



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

101ST LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

Child advocates,

As many of you may have seen in the press, thousands of expectant moms in Nebraska are at risk of losing access to Medicaid coverage and prenatal care. There has been much confusion and misinformation surrounding this issue, so I'll give you a more detailed summary below.

Your urgent action is needed! Please contact all members of the Health and Human Services Committee, and urge them to act to protect prenatal care for expectant moms in Nebraska. You can incorporate any of the talking points below – also see our fact sheets for more information. The most important thing is to urge our Legislature to act. Please call or email today!

Health and Human Services Committee

Senator Tim Gay	tgay@leg.ne.gov	402-471-2730
Senator Dave Pankonin	dpankonin@leg.ne.gov	402-471-2613
Senator Kathy Campbell	kcampbell@leg.ne.gov	402-471-2731
Senator Mike Gloor	mgloor@leg.ne.gov	402-471-2617
Senator Gwen Howard	ghoward@leg.ne.gov	402-471-2723
Senator Arnie Stuthman	astuthman@leg.ne.gov	402-471-2715
Senator Norm Wallman	nwallman@leg.ne.gov	402-471-2620

Once you have called or emailed the committee, please forward this to a friend and urge them to do so as well.

Talking points:

- **All babies born in Nebraska should have the opportunity to be born healthy.**
- **There is a simple solution.** Through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), we can continue to prioritize and protect the health of babies born in Nebraska.
- **Prenatal care saves babies' lives and saves the state money.** By preventing costly complicated births and poor birth outcomes, the state will realize a significant cost savings at birth and throughout the life of a healthy child.
- A baby born to a low-income mother will be eligible for Kids Connection the minute they are born, regardless of whether the mom was eligible for Medicaid. **By investing in prenatal care, we are investing in the life of the child and also eliminating high costs of poor birth outcomes, often borne by the state.** (See Voices for Children's fact sheet, [Investing in Healthy Moms and Healthy Babies](#) for a more detailed overview of costs associated with a lack of prenatal care)
- **Prenatal care leads to healthier babies. A lack of prenatal care puts babies at much greater risk. We should not take away babies' chances at leading healthy and productive lives before they are even born.**

See our fact sheets:

[Investing in Healthy Moms and Healthy Babies](#)
[Prenatal Care Fact Sheet](#)

[More details:](#)

The state of Nebraska has always recognized and prioritized the value of prenatal care and ensuring that babies born in Nebraska are as healthy as they can be. In late November, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) notified the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services that federal Medicaid policy does not allow coverage of an unborn child. Prior to this notification from CMS, Nebraska Medicaid has provided prenatal services to women who do not otherwise qualify for Medicaid by designating the unborn child as the recipient of services.

There is a simple solution. Nebraska may continue to provide prenatal care to pregnant women who do not qualify for Medicaid by covering unborn children under the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP or SCHIP). **So, while you cannot cover the "unborn child" under Medicaid, you can do so under SCHIP.** This can be accomplished by designating the unborn child as the recipient of health care services - not the mother. The state of Nebraska would simply have to take up the "unborn child option" in a State Plan Amendment. This is a simple administrative procedure that, if done soon, could allow continuous coverage and continuous federal reimbursement for the women about to lose their access to prenatal care.

There are approximately 6,000 expectant women whose Medicaid eligibility is being reviewed. There has been much confusion about how many women this change would affect and to what extent this change will affect undocumented women and US citizens. **Regardless, eliminating prenatal care for any pregnant women who will give birth to a baby in Nebraska is short-sighted, costly, and will ensure an unacceptable increase in poor birth outcomes, reducing opportunities for Nebraska children to be born healthy.**

There are a number of senators who have been working to protect prenatal care and find a resolution to this issue. It is our hope that the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature will take the lead and introduce a bill to protect prenatal care for thousands of expectant moms in Nebraska. **It is incredibly important to communicate with the members of the Health and Human Services Committee that, as Nebraskans, we believe that babies born healthy should be a priority in our state.**

For more detailed information, see the following article:

Lincoln Journal Star – "Medicaid Status Up In the Air for Some Pregnant Women"

http://www.journalstar.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/article_7d5df5a4-19d1-11df-b104-001cc4c03286.html

Voices for Children will continue to work alongside a number of other organizations to protect prenatal care for babies born in Nebraska. **We believe that prenatal care saves babies' lives and saves the state money.** If you would like to be engaged in this advocacy work, please share your stories and thoughts with us about the importance of prenatal care. If you know of any women who are at risk of being affected by this, please contact us. If you are a medical professional or a service provider who will be affected or know women and infants who will be affected, please contact us. We need to hear your stories, so that we may pass them on to our policymakers.

As always, contact me with any questions or concerns.