



Gov. Peter Shumlin applauds Vermont's national ranking for ensuring children's health care access

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MONTPELIER – A new national study has ranked Vermont among the top states in the nation for ensuring children have quality health care and ‘the potential to lead healthy lives,’ Gov. Peter Shumlin announced today.

Citing the Securing a Healthy Future report released by the Commonwealth Fund that ranked Vermont third (after Massachusetts and Iowa, which tied for first) among the 50 states on their Child Health System Performance, Gov. Shumlin stressed that Vermont's continued focus on expanding quality care and affordable coverage has never been more important.

“We understand that a healthy start in life for our children is not only the right thing to do, but the fiscally responsible approach to take, as well,” the Governor said. Gov. Shumlin's agenda includes a plan for universal health care for all Vermonters, as well as efforts to ensure children start school healthy and ready to learn.

“Every child needs a medical home,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. “This is a consistent health care setting with a regular primary care provider who can make sure every child has the care they need, and every parent has the best possible guidance to help prevent health problems, or treat them early.”

According to the Commonwealth Report, Vermont scored well on every indicator: access and affordability, prevention and treatment, potential to lead healthy lives, and equity. This state scored especially well in the final two categories.

Some of the measures of “potential to lead healthy lives” include infant mortality rates, childhood obesity, and physical activity levels. The “equity” category, where Vermont ranked second, compares the availability of care across the spectrum of income, race and geographic areas.

“Children living in the five top-ranked states—Iowa, Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire—are more likely to be insured and to receive recommended medical and dental check-ups than children living in poorer-performing states like Florida, Texas, Arizona, Mississippi, or Nevada,” the Fund stated in a news release. “The report finds strong evidence for the value of federal and state policies aimed at improving rates of health insurance coverage.”

Vermont has been a leader in guaranteeing health care to virtually all children, in part thanks to the Dr. Dynasaur program that provides coverage to children whose parents earn higher incomes than traditional federal poverty guidelines.

No state scored perfectly in every category on the Commonwealth Fund's report, indicating there is room for improvement – which the Shumlin health care proposal seeks to address. For example, one barrier to getting timely and comprehensive health care includes a lack of adequate insurance.

“Too many Vermonters, especially those who are younger, less educated and with lower incomes, develop serious health problems that are largely preventable,” the Governor said. “This is why our collective work to provide health insurance and quality health care, combined with preventive health services and a strong public health system, is so important.”

Other areas for improvement, which the Vermont Department of Health will tackle, include increasing vaccination rates, preventing obesity, and working to ensure that every child has a regular primary provider.

To read the full report, visit www.commonwealthfund.org.

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