

Presidential Documents

Proclamation 7232 of October 1, 1999

Child Health Day, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As America's children begin their exciting journey into the 21st century, one of the greatest gifts we can give them is a healthy start; and we should recognize that the well-being of our young people includes both their physical and mental health.

We have already made great strides in addressing children's physical health care needs through the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which funds State efforts to provide affordable health insurance to millions of uninsured children. Sadly, however, as many as one in ten American children and adolescents today may have behavioral or mental health problems; and parents, teachers, and health care professionals need to realize that even very young children can experience serious clinical depression. The majority of children who commit suicide are profoundly depressed, and the majority of parents whose children took their own lives did not recognize that depression until it was too late.

My Administration is working to increase children's access to mental health care and to help communities expand counseling, mentoring, and mental health services in our schools. In addition, we fought to ensure that funding for CHIP contains a strong mental health benefits component. While there is no substitute for parents becoming and remaining involved in their children's lives, we must give families the tools they need to meet the challenges they face.

Perhaps the most vital step we can take to ensure that every child reaches his or her full potential is to fight the stigma that prevents so many Americans with mental illness from making the most of their lives. In June of this year, under the leadership of Tipper Gore, we convened the first-ever White House Conference on Mental Health, where, among other important issues, we discussed how to reach out to troubled young people and put them on the path to mental and emotional health. The first and most crucial effort we can make is to talk honestly about mental illness and begin to dispel the myths that surround it. I am pleased that the Surgeon General and Mrs. Gore have committed to a major new campaign with these goals in mind. With powerful public service announcements and strong partners in the private sector, we can reach millions of Americans with a simple but life-changing message: Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of, but bias and discrimination shame us all.

To acknowledge the importance of our children's health, the Congress, by joint resolution approved May 18, 1928, as amended (36 U.S.C. 143), has called for the designation of the first Monday in October as "Child Health Day" and has requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Monday, October 4, 1999, as Child Health Day. I call upon families, schools, communities, and governments to dedicate themselves to protecting the health and well-being of all our children.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William Clinton

[FR Doc. 99-26380

Filed 10-6-99; 8:45 am]

Billing code 3195-01-P