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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Celebrates
Children's Health at Annual Event**

**Report Shows that Children and Families
Enrolled in Rite Care have Improved Health Outcomes**

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

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Providence RI, – Over 100 community leaders gathered today for the ninth annual event, *A Celebration of Children's Health*, to celebrate the progress the state has made in achieving positive health outcomes for Rhode Island's children. The breakfast was held on **Monday, October 19, 2009 from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Providence Marriott**, located on the corner of Charles and Orms Streets.

Rhode Island ranks among the top states for high rates of prenatal care, children's health insurance coverage, and low rates of child and teen deaths, as well as low rates of teen births. Research shows that insured children are more likely than uninsured children to receive preventive care and have a regular health care provider. 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.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, stated, "Rhode Island has long been a leader in children's health coverage. In difficult economic times, it is even more important that families continue to have the health security that comes with affordable, comprehensive health coverage for themselves and their children. The state can make continued progress toward covering all kids by maintaining the effective mix of employer-sponsored insurance and access to Rite Care and Rite Share that has been such a policy success. "

Rhode Island is among the top 14 states in the U.S. in providing access to health insurance coverage for Rhode Island's children and families. In 2006-2008, 93.0% of Rhode Island's children under age 18 were insured. The most recent single year U.S. rate of insured children (89.2%) was the best since 1987, indicating that many states are making progress toward covering all children. Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, noted, "Health coverage means that children stay in the classroom, concentrating on their studies so that they can become productive citizens. Children's health coverage is one of the most cost-effective investments a state can make. By investing in RItE Care, Rhode Island's leaders have made a smart investment in the future of Rhode Island."

Nearly two-thirds of children (156,000) living in Rhode Island are covered through employer-sponsored health insurance; just under one-third are covered through public health insurance programs including Medicaid, RItE Care and RItE Share (71,667); and the remaining insured children have coverage through the direct purchase of insurance in the individual market (8,333) or through other non-Medicaid government health insurance programs, such as Medicare and military coverage (7,667).

The most recent Census data for 2006-2008 indicate that there are almost 17,000 uninsured children in Rhode Island. This is 7.0% of children under age 18 who have no health insurance, up from a low of 4.3% in 2002. Almost three-quarters (72%) of these uninsured children are eligible for RItE Care based on family income. Just over one-quarter (28%) of the uninsured children live in families with income over 250% of the federal poverty level and therefore are not currently income-eligible for RItE Care. Most of these children living in families with higher incomes are not covered by private insurance because their parents' employer does not offer health insurance, puts limits on which employees are eligible (through initial waiting periods and/or excluding temporary, part-time or seasonal employees), or has employee premiums that are unaffordable.

Much of Rhode Island's success in increasing access to health insurance and comprehensive health care for children is due to RItE Care, Rhode Island's Medicaid managed care program for low-income working families, and RItE Share, Rhode Island's premium assistance program for working families who cannot afford offered employer-sponsored insurance. RItE Care has a long history of producing positive health outcomes for children and parents.

The most recent data were highlighted in the report, *It's Simple: Rlte Care Works*, available today at the event. Rlte Care results include the following:

- Children and adults enrolled in Rlte Care have the **lowest percentage of emergency admissions** to the hospital.
- Children in Rhode Island who have either Rlte Care or private health insurance have **fewer preventable hospitalizations** than uninsured children.
- Parents enrolled in Rlte Care have the **lowest rates of preventable hospitalizations**, compared with those with private insurance or those without health insurance.
- More women enrolled in Rlte Care are **receiving prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy** than when the health insurance program began in 1993.
- **Fewer women enrolled in Rlte Care smoke during pregnancy** now than in 1993.
- The percentage of women enrolled in Rlte Care with **short intervals between births is the same as women enrolled in private insurance**.
- **Fewer Rhode Island babies are dying in the first year of life**, with infant mortality rates dropping among publicly-insured infants since Rlte Care began.
- The **low birth weight rate for infants enrolled in Rlte Care has been stable over the past decade**, while the percentage of low birthweight infants born to women with private insurance in Rhode Island has increased.
- **Children and parents with no health insurance experience negative health outcomes in all of these areas.**

A *Children's Health Champion Award* was presented to U.S. Senator Jack Reed, in recognition of his outstanding work to expand access to high-quality, affordable health insurance coverage for children in Rhode Island and across the nation. *Covering Kids* awards were presented to the following elected officials, government leaders and community partners for their contributions to increase access to health insurance for children: U.S. Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts, Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed, House Majority Leader Gordon Fox, Senator Rhoda Perry, Representative Frank Ferri, and Mayor David Cicilline. Community leaders receiving *Covering Kids* awards were Elizabeth Lange, MD (President, RI Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics) and the Rhode Island Chapter of the March of Dimes.

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