

Alice Birney is site for Healthy Kids Humboldt insurance campaign

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Healthy Kids Humboldt kicked off its health insurance enrollment campaign at Alice Birney Elementary School this month.

The goal is to contact 100 percent of families who indicate their children don't have health insurance. Enrolling the children in one of three health insurance programs is the next step.

Children who have health insurance tend to have more access to medical and dental services. The result: They do better in school.

"It's really hard for a child with a bad toothache or earache to pay attention in school," said Marina Cortez-Hash, enrollment coordinator. "When kids' health needs are met, they have the best chance to succeed."

During the 2007-2008 school year, Healthy Kids Humboldt helped the parents of more than 250 children enroll in health insurance programs.

"As we all know, there is a health care crisis across the country, especially for children and young families, and Humboldt County is no exception," said Georgeanne Fulstone-Pucillo, Alice Birney principal.

"Alice Birney is excited to have Healthy Kids Humboldt as a partner in addressing this need — right here, right now. Our kids need to be healthy in order to be ready to learn. It's really a win-win situation for the community."

Alice Birney has more than 400 students. Healthy Kids Humboldt plans to coordinate with school staff to contact families of uninsured children and then will help parents with the paperwork to get the children enrolled in low-cost or no-cost medical insurance.

"All of Humboldt County's kids deserve the best chance at health," Cortez-Hash said. "We're going directly to where the kids are to see where we can help."

Healthy Kids Humboldt is the Children's Health Initiative, a local collaborative that helps families enroll their children in one of three insurance programs: Medi-Cal, Healthy Families or CaliforniaKids.

The insurance vehicle depends on the family's gross monthly income.

The organization also coaches parents on how to use health insurance and helps them re-enroll annually.

For more information about Healthy Kids Humboldt, phone 707-442-6066 or visit www.healthykidshumboldt.org.