

## Impact of federal cuts on children's Eligibility for Medical Assistance

As explained in our Impact Alerts on home health, medical equipment and behavioral health, Medical Assistance covers a wide range of services and supports for children with developmental disabilities and complex medical conditions. In order to qualify for Medical Assistance, the child must either live in a household with low income and low assets or meet certain disability and financial eligibility criteria. Children receiving SSI automatically qualify for Medical Assistance because they meet the disability and financial eligibility criteria by virtue of qualifying for SSI. Financial eligibility for SSI. It is determined by Social Security. and usually considers the income and assets of the child's custodial parent until the child turns 18. Those income limits are quite low so many children with developmental disabilities or medically complex conditions fail to qualify for SSI due to their parents' income and or assets, despite meeting the disability criteria. However, in Pennsylvania, children whose condition meets the SSA disability criteria can usually qualify for Medical Assistance even though their parents' income and or assets are above the limits for SSI. This special eligibility category of Medical Assistance is called PH-95.

Because Pennsylvania received permission from the federal government to provide Medical Assistance to children who meet the SSA disability criteria regardless of their parents' income, the federal government shares in the cost of the services provided to those children under Medical Assistance. There have been attempts in the past to reduce the costs of providing Medical Assistance to those children with disabilities. Those attempts have not been successful so children with disabilities remain eligible for Medical Assistance under this category PH-95, just like children on SSI. However, because of the massive cuts to federal Medical Assistance funds in the coming years, the state will be pressured to make cuts, either to eligibility for Medical Assistance, the services covered or the reimbursement rates paid to providers. Because eligibility for children with disabilities not eligible for SSI is not mandated by federal law or the federal government and is in fact unique to Pennsylvania, there is certainly the possibility that the state may try again to either reduce eligibility under this special category or make other cost cutting changes.

We don't know yet whether the state will attempt to restrict eligibility for children with disabilities under the PH-95 category or impose costs on those children, But it is important that the state, both the department of Human Services and the legislature, be aware of the critical importance medical assistance has in the health and lives of children with disabilities. Help us to educate the policymakers in Harrisburg about the importance of medical assistance to your child by filling out our family survey. Please click on the link for the Survey at [www.imaginedifferent.org/medicaiddefense](http://www.imaginedifferent.org/medicaiddefense) .