

# Rep. Alexander rings in week of children's insurance awareness

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U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander on Monday helped kick off a week of events to raise awareness of the Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program.

Alexander, R-Quitman, sponsored LaCHIP legislation while serving in the state Legislature several years ago.

LaCHIP provides low-cost or no-cost insurance for children up to 18 years old. To qualify, a family's income cannot exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty level, or about \$3,534 monthly for a family of four.

"The program has been available for several years, but there's still many who don't have it," Alexander said. "Parents either don't know about it or are reluctant to enroll for a variety of reasons."

Linda Gavioli, executive director of the Children's Coalition for Northeast Louisiana, said 95 percent of eligible children have enrolled in the program.

However, up to 5,000 children in the 12 north-eastern Louisiana parishes are still not enrolled, according to Gavioli.

"This week is just an all-out effort to get them enrolled," she said.

The week-long "enrollment blitz" took hold shortly after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, according to Gavioli. The effort has since stretched across the state.

Throughout the week, blitz team members will visit parish offices to distribute LaCHIP applications and increase awareness of the program.

The event is part of National Cover the Uninsured Week.

The insurance covers children's mental, dental and vision health, according to Gavioli.

Gavioli said some families of four can make up to \$53,000 and still qualify when factoring childcare and other deductions.

Children already covered by insurance cannot receive additional coverage under LaCHIP, she said.

"The more we can do to help people grow up to be healthy adults, the better off we'll be as a nation," Alexander said.