The uninsured rate among children rose for the first time in a decade, but CMS just announced funding to help increase coverage. This funding may be an opportunity for certain HealthySteps sites.

The uninsured rate among children rose in 2017 from 4.7 percent to 5 percent, as noted in a new report from Georgetown University’s Center for Children and Families (CCF). This is the first increase in the ten years that CCF has collected this data. Though this is an alarming indicator of the current state of coverage for U.S. children, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced a funding opportunity on November 30th to help combat the rising rate of uninsured children. The funding is available under the Connecting Kids to Coverage HEALTHY KIDS 2019 Outreach and Enrollment Cooperative Agreement Program (Connecting Kids to Coverage), authorized under the Helping Ensure Access for Little Ones, Toddlers and Hopeful Youth by Keeping Insurance Delivery Stable Act of 2018.

This program provides funding opportunities to reduce the number of children who are eligible for, but not enrolled in, Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and to improve retention of eligible children who are enrolled in both programs. Grants awarded under the cooperative agreement will fund outreach and enrollment strategies aimed at educating families about the availability of Medicaid and CHIP coverage as well as directly assisting families with the application and renewal process. A total of $48 million of funding is available via cooperative agreements to states, local governments, Indian tribes, federal health safety net organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and schools.

CMS expects to grant 35 awards ranging from $500,000 to $1,500,000. At this time, applications will be accepted until January 28th. For HealthySteps sites that already assist children and families in learning about available benefits and/or assist with enrollment of children into Medicaid and CHIP, this funding is an opportunity to further support that work. For sites that have not historically focused on eligibility and enrollment, it is an opportune time to examine the uninsured rate in your community and determine whether your site can offer these types of services to families in need, possibly leveraging HealthySteps. This opportunity is most applicable to Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), but non-FQHC sites and systems may be able to partner with community-based organizations, which would act as the main applicant.

For more information and to apply for funding, please visit https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=310663 or contact Johanna Lister at JLister@zerotothree.org with any questions.