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Rural hospitals promoting CHIP program

COTTONWOOD - St. Mary's and Clearwater Valley hospitals and clinics are helping to promote the Idaho health plan coverage for children, formerly known as the CHIP program.

The program provides free or reduced-cost medical care to children in low-income families. The children must be younger than 19, U.S. citizens or a legal resident and uninsured to qualify.

Jeanette Gorman, community relations coordinator for the hospitals, said family income guidelines change each March. "We're trying to let families know about the new income guidelines in case they now qualify," she said.

According to the 2009 guidelines, a youth younger than 19 can qualify if his or her income is less than \$1,670 per month. A two-person family can make up to \$2,247 and a family of four can have a monthly income of \$3,400 and still qualify. A family of six can make up to \$4,553 per month. Income from stepparents, grandparents, custodians, and legal guardians don't count. Only parental income is used to determine eligibility.

The program provides coverage for doctor visits, prescriptions, vision screening, immunizations, dental benefits and other health needs.

A Medicaid program, the Children's Health Access card, can provide up to \$100 per child per month to help pay for an employer-sponsored or individual health plan.

An application form or more information is available by calling the Idaho Careline, 211 or 1-800-926-2588 or visiting www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov. Information is available at local Idaho Department of Health and Welfare field offices.

The financial counselors at the business office in St. Mary's Hospital, 962-3251 or Clearwater Valley Hospital, 476-4555 can provide an income eligibility sheet and assist in the application process.