



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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For Immediate Release

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Children's health insurance coverage rates in Rhode Island worsened during the economic downturn, due in part to loss of jobs and loss of employer-sponsored health coverage.

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Providence, RI, September 16, 2010 – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009 Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS reports that 7.7% of Rhode Island children were uninsured in the three-year period from 2007-2009, an increase from 6.4% in the three years from 2004-2006, the period just before the economic downturn. The number of uninsured Rhode Island children under age 18 increased from 16,000 to 18,000. Rhode Island now ranks 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation for children's health insurance coverage, down from 13<sup>th</sup> in 2004-2006.

Comparable U.S. data based on three-year averages from the CPS show that the U.S. rate of uninsured children was 10.3% in the period from 2007-2009, down from 10.8% in 2004-2006. The single year U.S. rate for uninsured children in 2009 was 10.0%, comparable to the 9.9% rate in 2008.

"The economic downturn of 2008 and 2009 resulted in the loss of jobs, and with that the loss of employer sponsored health coverage. We are seeing these effects in the children's health insurance coverage numbers released today," stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "Yet, we can also be confident that the availability of RIte Care health coverage has lessened the impact of the economic crisis on children's health. Many children who would otherwise be uninsured, have been able to receive health coverage through the RIte Care program for low-income and moderate-income families. This program has been a critical safety net for families who have lost their jobs."

In releasing the latest figures, Bryant noted, “The state-federal funding partnership through Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program has been critical in minimizing the losses in children’s coverage during the recent economic downturn. The latest data show declines in the number of children with employer-sponsored coverage, while the number with RItE Care coverage has risen slightly. Making sure that all children have health coverage has always been a balance of employer-sponsored coverage and public coverage through RItE Care.”

The number of children insured through employer-sponsored health insurance (ESI) in Rhode Island has decreased over the past decade, from 70.5% of children having ESI in the three year period from 2000 to 2002 compared with 64.4% of children in the three year period from 2007 to 2009. In Rhode Island between 2007 and 2009, there were an average of 150,000 Rhode Island children under age 18 who were covered by private health insurance (including employer-sponsored coverage and direct purchase coverage) each year and an average of 75,000 Rhode Island children who were covered by government insurance (including Medicaid, RItE Care, Medicare and military insurance) each year. RItE Care, Rhode Island’s Medicaid managed care program for low-income working families, covers about one-third of Rhode Island’s children.

“As a nation we must finish the job and cover all kids. As we begin to implement health care reform in Rhode Island, kids don’t have to wait. It is imperative that we keep RItE Care strong and use it as a model program on which to build,” remarked Bryant. “RItE Care continues to be a wise investment and an important health coverage option for working and unemployed families. RItE Care provides affordable coverage, keeps Rhode Island children and families healthy, and helps individuals be ready to learn and ready to work – all while maximizing federal matching dollars in doing so.”

Research shows that insured children are more likely than uninsured children to receive preventive care and have a regular health care provider. Children are more likely to receive preventive health care if their parents also have health insurance. Children with health insurance are more likely to receive treatment for health conditions such as asthma and ear infections, that if left untreated can have life-long consequences and lead to more serious and costly health problems. Uninsured children and adults are more likely to have costly hospitalizations and emergency room visits that could have been prevented with access to regular health care.

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.