

# Florida KidCare *Innovations*

*Highlighting Innovative Outreach Strategies*

## School-Based Outreach: A Way In

According to the Urban Institute, 3.4 million U.S. children aged 6-18 are eligible for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) but are uninsured. These school-aged children make up about 68% of the total eligible but uninsured population. Child and family advocates have long considered schools to be valuable partners for Florida KidCare outreach.

As research and experience have shown, the most effective way to increase enrollment in child health insurance programs is to provide families with application assistance. Simply making the information available can be insufficient. This is especially true when it comes to enrolling children who are considered the hardest-to-reach and in the highest need for health care coverage. These children experience enrollment barriers related to culture, language, literacy and social economics. Outreach approaches for families need to be hands-on. Additionally, to ensure all Florida public school students have health coverage, it is necessary to provide Florida KidCare information not just to the "income-eligible" but to all students (OPPAGA, 2010).

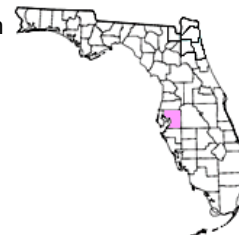
For example many families may be unaware of the availability of the Florida KidCare full-pay option. Families whose household income exceeds 200% of the Federal Poverty Level or families with undocumented children may qualify for unsubsidized Florida KidCare coverage:

Florida Healthy Kids	MediKids
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ages 5-18 are \$133/per month/per child with dental</li><li>• \$121/per month/per child without dental</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$159 per month per child</li></ul>

In the words of Earl Kiole, "information cannot replace education." Educating families about the benefits of Florida KidCare unlocks the strategies for successful outreach and Florida's schools hold the keys to reaching families in need.

One promising development with school-based Florida KidCare outreach is taking place in the School District of Hillsborough County (SDHC), which includes Tampa and surrounding areas. It is the nation's eighth largest school district, with 243 schools and over 193,000

students. Today, the school district, in collaboration with the Kids Health Care Foundation (KHCF), employs a full-time staff person to provide Florida KidCare outreach, train school personnel in application assistance, and find ways of increasing opportunities to provide assistance to families. But the path to get here has taken time, hard work, dedication, and collaboration with many lessons learned.



SDHC's outreach endeavors began during the 2005 Cover The Uninsured Week. SDHC's Deputy Superintendent and two school board members were featured speakers at the University of South Florida's Florida Covering Kids & Families' (FL-CKF) Press Enrollment Event. Additionally, the Deputy Superintendent participated in FL-CKF's Business Round Table meeting, discussing with business owners the importance of children's health and the need for children's health insurance. This marked the beginning of SDHC innovative school-based outreach.

SDHC's early outreach efforts consisted of FL-CKF providing outreach materials to the district's school health and student services programs. Nurses, social workers, and student service staff now had access Florida KidCare information.

In 2006, to celebrate back-to-school time, SDHC dignitaries once again were featured speakers at a FL-CKF press conference and enrollment event. This time when they addressed the community, it was to solidify SDHC's commitment to insure Hillsborough County kids. Later that fall, SDHC Board Member, April Griffin, asked Jodi Ray, FL-CKF Project Director, to address the full school board. Griffin knew the only effective approach to outreach is when there is 100% support. Board members needed to hear about the needs of Hillsborough's uninsured children and how SDHC can make a positive impact in the



**Hillsborough County  
School Board Member  
April Griffin**

community by helping families get health coverage for their children. This meeting substantiated the board's support to integrate school-based outreach for Florida KidCare throughout the district. Florida KidCare material distribution began immediately-targeting SDHC employees who may not have been able to afford full-family coverage under their employee health insurance.

Social relationships and affiliations have powerful effects on the health of our communities. SDHC's outreach program isn't just to disseminate information; their goal is to connect families directly to Florida KidCare. Griffin knows the structure of network ties can influence children's health via the provision of social support, so she joined the Kids Health Care Foundation (KHCF). Griffin serves on the KHCF board alongside Steve Freedman, Ph.D., the principal architect of the Healthy Kids Program that is the model for nationwide CHIP projects. Freedman has secured funding for KHCF from Allegheny Franciscan Ministries for a 3-year school outreach initiative. Griffin then helped develop a formal partnership between KHCF and SDHC. While SDHC and KHCF were developing their formal partnership, outreach efforts within the schools continued, to include training 900 student service employees in the fall of 2008 on how to identify uninsured children and link them with Florida KidCare.

The formal partnership between SDHC and KHCF was finalized in 2009. At the heart of this collaboration is a part time Florida KidCare Outreach Specialist, funded half by KHCF and half by SDHC. According to Ken Gaughan, M.S.W., Ed.D., Supervisor of School Social Work

Services, a staggering 57% of the SDHC students are National School Lunch Program recipients. The sole focus for SDHC's Florida KidCare outreach specialist is to increase the number of insured students throughout the entire district.

SDHC is working on expanding its outreach strategies. One of the innovative outreach approaches being looked at by the district is the use of ParentLink, a parent notification and school-to-home communications system. Through ParentLink, families could receive messages about Florida KidCare enrollment events by way of phone, email, and form letters sent by the system. Two schools, Woodbridge Elementary and Turkey Creek Middle School have already agreed to participate in a pilot program that will train school personnel to provide application assistance.

Taking into consideration, when using any type of technology, family and student confidentiality is respected and protected, SDHC is also looking at the use of the district's web-based email system. The district will use their existing system to share Florida KidCare information, forms, and resources with teachers, school nurses, and other personnel.

Even though SDHC's outreach program is still under development, the district has already established a significant precedent—not only by taking lead role in reducing the number of uninsured children but in actually committing resources to make this a reality-inspiring other school districts to follow suit.

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#### Hillsborough County School District (2008)

- Total area: 1,266 square miles
- Population: 1,180,784
- Major city: Tampa
- Median household income: \$49,762
- Population below poverty level: 13.9%
- Schools: 243
- Students: 193,517
- Percentage of students in NSLP: 57%
- Population under 18: 24.5%
- Uninsured children eligible for Florida KidCare: over 50,000

*This report is made possible through funding from the Agency for Health Care Administration.*

*For more information on Florida KidCare, call 1-888-540-5437 or visit [www.floridakidcare.org](http://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](http://www.health.usf.edu).*