



CHILDREN'S HOSPICE INTERNATIONAL

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CHI PRAISES FLORIDA, HHS & MEDICAID OFFICIALS FOR INNOVATIVE HEALTH CARE PROGRAM FOR SICK CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Children's Hospice International of Alexandria, VA Helped Develop New Program

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Children's Hospice International (CHI) Thursday praised the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Florida officials for instituting a new, innovative program based on a model of care developed by CHI for critically ill children and their families.

Florida officials hope to serve approximately 1,000 children initially under the new program. "I am approving this new Florida Medicaid program because I believe we must do everything possible to lighten the heavy burden on families of children who may be near the end of their lives," said HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt.

"The diagnosis of a life-threatening condition in a child is devastating for families. This waiver will combine medical and support services currently available in Medicaid with counseling and respite care that are also important for these children and families," said Mark B. McClellan, M.D., Ph.D., administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

"By providing key support services to children and their families as they cope with life-threatening conditions, Children's Hospice International, CMS and AHCA will make a significant contribution toward the quality of life of Florida's most courageous children and families," said Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) Secretary Alan Levine.

CHI Founding Director Ann Armstrong-Dailey said: "This landmark health care policy would not have been possible without the compassionate leadership of Governor Bush and Secretary Levine, and the dedicated support of Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt and Dr. McClellan and his team at CMS."

"This policy decision paves the way for Colorado's waiver, which would allow our state flexibility to develop solutions to better serve sick children and their families through 'The Butterfly Program' in Denver," said Governor Bill Owens (CO). Colorado and Utah will be submitting their waiver applications later this year.

Initial funding totaling \$3.2 million for the multi-state CHI PACC grant was secured by U.S. Congressman James Moran (D-VA) through federal appropriation. "CHI PACC is better, more comprehensive care for families in need, with less cost to taxpayers," said Moran.

CHI is seeking an additional \$1 million appropriation for FY '06 to continue to expand CHI PACC to additional states and for a formal program evaluation.

For more information, or to request an interview with Ann Armstrong-Dailey of CHI, contact Kirsten Fedewa or Patricia Lowe of Children's Hospice International at 703-684-0330.

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