Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

When You Want to Adopt

Valerie H. - Brandon, South Dakota

That's Medicaid *shares stories of people covered by Medicaid at critical points in their lives, underscoring the importance of stable health insurance coverage in building a Culture of Health.*

Valerie and her husband Christopher wanted to adopt two boys from foster care, both with significant health complications.

As a pediatric nurse, Valerie knew she could handle the children medically but was not sure if her family could afford the expenses of their care. However, during the adoption process, she found out both children were automatically covered by South Dakota Medicaid because of their time in foster care. The children, now 5 and 2, will stay on Medicaid until they are 18 or graduate high school, whichever comes first.

The oldest has a heart defect that requires him to be taken to specialist appointments several times a week. The youngest has Down syndrome and has needed a tracheostomy and other significant surgeries, as well as follow-up care, over the years.

The parents now plan their work schedules to make sure at least one of them is home with the boys at all times and trade off attending doctors' visits.

Though Valerie and Christopher are both privately insured through work, they say adoption was only possible because of Medicaid.

"Without Medicaid there would have been absolutely no way for us to adopt our boys." Valerie says. "Medicaid lets us focus on the most important thing—taking care of them."