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Advocates Say Disallowed BadgerCare Changes Shouldn't Be Resurrected in State Budget

Two years ago, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services attempted to make several changes to BadgerCare that would have caused at least 29,000 children to lose their coverage, and many more to lose some of their benefits. Federal law prevented those changes from being enacted, but now many of those same proposed changes have been resurrected as part of Gov. Walker's proposed 2013-15 state budget.

The presence of these proposed changes in the budget has largely gone unnoticed, to the chagrin of health care advocates. The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) today published an [issue brief](#) that examines the proposed changes and their potential impact in detail.

Most of the proposed changes relating to children are inconsistent with federal law until 2019, but they are nevertheless being written into state law to be put into place once federal approval is granted. The changes would make it harder for children to receive health care services in these ways:

- Premiums, co-pays, and deductibles would all be raised, which the state expects would price thousands of children out of BadgerCare.
- Many families would lose eligibility due to the elimination of Transitional Medicaid; the establishment of year-long suspension for missing a premium payment; and an unusual change in the way household income is counted that would penalize families for having unrelated adults living in their residence (by adding their income to the family's, but not including their presence in determining family size).
- The range of health care services covered by BadgerCare for families over the poverty level would be reduced.
- The application process for BadgerCare and for coverage through the new health insurance marketplace would be made more complicated.

“Because these changes have no fiscal impact in the 2013-15 budget, they have been completely overshadowed by far more pressing budget issues, and they don't belong in the current bill,” said WCCF Executive Director Ken Taylor. “Pushing them through now, years before they can take effect, prevents a critically important issue from receiving the thorough scrutiny it deserves.”

The WCCF issue brief is available at http://www.wccf.org/pdf/badger-care-plus-changes-for-kids_050813.pdf.

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