Program Design

States are able to structure their CHIP programs in different ways: by expanding Medicaid, by creating a separate program, or a combination of these approaches. Like most states, Massachusetts has a combination program with nearly two-thirds of CHIP children enrolled in its separate CHIP program known as MassHealth.

MassHealth covers uninsured children in families who do not qualify for Medicaid and earn up to 305 percent of the federal poverty level, or $62,281 annually for a family of three. Massachusetts charges monthly premiums of $12 to $28 for some CHIP children but does not charge cost sharing for health care services.
Federal Financing

How does CHIP financing work?
CHIP is a federally-funded, state-administered block grant program. To encourage states to expand coverage, Congress covers a larger share of CHIP costs than it does under Medicaid by establishing a higher matching rate. For every dollar a state spends on CHIP, the federal government reimburses between 65 and 85 percent of costs.

When does CHIP expire?
Unlike Medicaid, Congress must take action to extend CHIP funding whenever the current funding period expires, which currently is September 30, 2017. Initially, CHIP was funded for a 10-year period but the last two funding cycles have each extended CHIP for only two years.

How does the ACA impact CHIP?
Recognizing that implementation of the Affordable Care Act’s (ACA) coverage expansion represented a time of major change in the health care system, Congress wanted to protect children’s coverage. It did so by requiring states to maintain eligibility levels and enrollment procedures through 2019, known as the maintenance of effort (MOE) provision. To help states stabilize children’s coverage, Congress approved an increase of 23-percentage points in federal CHIP match, which went into effect in fiscal year 2016, raising the federal funding levels to cover between 88 and 100 percent of CHIP costs.

Can children covered by CHIP get comparable coverage in the marketplace?
Research shows that CHIP is a better source of coverage—both in terms of affordability and child-focused benefits—for meeting children’s health care needs across the country. With the future of the marketplace coverage uncertain, families and states need the greater predictability of a long-term extension of CHIP.

What’s at Stake for Massachusetts’s Children and Families?
Affordable, high-quality, consistent coverage for nearly 186,000 Massachusetts children is at risk without a CHIP funding extension at current levels. A delayed CHIP extension forces states to freeze or limit children's coverage. Uncertainty about the amount or timeline for continuation of funding places undue stress on families and states.

Children need access to continuous, affordable health care coverage to succeed in school and life.

Families need the peace-of-mind that comes from knowing their children can get the care they need at a price they can afford and that their family is protected from financial catastrophe in the event of an illness or injury.

States need sufficient time to plan budgets to ensure they can provide adequate coverage to low-income children and families who rely on CHIP.

A long-term (5+ years) CHIP funding extension at current levels will ensure that no child experiences interruptions in coverage, that no family faces an uncertain future, and that state budgets are stabilized to continue serving their children and families. Key aspects of CHIP funding that should be maintained include:

- Enhanced federal matching rates, including the 23-percentage-point CHIP “bump.”
- Requirements for states to maintain eligibility levels and prohibit additional barriers to coverage such as new premiums or added red tape to enrollment procedures.
- State flexibility to extend coverage to additional children and pregnant women, by raising eligibility levels or adding optional groups such as all lawfully-residing immigrant children.
- Financial support for states to conduct outreach and provide community-based enrollment assistance to reach eligible children.
- Investments in quality initiatives to measure, report, and improve health care for children in Medicaid and CHIP.