



Budget Briefs from the Legislative Reference Bureau

LRB Introduces New Budget Series

This first issue of *Budget Briefs* introduces a new LRB publication designed to provide capsule summaries of substantive program changes in the 1997-99 budget. This series describes the new programs and regulations in their state and federal context and offers information regarding their adoption and implementation. Each brief lists appropriate informational contacts when available.

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BADGER CARE

The biennial state budget act (1997 Wisconsin Act 27), signed by Governor Tommy Thompson on October 11, 1997, created Badger Care, a program of family health care coverage for low-income families who lack employer-sponsored medical insurance. Badger Care enrollees will be eligible for the services and benefits currently available under the state's Medical Assistance (MA) program.

I. ELIGIBILITY AND COST

To be eligible for Badger Care, a family must meet certain criteria:

- Family must include dependent children.
- Family income below 185% of the federal poverty level to enter the program (below 200% of federal poverty level if family is already participating in Badger Care).

1997 Federal Poverty Levels

Group Size	Base	185%	200%
2	\$10,610	\$19,629	\$21,220
3	13,330	24,661	26,660
4	16,050	29,693	32,100
5	18,770	34,725	37,540
6	21,490	39,757	42,980
7	24,210	44,789	48,420
8	26,930	49,821	53,860

- No family access to employer-subsidized health care coverage currently or within a set period of time (not to exceed 18 months) prior to applying

for Badger Care. The Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) determines the lead period.

- Any other requirements established by DHFS.

No family may be denied health care coverage solely because of a health condition of any family member.

Badger Care families with incomes from 143% to 200% of the federal poverty level are required to pay a percentage of the premium cost as established by DHFS. If the DHFS rates exceed 3% of family income, approval by the legislature’s Joint Committee on Finance is required. However, the committee cannot approve contributions in excess of 3.5% of the family’s income

3% Monthly Cost for Coverage (Based on 185% of 1997 Federal Poverty Level)

Family Size	Monthly Income (185% FPL)	3% Cost Share*
2	\$1,635	\$49.07
3	2,055	61.65
4	2,475	74.23
5	2,893	86.81
6	3,313	99.39
7	3,733	111.97
8	4,151	124.55

*May vary a few cents, depending on base figures.

II. ADMINISTRATION

Badger Care will require certain federal waivers in order for the state to receive federal funding. The program will be implemented by DHFS no later than July 1, 1998 (if federal waivers are approved) or the effective date of the waivers (if later than July 1, 1998).

DHFS may limit access to Badger Care to defined enrollment periods. The department is also authorized to purchase family coverage from the employer of an eligible family member if it determines that cost would be less than Badger Care.

III. FOR MORE INFORMATION

For copies of Sections 20.435 (5) (jz) and 49.655, Wisconsin Statutes, relating to Badger Care, contact the Legislative Reference Bureau at (608) 266-0342. For more detailed information about implementation of the program, contact the DHFS Office of Managed Care at (608) 267-7126.