



SMD#: 10-025

November 30, 2010

**RE: Medicaid/CHIP Dental Provider  
Information**

Dear State Medicaid Director:

Dear State Health Official:

We are writing today to ask for your help in continuing the efforts underway to improve access to dental care for the many millions of children who are enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). As you know, access to dental care has for years been a persistent problem for low-income children, with numerous studies documenting high rates of dental disease and low rates of children receiving annual visits, even among those children who have health coverage through Medicaid or CHIP. In the past, one of the most frequently cited barriers to accessing dental services is the ability to find a dentist who participates in Medicaid.

To make it easier for families to find a participating provider, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) required the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to post on the Insure Kids Now website ([www.insurekidsnow.gov](http://www.insurekidsnow.gov)) a current and accurate list, by State, of dentists participating in the Medicaid and CHIP programs.

Since August 2009 your State, along with all other States, has been providing data on dental providers participating in Medicaid and CHIP to the Department of Health and Human Services on a quarterly basis. We have been relying on you to provide accurate listings of participating providers as required by the statute, and we appreciate your efforts in providing these listings.

However, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) review released today (available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d1196.pdf>) highlights significant inaccuracies in the information provided to the Insure Kids Now website. GAO's review of the lists of providers from all fifty States revealed missing and incomplete information. In a detailed check of four States' listings this summer, reviewers found problems with half of the provider listings that were checked. This means not only that InsureKidsNow.gov conveyed inaccurate information to families, but also suggests that families looking for a dentist directly from the State's Medicaid/CHIP program may be receiving inaccurate information or have problems accessing information. We are certain that you agree that this needs immediate correction.

We are developing several changes to the Insure Kids Now data collection and validation process and will be reaching out to your staff with more information about our expectations for improving the quality of the information that is posted on [www.InsureKidsNow.gov](http://www.InsureKidsNow.gov). We are also interested in your ideas for how to improve the quality of this information and hope you will join us in carrying the message to your staff that providing up-to-date, accurate information for families is an essential component of any effective strategy to improve children's access to dental care.

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Thank you in advance for working with us to ensure that data provided to families in your State and for use on the Insure Kids Now website is regularly updated and accurate with respect to providers' contact information and their capability to accept new patients, and to serve patients with special needs. If you have ideas on how to make this work better at the State and federal levels, please contact either of us. For technical assistance about how to ensure better quality of your State's dental provider data, or have any questions about the process for data submission please contact James Resnick of the Health Resources and Services Administration at 301-443-3222 or via email at [jresnick@hrsa.gov](mailto:jresnick@hrsa.gov).

Sincerely,

/s/

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CMS Deputy Administrator  
Director, Center for Medicaid,  
CHIP, and Survey & Certification

Mary Wakefield  
Administrator  
Health Resources and Services Administration

cc:

CMS Regional Administrators

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