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## State audit says some eligible families not getting Medicaid

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**ALBANY** — Some New Yorkers aren't getting health insurance because counties aren't checking whether they qualify for Medicaid even if they have been denied welfare benefits, Comptroller H. Carl McCall charged in an audit released Wednesday.

Oneida County had the worst problem of the nine counties surveyed, with Westchester and Monroe performing better. No problems were uncovered in

Broome County.

"There are too many New York families who live day-to-day without health care, worrying about an illness or an injury," McCall said, while acknowledging that current procedures work most of the time. "Certainly when there's health insurance available, no one should be left behind."

Since the nation's welfare rules were overhauled five years ago, eligibility for cash assistance and Medicaid, the health-insurance program for poor people,

have been separated. Some people are eligible for Medicaid who aren't qualified to get welfare benefits.

McCall's auditors reviewed 320 cases where welfare benefits had been denied and found that in 32 of the cases no separate Medicaid-eligibility review was done.

Those 32 cases involved 103 people. When asked to recheck the cases, local district found that at least 23 qualified for Medicaid, 13 didn't qualify and not enough information was

available to determine the eligibility of another 50. The counties didn't provide information on the remaining 17.

Of the 44 people reviewed in Oneida County, 16 were found to be eligible, one ineligible. The county was unable to determine the eligibility of the other 27.

Although the counties have the responsibility to make sure the reviews take place, McCall said the state also needs to ensure that the program is working properly.

In its response to the audit, the state Health Department and Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance said they were planning more training, teleconferences and other steps to assure separate Medicaid-eligibility screening is done for all welfare applicants.

The agencies also have notified the county social service departments that they must do a separate Medicaid screening when denying or ending welfare benefits and also send a let-

ter to those losing welfare eligibility asking for information to see if they still qualify for Medicaid.

McCall said he didn't include New York City in the audit because the city and state are being sued over allegations they blocked eligible recipients from getting cash assistance, food stamps and Medicaid. The federal government is also reviewing screening procedures in New York City as well as in Nassau and Suffolk counties.