

News

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FURTHER INFORMATION:
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Governor Corzine Announces Catastrophic Illness In Children Relief Fund Assistance For Families With Sick Children

TRENTON – Governor Jon S. Corzine today announced more than \$3 million in financial assistance awarded by the Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund Relief Fund Commission (CICRFC) to help families dealing with their children’s extraordinary medical expenses.

“In this economic climate, the work of the Commission is a critical safety net for families with uncovered medical bills related to their child’s illness,” Governor Corzine said. “This assistance ensures that families can focus on the important needs of their children without worrying about their ability to pay for necessary medical care.”

“For the first six months of this fiscal year, the CICRF will help 148 eligible families desperate for relief from expenses associated with their child’s illness that insurance won’t pay,” said Department of Human Services Commissioner, Jennifer Velez. “I am proud to say that New Jersey can provide this lifeline through CICRFC – unique in the United States - for so many families when they face catastrophic medical costs for their child.” These figures represent an increase of over \$900,000 for an additional 58 families over last year.

Since its creation in 1989, the Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund has awarded more than \$124 million to over 5,100 New Jersey families, in every county of the state. “By helping families maintain their family life while caring for a sick child and coping with mounting medical bills, the fund does almost as much for the family’s state of mind as it does for their finances,” said Jane Lorber, Chairperson of the Commission.

Families of any income may qualify, and the fund does not limit coverage to specific diseases or diagnoses. Eligible medical and related expenses are those not fully covered by insurance, state, or federal programs, and include hospital and physician bills, medications, medical equipment, psychiatric care, home health care, and specialized home and vehicle modifications.

“We define catastrophic in terms of the economic impact the child’s illness has on the family. We look at how high the uncovered medical expenses are compared with the family income,” said Ralph J. Condo, Executive Director of the Fund. “A family may have health insurance, but coverage often is inadequate, and mounting bills can quickly become catastrophic for a family.” Most families that have been helped by the fund have been working parents with health insurance, but their out-of-pocket expenses were still greater than 10 percent of their income. “The fund helps families weather a financial crisis and return to the routine responsibilities of their lives,” said Condo.

The fund is collected from an annual surcharge of \$1.50 per employee levied on all employers who are subject to the New Jersey Unemployment Compensation Law. A family may qualify for the fund’s help if a child’s unreimbursed medical and related expenses exceed 10 percent of the family’s income up to \$100,000 plus 15 percent of any excess income over \$100,000. The child must have been 21 years or younger when the medical expenses were incurred, and families must be state residents. Expenses must have been incurred during a previous 12-month period, and expenses dating back to January 1988 will be considered.

While the legislation that created the fund protects the anonymity of families applying for help, several families who have received grant awards from the fund were willing to share their experience at today’s ceremony.

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