

KEEPING TRACK OF RITE CARE CHANGES

What you need to know to keep children and families covered

September 13, 2006

There are several changes to the Rite Care program that will go into effect over the next few months that will impact Rite Care eligibility for low-income children and parents. This document gives an overview of the changes – including a change in the FIP program that will impact Rite Care. We will provide more detail about the changes as information becomes available. Check the Poverty Institute website (povertyinstitute.org) for updates.

Non-citizen children and Rite Care: Because of a change in state law, beginning January 1, 2007, undocumented children and some legally present children will not be eligible for Rite Care unless they received Rite Care at some time prior to December 31, 2006. Legal permanent resident children (“green-card holders”) will not be eligible for Rite Care unless they received benefits prior to 12/31/06 or have lived in the US for five years.¹ Children on the program as of 12/31/06 will stay on and eligibility for new applicants is summarized in the following chart.²

	<u>Until 12/31/06</u>	<u>Beginning 1/1/07</u>
Legal Permanent Resident (green card)	Eligible	Eligible if received Rite Care at any time prior to 12/31/06 Or If in US for 5 years.
Other Legally Present (e.g., deferred enforced departure – Liberians)	Eligible	Eligible if received Rite Care at any time prior to 12/31/06
Undocumented	Eligible	Eligible if received Rite Care at any time prior to 12/31/06

¹ Children who are not eligible for Rite Care due to immigration status will remain eligible for emergency Medicaid. This primarily covers the cost of emergency care at hospitals.

² Note that there are other categories of non-citizen children and parents who are eligible for Rite Care. These include refugees and persons granted asylum.

In addition, a rule change that DHS is expected to make will result in denial of RIte Care for **legal permanent resident parents** unless they have lived in the US for at least five years.³

Finally, RIte Care is still available to **all pregnant women** who meet program rules (e.g., income) other than citizen/immigrant status.

What you can do:

- Check with the families you work with and find out whether the children need health insurance.
- Encourage families to apply as soon as possible especially non-citizen families.
- Let non-citizen families know that receipt of RIte Care does not affect immigration status. Receipt of RIte Care does not affect a legal permanent resident's eligibility for citizenship. DHS will document the status of legally present immigrants, but will not check on those who report no status.
- Family Resource Counselors (FRCs) at Community Health Centers and hospitals can help with the application. Call: 462-5300 to find out the nearest FRC.

Citizens and RIte Care: Because of a change in federal law, citizens will need to prove their citizenship and identity as part of the RIte Care application process.⁴ Recipient families will need to prove citizenship/identity at recertification. Families that receive both FIP cash assistance and RIte Care already need to provide proof of citizenship as part of the FIP application so this new rule will affect only families that apply for or receive RIte Care and not cash assistance.⁵

This new rule will go into effect for applicants around November 1, 2006.

The rule sets up a “hierarchy” of documentation that can be submitted. This will be described in more detail in future communications. Briefly: a passport, certificate of naturalization and certificate of citizenship can be submitted as proof of both citizenship and identity. If one of these documents is not available, then two documents must be provided: one showing citizenship (birth certificate; hospital record of birth or life/health insurance record or medical record as long as the record was created at least 5 years before the application date) and identity by a driver's license, state photo ID, school photo ID, US military ID or Native American Tribal document. For children (under age 16) identity can be proved by the parent's statement and signature on the RIte Care application.

³ Under present policy, legal permanent resident parents are eligible for RIte Care even if they haven't lived in the US for 5 years. Undocumented parents and other legally present parents have not been eligible.

⁴ The current rule requiring non-citizens (excluding undocumented) to submit proof of immigration status as part of the application process is not changed.

⁵ The rule does not affect SSI or Medicare recipients since they have already proved citizenship.

This new requirement has the potential to result in delays and denials of RIte Care to otherwise eligible individuals. Applicants cannot be accepted until the required proof is provided. Recipients will have a reasonable time to submit documentation (while eligibility continues) but could lose coverage if they cannot provide the necessary proof.

The Department of Human Services is still finalizing the rule for implementing this new federal requirement and the timeframe for applying the rule to applicants and recipients. Once details are known we will share this information. The Poverty Institute will be monitoring to document the impact of the new requirement.

What you can do:

- Inform families about the citizenship verification requirement and keep track of families that may need help providing proof of citizenship and identity.

Resource Test. Because of a change in state law, a resource limit of \$10,000 in liquid assets will be applied to the RIte Care program for children and parents.⁶ The resource test does not apply to pregnant women or the Katie Beckett children. Liquid assets include: bank accounts, money market accounts, certificates of deposit, stocks, bonds, mutual funds. Educational savings accounts and retirement accounts do not count. If a person jointly owns a resource with someone outside the home (other than a spouse) the resource will not count if the person can document that she is not the owner of the funds. As part of the application process (and at recertification) proof of resources (e.g., copy of bank statement) will need to be provided. (The effective date of this requirement has not yet been determined.)

Transitional Medical Assistance Because of a change in state law, effective October 1, 2006, families closing to FIP cash assistance due to earnings (and other low wage families) will receive only 12 months of transitional medical assistance (TMA) instead of 18 months. During TMA the family does not need to pay a monthly premium even if income is above the premium threshold. In the 7th month of the TMA period, the family needs to provide proof of income from the 6th month. Families should be advised to keep their pay stubs from the 6th month of the TMA period.

Family Independence Program – Plan as Condition of Eligibility

Due to a change in state law, many families applying for FIP cash assistance will need to sign an employment plan before the FIP cash assistance payment is processed. The rule will apply to applicants beginning September 18, 2006 and to families recertifying for FIP after that date.

When families apply for (or are recertified for) FIP they are also applying for RIte Care and Food Stamps. However, because the FIP eligibility rules and the RIte Care rules are very different, the family may be eligible for RIte Care and not for FIP. Most importantly, if the family has completed the application form and provided the necessary

⁶ The resource test also applies to the Child Care Assistance Program

verification but the parent does not sign an employment plan, RItE Care must be processed while FIP may be denied. The eligibility worker handles the application and the social case worker handles the employment plan.

It is important that families understand they should complete the application process with the eligibility worker in order to receive RItE Care (and Food Stamps) even if they are not going to pursue FIP and do not meet with the social case worker to complete an employment plan. Families that receive notice of FIP recertification should follow-through with the recertification, even if they no longer want to receive cash assistance, since the FIP recertification is also the recertification for RItE Care and Food Stamps.