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CONTACT:
Jodi Ray, MA
Florida Covering Kids and Families
(813) 974-3143
jray@health.usf.edu

USF RECEIVES FEDERAL GRANT TO REDUCE STATE'S UNINSURED

USF's Florida Covering Kids and Families is one of two Florida award recipients

Tampa, Florida – The Florida Covering Kids and Families Initiative, a project of the Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies at the University of South Florida's College of Public Health today announced it has received almost one million dollars in grant funds from the US Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The funds will be used to increase enrollment and retention in Florida KidCare, the state's child health insurance program.

On September 30, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced that \$40 million in grants were awarded to 69 grantees in 41 states and the District of Columbia to help find and enroll children who are uninsured but qualify for either Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Florida Covering Kids and Families, one of only two Florida recipients, will receive \$988,177 over the two-year grant period (September 30, 2009 through September 29, 2011).

The Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA) set aside \$100 million for the next four years to help find and enroll eligible children. Grants were awarded to applicants whose outreach, enrollment and retention efforts will target geographic areas with high rates of eligible but uninsured children, particularly those with racial and ethnic minority groups who are uninsured at higher-than-average rates. The vast majority of grantees will, like Florida Covering Kids and Families (FL-CKF), use multiple, community-based approaches.

Project Director for Florida Covering Kids and Families, Jodi Ray, expressed her excitement about the grant, which is the first federal grant FL-CKF has received: "We are honored to receive this federal award. Florida has 800,000 uninsured children, and most of them could be covered by Florida KidCare if they only knew about the program. This grant will help us reach more of these eligible children."

Ray conveyed her gratitude to those who assisted with the grant application: "Applying for this grant was a collaborative effort, and we couldn't have done it without the support of all of the state entities who administer the Florida KidCare program: the Agency for Health Care Administration, the Department of Health, the Department of Children and Families, and the Florida Healthy Kids Corporation. These folks were instrumental in providing the kind of feedback that produced a winning proposal. They will also be indispensable partners in performing the work involved—providing enrollment data, technical assistance, and support—without which this effort would be impossible."

FL-CKF's aims to increase enrollment in Florida KidCare by 40,000 children. It will do so by working with a network of regional collaborative partners. FL-CKF selected 10 local projects, representing 19 Florida counties: Brevard, Calhoun, Escambia, Holmes, Indian River, Jackson, Lake, Liberty, Martin, Okaloosa, Orange, Palm Beach, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Santa Rosa, Seminole, St. Lucie, and Washington. FL-CKF will also work with the Florida Association of Children's Hospitals, the Chiles Center's Refugee and Entrant Project, and human resources departments in businesses around the state.

Ray also thanked the local projects and organizations who will conduct outreach across the state for this project: "Significantly increasing Florida KidCare enrollment requires the hard work of our regional partners, in addition to organizations such as the Florida Association of Children's Hospitals and the Chiles Center's Refugee and Entrant Project. We are gratified these organizations agreed to participate."



Dean of USF's College of Public Health, Donna J. Petersen, MHS, ScD, acknowledged FL-CKF's efforts to reduce Florida's uninsured population: "It is enormously gratifying to have the outstanding work of the Florida Covering Kids and Families Coalition recognized by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. We have always known that outreach to eligible children is essential to assuring their access to health care, care that is critically important to their optimal growth and development."

For more information on Florida KidCare, call 1-888-540-5437 or visit www.floridakidcare.org.

Florida Covering Kids and Families is a statewide program working to ensure that all eligible children and families are enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Its statewide coalition is a broad representation of Florida's agencies, organizations, and key leaders—representatives from child advocacy groups, child care organizations, provider groups, private health plans, private coverage programs for low-income children, the business community, minority organizations, in addition to numerous state agencies charged with Medicaid and federal program implementation. The Coalition also works with community coalitions in targeted regions around the state.

USF Health is dedicated to creating a model of health care based on understanding the full spectrum of health. It includes the University of South Florida's colleges of medicine, nursing, and public health; the schools of biomedical sciences as well as physical therapy & rehabilitation sciences; and the USF Physicians Group. With more than \$360 million in research grants and contracts last year, USF is one of the nation's top 63 public research universities and one of 39 community-engaged, four-year public universities designated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. For more information, visit www.health.usf.edu.

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