

Ad campaign targets uninsured residents

By Gadi Dechter

September 24, 2008



Gov. Martin O'Malley and Baltimore health advocates announced the launch yesterday of a \$150,000 advertising campaign designed to let uninsured Baltimoreans know that thousands more of them are eligible for Medicaid.

Under a law that went into effect in July, parents with annual incomes up to 116 percent of federal poverty guidelines, or about \$20,500 for a family of three, are now eligible for Medicaid. Before the new guidelines were passed, only parents making less than 40 percent of poverty were eligible.

"It's not enough just to pass a law. ... We have to do the outreach," O'Malley said at a news conference outside a social services center in Pigtown.

The "Got Healthcare?" campaign features the Democratic governor and four Ravens players. Radio spots featuring O'Malley and Ravens safety Ed Reed will be heard on five area radio stations. Print ads will also run on more than two dozen billboards, 53 buses and 30 bus shelters.

In the radio ad, O'Malley and Reed encourage listeners to call 311 to determine their eligibility.

Also yesterday, O'Malley and Comptroller Peter Franchot mailed 10,000 letters to Maryland families eligible for the Medicaid expansion. Nearly 500,000 will eventually get letters.

Health Secretary John M. Colmers said the state can pay for the expansion for two years without taking money from the state's general fund. After that, Colmers said, funding will be linked to the success of November's slot machine gambling referendum.

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