



ADA American Dental Association®



# A Guide to Help Give Kids A Smile® Program Coordinators Increase Children's Continuity of Care

## How to Find Families with Children Who are Uninsured and Refer Them to Insurance Application Assistance Organizations



Written by Public Citizens for Children and Youth in collaboration with the American Dental Association.

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## Section III: How to Refer Families with Children Who are Uninsured to Sign Up for Health Insurance



# Section I: Background Information

## Purpose of the Guide

Volunteers at Give Kids A Smile (GKAS) events have delivered education, screenings, preventive care and treatment to over five million underserved children across the nation to date! This is a phenomenal achievement. GKAS fills an important unmet need – specifically for children who are uninsured. The good news is that the vast majority of uninsured children across the country are eligible for Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP); however, many have not been enrolled.<sup>i</sup> As a GKAS coordinator, you have an opportunity to help children year round by using GKAS to connect families with uninsured children to coverage. Referring families with uninsured children to sign up for insurance is easy and won’t cost you anything – and by helping children get coverage, you are contributing to improving their overall health.

Some GKAS coordinators find it a challenge to identify children who are uninsured to participate in their events. Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY), an organization that participates in GKAS, has also struggled with this. Yet PCCY has recently had several consecutive years of successfully implementing strategies to recruit a majority of uninsured children for their GKAS events.

The purpose of this guide is to share strategies that can help GKAS coordinators identify and recruit children who are uninsured to participate in GKAS and to provide concrete instructions on how to refer these families for health insurance application assistance.

Please note that this guide is designed for a variety of GKAS models – urban and suburban settings, events that accept walk-ins or events that require families to make appointments. You can pick and choose the strategies that are relevant to your setting, event, and community.

Lastly, the strategies in this guide focus on conducting outreach within your community. This guide does not include strategies for working with the media, although doing so can be key to getting the word out. The American Dental Association has included robust recommendations for working with the media in its *GKAS Program Planning and Promotion Guide*, which can be accessed at [ADA.org/GKAS](https://www.ada.org/GKAS).

## What is Public Citizens for Children and Youth?

Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) is a nonprofit organization working to improve the lives and life chances of children in southeast Pennsylvania, particularly in the areas of public education, health, early childhood education and family economic security.

On the one hand, PCCY offers direct help to children – one at a time – through programs, such as GKAS. And on the other hand, the organization encourages government officials to do what is necessary to give every child the basic ingredients for a lifetime of success.

PCCY has connected over 3,000 children to free dental care since it first participated in the GKAS program in 2004. For the past three years, two thirds of the children PCCY has seen during their GKAS program have been uninsured, and all of these families were referred for insurance application assistance, as this is also a service provided by PCCY.

This was possible after 10 years of trying a variety of different strategies to specifically draw uninsured children to these events. For over 20 years, PCCY has operated a telephone helpline to enroll families with uninsured children. PCCY also works with other local and national organizations that enroll children in coverage.

<sup>i</sup> Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. (June 13, 2016). *Strategies to Enroll and Retain Eligible Children in Medicaid and CHIP*. CMCS Informational Bulletin. [www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/cib061316.pdf](https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/cib061316.pdf)



## Overview of Children’s Public Health Insurance Programs

There are two major public health insurance programs for children in the United States, Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Medicaid is a program that provides insurance to adults and children with limited incomes and resources. CHIP provides free and/or low-cost health coverage to children in families that earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid (and in some states CHIP also covers pregnant women). States have broad discretion in setting their income eligibility standards, and eligibility varies across states. Medicaid and CHIP are administered by the states, but are jointly financed by federal and state governments. Every state offers Medicaid and CHIP coverage and the two programs work closely together.

Both Medicaid and CHIP provide comprehensive benefits for children including dental care.

Every state has its own regulations regarding eligibility, benefits and application processes for Medicaid and CHIP. For specific information about your state go to [www.medicaid.gov/chip/chip-program-information.html](http://www.medicaid.gov/chip/chip-program-information.html).

Parents and caregivers can apply for and enroll in Medicaid or CHIP at any time of the year. There’s no limited enrollment period for either program. If families qualify, coverage for their child/children can start immediately. In some states, care can begin even while the application is being processed (this is called “presumptive eligibility”).

# Section II: How to Find and Reach Out to Families with Children Who are Uninsured

## Which Children are Likely to be Uninsured and How Do I Find Them?

**Nationwide, families who are considered to be low income are more likely to be uninsured.**

Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native children are also disproportionately uninsured – as are children who are immigrants or who have immigrant parents.<sup>ii</sup> Language barriers, misinformation about eligibility, and fear of reprisal can get in the way of immigrants understanding the availability of insurance programs and how to apply for them.

These are the key populations to target for GKAS. One of the best ways to reach these populations is to identify and work with organizations that work within these communities. These organizations may help you identify families with uninsured children who can attend your GKAS event.

If you convene a GKAS steering committee, consider inviting representative from organizations described below. You can also join coalitions convened by these organizations or visit their meetings to inform them about GKAS and ask them to refer families to your event.

## Schools Can Be a Great Resource to Help Spread the Word About GKAS and for Locating Children Who are Uninsured

*Schools can be the most helpful resource to help spread the word about GKAS and to families with children who are uninsured. Why? Because school staff can make the program known/available to parents and ask interested families to sign up.*

Start by reaching out to schools with children from low-income families and who are eligible for reduced-cost or free school meals (Title 1 schools) as well as schools with high numbers of English language learners because these are likely the children who are disproportionately uninsured.

Several key school staff members can be helpful resources in identifying those in need of dental care. They are:

- School nurses and counselors who assist students in health-related matters.
- Athletic Coaches – because many schools require students to have health insurance to play sports.
- English Language Learner (ELL) teachers and counselors often act as supports and interpreters for ELL students' parents and caregivers. They may know how to best communicate with families about a student's insurance status.

ii Alker, J. & Chester, A. (October, 2016). *Children's Health Coverage Rate Now at Historic High of 95 Percent*. Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families. <http://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Kids-ACS-update-11-02-1.pdf>.

ii Schwartz, S., Chester, A., Lopez, S. & Vargas Poppe, S. (December, 2016). *Latino Children's Coverage Reaches Historic High, But Too Many Remain Uninsured*. Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families and National Council of La Raza. [http://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/LatinoChildren12\\_15.pdf](http://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/LatinoChildren12_15.pdf).





## Key Organizations/Entities That are Likely to Work with Uninsured Children

The list below includes additional organizations/entities that are likely to work with families whose children are typically at risk for being uninsured.



- **Community Health Centers/Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)** At FQHCs, no one is refused care due to an inability to pay. These health centers provide care to everyone, including people who are uninsured. Approximately 75% of community health centers also offer dental services. The centers without dental care can be rich referral sources for your GKAS event, and the centers with dental care can become potential dental homes. To find out if a federally qualified health center is located in or near your community, go to <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/index.html>
- **Hospital emergency departments** and their charity health care enrollment offices
- **Immigrant organizations**
- **Immigration offices and consulates**
- **Faith-based organizations**
- **Community action programs/agencies** All states have organizations that are designated as community action programs or agencies that help people escape poverty and achieve economic security through programs such as Head Start, job training, housing and food banks. To find the organizations near you, go to [www.communityactionpartnership.com](http://www.communityactionpartnership.com).
- **Homeless and domestic abuse shelters**
- **Health departments**
- **United Way** (and other umbrella-type organizations) The United Way serves as an umbrella entity and convenes charitable organizations. United Way may be able to connect families in need to a GKAS program. (They can also help recruit, train and deploy volunteers, so consider requesting assistance in recruiting GKAS volunteers for your event). In addition, consider researching other umbrella organizations within your community that serve as connectors to charitable organizations.
- **Health insurance navigator organizations** These organizations, most of which operate as nonprofits, help people enroll in Medicaid, CHIP and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) Marketplace. These organizations will be discussed in more detail on page 11. These organizations know best how to find individuals who are uninsured and can help inform families about your GKAS event. Ask them to specifically tell parents who have submitted applications that have not yet been approved for insurance about GKAS, as these children are uninsured and could certainly benefit from GKAS.
- **Women, Infant and Children (WIC) offices**
- **Public housing agencies**
- **Boys and Girls Clubs of America**
- **Medical and nursing societies/organizations**

- **Elected officials' offices** Local and state legislators employ staff who help their constituents find services in their district – including health care, dental care and health insurance services. They can help spread the word about GKAS.
- **Libraries**
- **Child care centers**

**Special Note:** If you need help finding and reaching out to community-based organizations, a relatively easy way to increase your reach is to recruit high school or college students who have community service hours to fulfill. They often have great internet searching skills to find relevant organizations, and with a little coaching, can make cold calls and send emails to ask folks to spread the word.



## Outreach Strategies to Reach Families with Uninsured Children

There are many engaging ways to get your message out, once you have identified organizations/entities that will help spread the word.

Remember, when it comes to advertising, consumers respond best when they see or hear about an event many times. Employing more than one of these strategies – and sometimes doing them multiple times – usually produces better results. Getting the word out in a variety of ways helps to reach people who respond to different approaches.

**Special Note:** Start outreach to families 6-8 weeks before your event. Preparing outreach materials well ahead of your event gives you time to use a variety of strategies.

### Strategy #1: School Outreach

*Ask several key school staff to help spread the word.* As described earlier, consider reaching out to school nurses, counselors, English Language Learning teachers and athletic coaches.

*Ask schools and school districts to do more than distribute flyers.* Schools have a variety of avenues to share information with families, so give them the materials they need for the different venues. The easier you make it for schools and districts to spread your message, the more likely they are to do so. Ask them to:

- Distribute flyers to all students. Under-resourced schools and districts may not have the capacity to print flyers, but they are usually happy to distribute them, so consider making copies for these schools. Are report cards being issued around the time you are distributing GKAS flyers? If so, ask schools to insert your flyer in the report cards.

- Write a phone message schools can record and send to all student households. Do schools in your area send “robo-calls”? Call your school district to find out. Write up a simple message that takes no more than 20–30 seconds to record out loud about how to participate in your GKAS event. As a bonus, look into finding a local celebrity to record the call to catch parents’ attention – maybe the mayor, a local sports star or popular radio personality.
- Ask that your GKAS flyer be posted on the school or district’s internet homepage – or that the school post a hyperlinked copy of your GKAS logo so parents can click on it and be connected to your webpage.
- Supply the district or school with a short description of your GKAS event and ask them to publish it in their electronic or paper newsletters. Do the same for the parent teacher organization.
- Periodically supply the district, school, parent groups, churches, movie theatres, small business communities, hair salons, restaurants, skating rinks, local service organizations, etc. with a variety of social media messages they can copy, post and re-post to help create a buzz.

### Strategy #2: GKAS Flyer

*Get it translated.* If you work in a community where languages other than English are spoken, have your flyer translated into the predominant languages in the area. Then get double use out of your flyers by printing English on one side and a different language on the opposite side. Online translation tools are generally not reliable for this purpose. Engage a local language expert to translate your flyer.

**Special Note:** If you do get your flyer translated into other languages, seriously consider recruiting language interpreters to be on-site at your GKAS event to facilitate Limited English Proficiency (LEP) families’ participation. Suggestions about how to do this are on page 10.

*Promote insurance application referral services on the flyer.* Advertise that you will be helping families apply for insurance coverage on your GKAS flyer. If possible, put the name and contact information of the application assistance organization on your flyer. (More information about application assistance organizations is on page 11.)

### Strategy #3: Create a GKAS Outreach Contact List

*Create a simple spreadsheet of organizations to email year after year.* Use a spreadsheet to record contact information for the organizations and individuals that can help recruit families. Creating a spreadsheet gives you an easy and quick way to keep contacts organized and to add more contacts throughout the year. The list will be conveniently stored in one place when you are ready to start your annual GKAS preparations!

*Ask organizations/entities to do more than post and distribute your flyers.* When you email and call these organizations/entities, ask them to consider promoting GKAS in a number of specific ways. The easier you





make it for these organizations/entities to spread your message, the more likely they are to do so. Ask them to:

- Speak directly to parents and caregivers about GKAS
- Forward your email and the attached GKAS flyers to their networks (other organizations that work with kids)
- Create and include sample social media messages and ask the organizations to post them (samples can be found in the GKAS Toolbox)
- Include a short description of GKAS that they can cut and paste into their electronic and/or paper newsletter

*Remind these organizations/entities to promote GKAS several times.* For example, pick three dates, six weeks before your event to send an email and/or call these organizations/entities asking them to spread the word. Sending the message at different times in different ways will help remind families and can spur them to act and participate in your event.

#### **Strategy #4: In-Person Outreach**

Speaking directly with a large number of parents and family members can be beneficial. Participating in outreach events can be time and labor-intensive, but if you have a steering committee, members can take turns promoting GKAS at various meetings. Look for or create outreach opportunities in some of these settings:

- Outreach events at your steering committee members' organizations, at schools (report card conference nights, sports events), faith-based gatherings (religious services, food pantry nights, religious study nights), and legislator's offices. Look at community calendars online and in the newspaper and be on the lookout for public meetings where you can present.
- High traffic consumer areas such as in front of discount "big box" stores, grocery stores and strip malls. Stand outside these locations and distribute flyers at busy times of the day, such as weekend afternoons. You may need permission to do so – simply ask.
- Public transportation stops. If you have a high-volume bus or transit line near one of your GKAS dental offices and/or in a community that needs GKAS services, hand out your flyers during peak transportation times – on the way to and from work and school, for example.

#### **Other Strategies to Serve Uninsured Kids**

- If you have the option, collaborate with dental practices/clinics that accept Medicaid and CHIP, so that the newly insured families can make a practice/clinic their dental home via information provided to them during your event. Consider creating a referral sheet that includes a balanced list of provider options. Some uninsured children, however, may not qualify for Medicaid or CHIP (depending on that state's eligibility rules) and some families will not enroll. If the practice/clinic does not accept uninsured children, these families will need to find an alternative dental home. Consider negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the practices/clinics to have them refer uninsured children to a local community health center with dental services or a Community Action Program/Agency to find a dental home.





- If you have the option, recruit practices with staff who speak the predominant languages in your community to increase the chance for limited and/or non-English speaking caregivers to participate. Again, consider creating a referral sheet that includes a balanced list of providers for their consideration.
- Recruit volunteer language interpreters to help make GKAS appointments and/or provide language interpretation at your GKAS event. How do you find volunteer interpreters?
  - Ask your steering committee members for help identifying individuals who speak the language(s) you need.
  - Reach out to a local college or university. Contact the office of student life or the language department.
  - Inquire at the dental hygiene and dental assisting programs in the area to find out if they have bilingual members who are willing to volunteer.
  - Contact organizations in the community who work with immigrants, including faith-based organizations.
- Reduce the paperwork and documentation families are required to bring or complete in advance of your event. For example, consider only requiring caregivers to bring proof of guardianship for consent to treatment. Once they arrive at the event, have them complete health histories and any other paperwork. Limiting the number of steps parents/caregivers have to take **before** they arrive at the event can simplify the process. Check with your state for minimum documentation guidelines.

**Special Note:** Check out additional referral and outreach resources created by the Connecting Kids to Coverage National Campaign at [www.InsureKidsNow.gov](http://www.InsureKidsNow.gov). The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) operate the Connecting Kids to Coverage National Campaign to assist parents and organizations who work with families to get kids signed up. The Campaign offers an extensive set of resources including **outreach tools focused on oral health care including flyers, tear sheets, web banners, social media messages, Facebook images and much more.** The Campaign also customizes outreach materials with your organization's name and/or logo. Their outreach materials are available in multiple languages. Find all of these resources and the link to sign up for the Connecting Kids to Coverage National Campaign Notes e-Newsletter at [www.InsureKidsNow.gov](http://www.InsureKidsNow.gov).

# Section III: How to Refer Families with Children Who are Uninsured to Sign Up for Health Insurance

## Step #1: Find Insurance Assistance Resources Prior to Your GKAS Event

There are several avenues parents and caregivers can take to apply for health insurance for their children. Some are more user-friendly than others.

1. Families can get help filling out an Insurance Application on [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov).  
Although child health insurance applications in most states are shorter and less complicated than adult applications, caregivers can still encounter challenges completing the applications on their own. Many agencies can help caregivers apply – more agencies exist now because of the Affordable Care Act – and it’s easy to find them. Healthcare.gov has a comprehensive list of organizations and an easily searchable database. The database provides an organization’s contact information, languages spoken by staff, and hours of operation. To find an organization that provides application assistance follow these simple steps:
  - a) Go to [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov).
  - b) On the homepage click, “Find Local Help”
  - c) Enter an address or ZIP code where you need assistance
  - d) The question, “What do you want help with?” pops up, and click, “Medicaid and CHIP Coverage”.
  - e) View assistance organizations in a list format or plotted on a map
2. Families can complete an application online at the federal website [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov).
3. Some states operate online application websites where families can apply. To find out if your state has a website, do an internet search for “(state name) online health insurance application”.
4. In most states, families can also apply by filling out and mailing in paper applications and by visiting a government office. The options listed above, however, generally help expedite the process and require less time than a face to face visit at a local government assistance office. If a parent/care-giver wants to apply in person, direct them to your local government assistance office.

## Step #2: Partner with an Application Assistance Organization

Consider working with one or more of the insurance application assistance organizations identified on [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov). This can improve families’ experience. For example, contact an organization to give them a heads up that you are going to be referring families to them. Ask for the organization’s outreach flyers and other materials to distribute to your GKAS families.

You can also ask if the organization can send an assistor to be on-site at your GKAS event to connect with families in person. Application assistors typically don’t sign up families when they are at outreach events such as GKAS, because signing up takes time and parents generally don’t have the information they need to do so. Applying may also require a private space to share income and other sensitive information which may not be available at your event. The great advantage of having an assistor on-site is that it provides the important opportunity for parents/caregivers to make a personal connection with the assistor and learn that the application process can be relatively simple, which can increase the likelihood that parents will follow up and apply. The assistor also collects parents’ names and numbers and will follow up with the families.



### **Step #3: Ask Parents If Their Child Has Health Insurance and If They Do Not, Refer Them to Application Assistance**

As described above, you can refer parents/caregivers by giving them a flyer with information about a local application assistance organization and/or invite an assistor to be at your event.

If parents have to make an appointment for your GKAS event, give them the application assistance referral information at that time so they can get a jump start on enrolling before your event.

If you communicate with parents/caregivers after your event via email or text, share the application assistance information through these channels as well.

### **Step #4: Document and Report Uninsured Children and Referrals to Application Assistance**

Starting in 2018, the ADA's GKAS will begin asking coordinators to report the number of children who are uninsured in addition to the number of children referred for health insurance application assistance. Doing so will give the national GKAS program a way to measure progress towards the goal of increasing children's continuity of care.

To make sure these two questions are asked and the answers recorded, you can simply include them on your GKAS patient registration or patient care form.

Written by Public Citizens for Children and Youth in collaboration with the American Dental Association.

This guide was made possible with major support from the Dental Trade Alliance Foundation.

# Community Coalition-Building and identifying Qualified Children for Give Kids A Smile®

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## Partnering with Others in Your Community

Momentum for Give Kids A Smile® can be generated by state and local dental societies, dentists in private and public practice, dental schools, dental health insurance companies, and industry partners working in local coalitions. Such partnerships can:

1. Identify key access barriers in the provision of oral health care to target populations
2. Explore alternative ways to address these barriers
3. Create opportunities for community members to join together in expanding access
4. Develop a sustainable action plan for implementing local oral health care access programs for the target populations

This program aims to encourage a variety of innovative strategies for the provision of dental services to children, build on these innovations, create visionary approaches to care, and diversify collaborations to meet local goals for expanding prevention and/or treatment services. The first year of Give Kids A Smile resulted in successful, collaborative programs that included oral health education, screening and provision of restorative and other types of care.

Since a community's ability to significantly impact local oral health access issues will depend on activating and strengthening existing networks, it is important to invite significant stakeholders to participate in Give Kids A Smile. These may include members of the dental community, and other key institutions such as public health departments, the state Medicaid office, hospitals, academic institutions, schools or early childhood programs, consumer groups, social service agencies and community foundations. Through the participation and endorsement of a broad array of institutions, partnerships will stand a better chance of securing the support of potential contributors. Finding meaningful roles for partners, to optimize their buy-in and create avenues for expanded care, should be an important part of your planning process.

## Identifying Children for Your Event

A number of organizations and groups can help identify children in need of dental services and connect them with Give Kids A Smile group activities or volunteers, including:

- Boys & Girls Club
- Head Start centers
- Social service agencies
- United Way chapters
- Faith-based groups in the community
- Public health agencies
- School nurses
- Hospitals

In addition to local agencies, some national groups can help you connect to chapters in your area that can help identify children.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America: B&GCA has identified improving oral health as one of their most important priorities. Many of the 3,700 Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide may be interested in participating in Give Kids A Smile. More than 1,000 Clubs have already conducted some level of oral health educational, screening or treatment. Some Clubs also have on-site dental clinics.

To locate a Boys & Girls Club in your area to discuss joint activities for Give Kids A Smile day visit [www.bgca.org](http://www.bgca.org).

You can also call 1-800-854-CLUB to locate a local Club.

- Select "Find a Club".
- Type in your zip code or another nearby zip code.

A list of Clubs and contact information will appear for the zip code requested.

*Tips for contacting a Boys & Girls Club:*

- When calling the Club, the best time to reach the programming staff is late morning or early afternoon before school ends.
- Ask to speak with the Health & Life Skills program director, or if not available, the person in charge of educational programming.
- Explain your event to the programming director. Ask if they are interested in bringing their members to your event or practice or holding an event at their Club.

National Head Start Association: Head Start is a federally funded and administered early childhood development program, which serves low-income children (from birth to age five), pregnant women, and their families. You can find a Head Start program in your area by using the Head Start Bureau's Web site at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb>

For more information, visit [www.nhsa.org](http://www.nhsa.org), the Web site for the National Head Start Association, the membership organization representing Head Start directors, staff, parents, children and friends.

United Way of America: Each United Way has a network of relationships with social and health service agencies, local government and business through which children with unmet oral health needs can be identified. United Way may play a role in transporting children to points of treatment or assisting with other volunteer capacities. To contact your local United Way, visit <http://www.liveunited.org/myuw/local.cfm> and enter your zip code.

School Sealant Programs: Several health department dental divisions operate dental sealant programs that serve schools in which the majority of children are from low-income families (eligible for federal school meals). Many sealant programs use portable or mobile equipment on the school grounds or refer children to local dental Medicaid providers. Go to [www.astdd.org](http://www.astdd.org) to find contact information for state public health dental programs. A guide was developed by the National Maternal and Child Resource Center ([www.mchoralhealth.org](http://www.mchoralhealth.org)) as a resource for community dental sealant programs. A Dental Sealant Resource Guide can be accessed at <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/DntSlntGd.pdf>

State and Local Dental Access Programs: Numerous dental access programs serve low-income families and persons with disabilities on the state and local level. These programs vary in size and operation. For Give Kids A Smile day, it may be practical to join forces and volunteer with an existing program. The ADA has general information on existing access programs sponsored by dental societies, health departments, dental schools and community services groups. To inquire whether there are existing dental access programs in your area, e-mail [gkas@ada.org](mailto:gkas@ada.org).