WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON
children
&families
Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count

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Stories of the Uninsured in Wisconsin, part 4

Madison--The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) today published the seventh and eighth in a series of stories collected from state residents who do not have health insurance. The stories released today feature the Burks Family and Crystal Owney, both of Milwaukee. All of the stories published to date are available on the WCCF website at http://wccf.org/health_stories.php.

WCCF conducted interviews between July and mid-September of 2007. Most of the people interviewed will benefit from implementation of the BadgerCare Plus program, which was included in the recently-passed state budget. All of them would gain health care coverage from the enactment of a more comprehensive plan similar to Healthy Wisconsin, which was passed by the State Senate earlier this year but subsequently withdrawn from the budget debate.

The stories released today highlight two important aspects of BadgerCare Plus: the reduction of barriers to enrollment for people who are already eligible for BadgerCare; and the expansion of coverage to children aging out of foster care. In 2005, about 110,000 Wisconsin children were uninsured for all or part of the year. More than half of them, like the Burks, were in families with incomes below the eligibility ceiling for BadgerCare. Fortunately for the Burks, they were eventually able to get their BadgerCare coverage restored, but the several months they spent without coverage illustrate an aspect of BadgerCare red tape that has tripped up thousands of Wisconsin families.

Cystal Owney is one of the hundreds of young people each year who leave foster care when they reach age 18 and as a result no longer have access to health insurance. BadgerCare Plus will continue health insurance coverage until age 21 for young adults like Crystal who “age out” of the foster care system. In addition, the second phase of BadgerCare Plus, which begins in 2009, will make a basic health insurance plan available to low-income childless adults.

“Wisconsin has made great progress in making health care coverage available to state residents,” said WCCF Executive Director Charity Eleson. “These stories underscore the importance of sustaining our efforts until every single person in the state is insured. By passing BadgerCare Plus as part of the state budget, we have taken another step toward that goal. Let’s continue taking such steps until we cross the finish line.”

WCCF is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit agency that promotes policies to maximize the well-being of the state’s children and families through research, public education and advocacy.