

Study: Healthy Kids saves state and federal funds



Tina Jackson enrolled her daughter, Kyana, in the Healthy Kids program after Tina lost her job. A University of Southern California study of children's health initiatives released this week found the program saves the state and federal government up to \$7.3 million annually in health care costs by preventing more than 1,000 unnecessary child hospitalizations each year.

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San Mateo County ([Map](#), [News](#)) - When corporate downsizing cost [Tina Jackson](#) her marketing job, the 27-year-old single mother feared losing much more than just a steady paycheck.

"I panicked because I didn't have any health insurance for my daughter," said the [Foster City](#) resident, who had just returned to work after maternity leave.

Two months later, she got a taste of what it meant to be an uninsured parent when treatment for her baby Kyana's ear infection came with a \$750 price tag.

But after enrolling Kyana in [San Mateo County](#) Healthy Kids, a locally funded health insurance program for low-income families who don't qualify for state or federal programs, Jackson pays only \$5 per visit for Kyana's care.

The program, however, which exists in nearly every county in the Bay Area but in less than half the counties statewide, may have an even broader benefit. A [University of Southern California](#) study of children's health initiatives released this week found the program saves the state and federal government up to \$7.3 million annually in health care costs by preventing more than 1,000 unnecessary child hospitalizations each year.

Study co-author [Michael Cousineau](#) said the programs keep hospitalizations down by providing access to treatment for chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes. The study, funded by the California Endowment and First Five California, focused on children enrolled in Healthy Kids in [San Mateo](#), Kern, [Los Angeles](#), Riverside, San Bernadino, [San Francisco](#), San Joaquin, [Santa Clara](#) and [Santa Cruz](#) counties.

Despite its success, Healthy Kids remains at risk financially in many counties. In [Alameda](#), [Sonoma](#) and Santa Clara counties, many children remain on enrollment waiting lists, according to California Children's Health Initiatives officials.

San Mateo's five-year-old Healthy Kids program has covered 6,500 children, according to Marmi Bermudez, program manager for the San Mateo County Children's Health Initiative

In San Francisco, the six-year-old program has been expanded to cover adults up to 24 years old, said [Bob Menezes](#), spokesman for the Health Plan of San Francisco.

"People just gush about the program. They say it's saved their lives and the lives of their children," Menezes said. He said the program also provides medical, dental and vision insurance for 7,300 people.

tbarak@examiner.com