



**For Immediate Release  
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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Releases New  
Census Bureau Data on the Number of Children in Poverty  
and  
Uninsured Children in Rhode Island**

**According to the latest Census Data released today, 19.5% of Rhode Island children under age 18 live in poverty, compared with 18.5% of children in the United States.**

**The percentage of Rhode Island children without health insurance has increased from 5.8% to 6.6%, according to the most recent three-year averages of the Current Population Survey. Access to health care helps to improve outcomes for poor children.**

**Rhode Island now ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the country for the rate of children without health insurance.**

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**Providence, RI, August 29, 2006** – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the Census Bureau’s 2005 American Community Survey (ACS) showing the extent of poverty in Rhode Island and the nation. The new Census data show that the child poverty rate in Rhode Island is 19.5%, compared with 21.0% last year (this is not statistically significant difference). The data for 2005 are based on the federal poverty threshold of \$15,735 for a family of three. Nationally, the 2005 child poverty rate for children under age 18 was 18.5%.

Today there are 19,000 children under age 18 in Rhode Island who are uninsured, down from 29,000 in 1995. Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT emphasized, “All children deserve to receive the health care they need. The success of the RItE Care program has been instrumental in improving health outcomes for children and in keeping the number of uninsured children low. The new data from the Census is of concern as the number of uninsured children in Rhode Island continues to increase.” New Census Bureau data based on three-year averages from the Current Population Survey (CPS) show Rhode Island ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the percentage of uninsured children, down from its second place status last year and its first place status in previous years. In Rhode Island, 6.6 % of children under age 18 are uninsured in 2003-2005 compared with 5.8% in the previous three year period (2002-2004). In the U.S., 11.1% of children lack health insurance. Vermont continues to lead the nation in providing children’s health coverage with 4.4% of children uninsured. Other New England states’ rates were Massachusetts (6.1%), New Hampshire (5.9%), Maine (6.5%), and Connecticut (8.0%).

In Rhode Island, the rate of uninsured children has increased from 4.3% in 2002 to 6.6% in 2005. Sonia Rodrigues Carr, Project Director for Covering Kids and Families noted, “In the past few years, the number of uninsured children has consistently increased due to the decrease of employer-sponsored insurance and the number of families who lose coverage every month for failing to pay the monthly RItE Care premium. Recent legislative changes requiring an assets test for RItE Care, increased documentation requirements for citizens, and the new law that makes undocumented children ineligible for the program are likely to prompt continued increases in the number of uninsured children in the state.”

RItE Care is Rhode Island’s Medicaid managed care health insurance program for low-income and moderate-income children and families. RItE Care provides comprehensive quality health care for children under age 19 and pregnant women with family income less than 250% of the federal poverty line (family of three with income less than \$41,500 per year) and for parents of eligible children up to 185% of the federal poverty line (family of three with income less than \$30,710). Rhode Island has made significant gains in enrolling children in RItE Care. As of July 2006, there were 117,199 people enrolled in RItE Care, of whom two-thirds were children. Since

RIte Care's inception 12 years ago, the health insurance program has helped to improve health outcomes for pregnant women and children. Pregnant women enrolled in RIte Care have longer birth intervals (number of years between children), improved early prenatal care rates, and lower rates of smoking during pregnancy. Children enrolled in RIte Care are more likely to receive timely and complete immunizations and to be screened for lead poisoning. They are less likely to die in the first year of life and more likely to access preventive care and specialty care as needed.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT stated, "I am proud that Rhode Island is a leader in providing health insurance to children. But the combination of increased administrative barriers and the newly instituted restrictions on the RIte Care eligibility of immigrant children will surely lead to continued upward trends in the number of children in our state who do not have health coverage. Children without health insurance, particularly low-income children, can suffer permanent damage to their health due to conditions that could have been easily treated with preventive care. Investing in health insurance coverage now prevents costly expenditures for emergency care later on and protects all the other investments the state is making in children's education and overall well-being."

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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. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is the lead agency for *Covering Kids & Families Rhode Island*, a health access initiative sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to reduce the number of uninsured children and families.