



For Immediate Release

June 26, 2024

Media Contact

Kim Brown, APR

817-266-3728

kim.brown3@cookchildrens.org

Cook Children's Health Plan Files Suit to Protect Local Families

Legal action designed to stop the State from replacing Medicaid benefits provided by local community health plans with national for-profit insurance plans

Fort Worth, Texas - Cook Children's Health Plan today announced it is taking legal action to stop the flawed process that led to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) taking away Cook Children's longstanding contract administering Medicaid to local families. Cook Children's has successfully run the Medicaid STAR and CHIP program for more than 20 years and has provided more than \$200 million in charity care and other community benefits out of its own pocket to families not covered by Medicaid.

"The State got it wrong, and we are asking the courts to make it right," said Karen Love, President of Cook Children's Health Plan. "We have taken such good care of our Members for so many years because we live here, and they are our neighbors. We genuinely care about them. And our providers know them by name. Now, thanks to a flawed process that did not follow the guidelines set by Texas law, these families will be at the mercy of national for-profit insurance companies."

The HHSC process was deeply flawed and failed to follow the law requiring it:

- Recognize and give preference to health plans with long and successful track records of facilitating care for the children and mothers in our community and with ties to charity care providers.
- Give weight to health plans that provide care to special populations like children.
- Consider how continuity of care would be impacted, as well as costs to the state.

Finally, HHSC did not go through the proper rulemaking process for making critical changes to the Request for Proposal (RFP). Their scoring was riddled with mistakes, and they gave one of the winning bidders an unfair advantage by prematurely disclosing copies of its' competitors' proposals.

Cook Children's has filed a Petition for Declaratory Judgment and Injunctive Relief against HHSC Commissioner Cecile Erwin Young. This is the lawsuit to overturn the decision. In the meantime, Cook Children's has also filed a Temporary Restraining Order request to stop HHSC from finalizing its procurement results. Both actions were filed in Travis County.

Cook Children's also filed a protest of the STAR Kids RFP to stop HHSC from making the same mistakes it made in the STAR & CHIP RFP and from taking away options from the kids who need help the most.

"These actions we take are strong but necessary," said Rick W. Merrill, President and CEO of Cook Children's Health Care System. "For more than 20 years, Cook Children's has set the standard for serving Medicaid families in outstanding fashion. Our reviews from our Members are always high. And we go the extra mile to cover costs they can't. There is zero chance that a national for-profit will care about these patients the way we do."

For more information, including key facts, videos, photos and recent media coverage, please visit [SaveCookChildrensHealthPlan.com](https://www.savecookchildrenshealthplan.com).

About Cook Children's Health Plan

Cook Children's Health Plan has been serving the Tarrant Service Area Medicaid and CHIP families since 2000, ensuring our Members receive the physical and behavioral health, pharmacy and social support services you need, when and where you need them. We are affiliated with Cook Children's Health Care System, an integrated pediatric delivery system that has over a century of service to North Texas Residents. Learn more at [cookchp.org](https://www.cookchp.org).

About Cook Children's

Cook Children's is more than a health care system: we strive to be an extension of your family, growing with your child from their first steps to adulthood. By collaborating to deliver on our Promise—to improve the well-being of every child in our care and our communities, we connect the dots for our patients. Between primary and specialty. Between home and medical home. Between short-term care and long-term health.

Based in Fort Worth, Texas, we're 9,700+ dedicated team members strong, passionately caring for over 2 million patient encounters each year. Our integrated, not-for-profit organization spans two medical centers (including our state-of-the-art location in Prosper), two surgery centers, a physician network, home health services and a health plan. It also includes Child Study Center at Cook Children's, Cook Children's Health Services Inc., and

Cook Children's Health Foundation. In 2024, Forbes named Cook Children's the top health care employer in the U.S., and third on the list of '[America's Best Large Employers](#).'

And our impact extends beyond the borders of Texas. We proudly treat children from virtually every state in the nation and 32 countries. By seeing the world through the eyes of children and their families from all backgrounds, we're able to shape health care suited to them: connected by kindness, imagination and respect—with an extra dose of magical wonder.

Discover more at [cookchildrens.org](https://www.cookchildrens.org).