

Covering Kids & Families Rhode Island is a health access initiative designed to:

- Reduce the number of uninsured children and parents.
- Enroll and retain eligible children and adults in RItE Care or RItE Share.
- Simplify enrollment and renewal processes.
- Coordinate existing health coverage programs.

Covering Kids & Families Rhode Island is part of a national health access initiative sponsored by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with direction and assistance provided by the Southern Institute on Children and Families.

# covering Kids & families

R H O D E I S L A N D



## The “RItE Care” for Rhode Island

### IN THIS ISSUE

The “RItE Care” for Rhode Island . . . . .	1
Strategies that Work . . . . .	2
Cover the Uninsured Week 2004 . . . . .	3
RItE Share . . . . .	5
Hot Issues: Health Insurance Retention: . . . . .	6
Leadership Council . . . . .	7
Latest Health Insurance Numbers . . . . .	8
Thank You! . . . . .	8

Over the last ten years, since the program’s inception, the State of Rhode Island and the federal government have partnered in funding RItE Care, Rhode Island’s Medicaid managed care program. The program began by enrolling families receiving cash assistance and uninsured young children and pregnant women in low-income working families. Through a series of program expansions in the 1990s, RItE Care now covers approximately 119,000 Rhode Islanders, two-thirds of whom are children. But how do we know whether RItE Care is accomplishing its goals? What has it really achieved?

RItE Care was created through a Medicaid waiver from the federal government to meet three goals: to reduce the number of uninsured low-income children and families; to improve

access, service quality, and health status for the covered population; and to control the rate of growth in Medicaid expenditures for the eligible population. All RItE Care members have a choice of three participating health plans – Neighborhood Health Plan of RI, UnitedHealthcare and Blue CHIIP.

*Rhode Island is committed to improving access and quality of care for all of the members enrolled in RItE Care.*

**Goal #1: To reduce the number of uninsured low-income children and families.**

Over the last ten years, RItE Care has helped achieve an overall decline in the number of uninsured Rhode Islanders. According to recent data from the Census Bureau’s Current

Population Survey (2002–2004), Rhode Island ranks second in the nation with just 4.8% of children lacking health insurance. The percent of uninsured Rhode Island children has dropped from 10.9% in 1995 to 4.8% in 2003. Rhode Island has been

*(continued from page 4)*

“Before RIte Care, we had many children who lacked immunizations and adequate medical care. Now, many of the students have insurance and a medical home. Our School Nurse Teachers continue to guide families, when needed, through the process of obtaining health insurance and accessing medical services through RIte Care. What a difference RIte Care has made for the families!” — Carol Brunelle, Certified School Nurse Teacher, Central Falls School District Registration Center

# Strategies that Work

## News from the Local Projects

---

*The Central Falls local coalition has developed successful strategies that help immigrant and Latino families obtain and retain health insurance.*

According to recent Census data, Hispanics are more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to be uninsured. Hispanic workers are often employed by small businesses that do not offer insurance or, if insurance is offered, many Hispanic families cannot afford the cost of the coverage. Many immigrants can also face language and literacy barriers that make it difficult to access health coverage programs, like RIte Care.

In collaboration with a local coalition of community groups and organizations, Progreso Latino has worked to design and implement strategies to enroll and retain eligible children and families in RIte Care. Some of these strategies include:

If you are interested in joining the Pawtucket/Central Falls local coalition to help children access health insurance contact Sonia Rodrigues-Carr at netWORKri at (401) 722-3100 x101.

For more information about RIte Care application assistance at Progreso Latino in Central Falls, contact Ellen Mercado at (401) 728-5920.

- Providing RIte Care application assistance at Progreso Latino, a local community-based agency, to reach the immigrant and minority population.
- Incorporating health insurance screening for every client seeking services at Progreso Latino, regardless of the service being sought. Covering Kids & Families has worked with other agencies in the community to implement a similar strategy.
- Collaborating with the Central Falls School District to survey families about their health insurance status and screen every new student for health coverage at the time of registration.
- Preparing Spanish language outreach/educational materials and working with the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) to improve RIte Care forms and notices in languages other than English.
- Educating administrators of early childhood centers about RIte Care eligibility and retention and providing them with Family Resource Counselor directories to use when referring families for RIte Care application assistance.
- Using foreign language radio, newspaper, and other media to educate immigrants about RIte Care and dispel myths about “public charge” and other immigration concerns.
- Collaborating with the Mexican Consular Mobile Unit to promote RIte Care enrollment in the Mexican community.
- Working with staffing agencies to provide RIte Care information and outreach materials to temporary workers, particularly those who do not speak English.

# Cover the Uninsured Week 2004

To highlight Cover the Uninsured Week 2004, Covering Kids & Families held its Leadership Council meeting on May 12, 2004 and released a report entitled, *Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Rhode Island Family Resource Counselor Program at St. Joseph Hospital for Specialty Care*. Family Resource Counselors provide RItE Care/RItE Share application assistance at community health centers and disproportionate share hospitals in Rhode Island. Covering Kids & Families prepared this report in collaboration with St. Joseph Hospital to highlight the costs and benefits of the Family Resource Counselor program and to make recommendations for improving the program and maximizing its benefits. H. John Keimig, President and CEO of St. Joseph Health Services of Rhode

Island, spoke at the event about the value of the Family Resource Counselor program to St. Joseph Hospital and the importance of helping families enroll in health coverage. Covering Kids & Families also held a number of other events including:

- An interview with Matilda Sansone, Central Falls Coordinator, on the Spanish language radio station, PODER 1110 about RItE Care and the importance of renewing eligibility each year.
- A presentation for employers entitled, Health Care Options for Retaining Your Employees, at netWORKri in Pawtucket by Sonia Rodrigues-Carr, Pawtucket Coordinator.



On May 10, 2004, Covering Kids & Families RI held a RItE Care Enrollment Fair at CVS/pharmacy on East Avenue in Pawtucket. Pictured from left to right are: Lucille Bush, CVS Community Relations, Bob Devlin, CVS Store Manager, and Amy Lapiere, Covering Kids & Families Project Director.



Matilde Sansone, Central Falls Coordinator, and Sonia Rodrigues-Carr, Pawtucket Coordinator, discuss health insurance options with patients at the St. Joseph Hospital Health Fair on May 11, 2004.

## The “RIte Care” for Rhode Island

*(continued from cover)*

successful in enrolling uninsured children for many reasons. In 1998, the eligibility process was simplified and coverage was expanded to include low-income parents. Enrolling parents in RIte Care proved crucial for enrolling children who had always been eligible but had not enrolled in the past. Another factor has been the successful outreach activities of Covering Kids & Families, led by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, as well as the Family Resource Counselors, who help families enroll in RIte Care at community health centers, hospitals and Progreso Latino. The Family

Resource Counselor program is jointly funded by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services and the Rhode Island Department of Health and is administered by the Rhode Island Health Center Association.

### **Goal #2: To improve access, service quality, and health status for the covered population.**

While RIte Care has reduced uninsurance rates significantly, insurance is only a vehicle to good health. RIte Care’s true strength lies in improving access, quality, health status and health outcomes for enrollees while maximizing the use of precious state dollars. The program accomplishes this through performance-based contracts with the three participating health plans. The health plans and providers

have become critical partners by providing access to primary and preventive care in appropriate community-based settings, thereby reducing reliance on more costly sources of care, such as emergency departments and hospital in-patient stays.

In terms of access, the number of primary care providers that participate in RIte Care has tripled. Emergency room visits and hospital days declined to half the pre-RIte Care rate, as members each have a physician to rely on for care.

### **Goal #3: To control the rate of growth in Medicaid expenditures for the eligible population.**

Finally, Rhode Island has been successful in slowing the rate of growth in Medicaid expenditures. Through a number of

innovative measures, such as helping eligible low-income families pay the employee’s portion of monthly health insurance premiums and enrolling in health coverage at work instead of enrolling in public coverage, RIte Care has been able to control its per person rate of increase to an average of 7-8% per year, compared to double-digit increases in the commercial sector.

### **Building on RIte Care’s success**

RIte Care’s focus on its members, both in terms of quality of care and access, are what makes the program so successful. The state has recently transitioned children in foster care and children with special health care needs from Medicaid fee-for-service to RIte Care with much success. In addition, the companion RIte Share program has helped 6,000 people enroll in or maintain employer-sponsored health coverage.

DHS is now working to improve access to dental services and mental health care by building on what has worked in RIte Care. This effort reflects RIte Care’s ongoing commitment to continuously improve access and quality of care and respond to members’ concerns and needs.

## Quality of care and health outcomes have improved

- Women enrolled in RIte Care now have longer intervals between births, are more likely to seek and obtain prenatal care early in pregnancy, and are less likely to smoke during pregnancy.
- Immunization rates for children enrolled in RIte Care exceed the national average and are the same as rates for commercially enrolled children in Rhode Island.
- Children enrolled in RIte Care are more likely to receive timely well-child check ups and lead screenings than the general population.
- Infant mortality rates for RIte Care births have dropped dramatically, due to a decrease in infant deaths caused by preventable and treatable conditions.
- RIte Care members’ use of physician office visits and emergency department visits are now the same as those with commercial insurance.

# RItE Share

---

As part of the Health Reform RI 2000 Act, the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) implemented RItE Share, a combined Medicaid/SCHIP premium assistance program that helps low- and moderate-income families enroll in and retain employer-sponsored health coverage. RItE Share pays for some or all of the employee's portion of the employer-sponsored insurance for eligible families and provides wrap-around coverage (services comparable to those available through RItE Care) through the fee-for-service Medicaid program.

To enroll in RItE Share, DHS must verify that the employee is eligible for the employer's insurance plan

and also determine if the plan is cost-effective and comprehensive. Since April 2001, RItE Share enrollment has grown steadily. As of September 2004, there were over 5,873 children and parents enrolled in an employers' insurance through RItE Share, and over 1,000 employers who participate in RItE Share or offer approved health plans.

According to the 2003 Annual Medicaid Report, the average cost of RItE Share was \$121 per member per month compared to \$194 per member per month for RItE Care. As a result, RItE Share saved the state \$1 million during FY 2003 and is expected to save the state \$1.2 million in FY 2004.



*In June 2004, Covering Kids & Families Rhode Island received the "Creative Partnership Award" from the Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island in recognition of its collaboration with netWORKri to increase access to health insurance. Sonia Rodrigues-Carr, Pawtucket Coordinator and Linda Hutnak, netWORKri Center Manager after the awards ceremonies.*

## Employers, Did You Know...

---

During Cover the Uninsured Week, Covering Kids & Families released a brochure entitled "Employers, Did You Know..." to inform employers of income support programs available to low and moderate-income working families. The brochure describes work support programs such as RItE Care/RItE Share health insurance, Food Stamps, child care subsidies, and the Earned Income Tax Credit, provides information about each program's eligibility and gives tips for outreach. For free copies of the brochure, contact Sonia Rodrigues-Carr at (401) 722-3100 x101 or by email at [srodriguescarr@networkri.org](mailto:srodriguescarr@networkri.org).

# Hot Issues

## Health Insurance Retention: Successful Strategies

Rhode Island has been successful over the past ten years in reducing the number of uninsured children, thanks in large part to the RItE Care program. However, many families still experience gaps in health insurance coverage. Gaps in coverage drive up administrative costs for the state, health plans and providers and can impede access to needed health care and prescriptions.

Unlike commercial health insurance that typically continues from year to year, RItE Care eligibility must be renewed each year. Many families enrolled in RItE Care experience gaps in coverage for a variety of reasons that include returning the renewal form late or incomplete, not receiving the renewal form by mail due to an incorrect address, falling behind on monthly

premium payments, language, literacy or other administrative barriers.

Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island has done a detailed analysis of its membership enrollment files over the past two years. The data indicate that an average of 46% (1,762) of members enrolling with NHPRI each month were previously enrolled with the health plan within the past 90 days.

Many of these members were likely eligible for RItE Care during the gap but lost their coverage for reasons mentioned above.

Data from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services indicates that more than a quarter (27%) of cases are closed at renewal time because the renewal was not returned on time.

## Covering Kids & Families Retention Strategies

*Covering Kids & Families and its partners have implemented several strategies aimed at improving the number of families who successfully retain their RItE Care health insurance and avoid gaps in coverage.*

**“Five Tips to Keep Your RItE Care” Flyer.** The flyer provides instructions for families on how to maintain RItE Care coverage. Covering Kids & Families has distributed flyers to schools, health centers, hospitals, employment centers and community-based agencies.

**Pre-filled RItE Care renewal forms.** The renewal forms list the information DHS has on file about each household and asks the family to update any changes and attach income documentation.

**DHS Mail.** DHS added the RItE Care and health plan logos to the front of the renewal envelopes along with the tag line “Important Health Insurance Information Inside”. These visual cues were designed to encourage RItE Care members to open and respond promptly to the renewal.

**Change of Address Form.** Covering Kids & Families and NHPRI designed a “Change of Address Form” to improve the exchange of new address information for members between health plans and DHS. This form has been successfully piloted for six months and is now being implemented by UnitedHealthcare and Blue CHIIP.

**Health Plan Outreach.** NHPRI and UnitedHealthcare began a campaign to reach out to members who had not returned their RItE Care renewal forms. The health plans send postcards and call members to remind them to renew. Data from NHPRI shows this outreach resulted in 60% of these members successfully renewing their RItE Care.

**NHPRI Communication.** NHPRI has included reminders about the importance of renewing RItE Care in its quarterly newsletter. NHPRI also recorded “on-hold phone prompts” reminding members to renew their RItE Care.

**Telephone Survey.** Covering Kids & Families and NHPRI designed a telephone survey of members who closed to RItE Care to gather specific data about the reasons for closure. Once the survey is completed, the data will be used to implement targeted strategies to help eligible families retain their health insurance coverage.

“...What’s important is that RItE Care is just a tool. What we’re interested in is the outcome. Kids are coming to school, they’re coming healthy and they’re coming ready to learn.” — Jane Hayward, Director, Rhode Island Department of Human Services  
Providence Business News (September, 2004)

# Covering Kids and Families Leadership Council

**Betsy Akin**

*March of Dimes  
Rhode Island Chapter*

**Joseph F. Amaral, MD**

*Rhode Island Hospital*

**Gary Bliss**

*Providence Mayor’s Office*

**Stanley Block, MD**

*Providence Community Health  
Centers, Inc.*

**Elizabeth Burke Bryant**

*Rhode Island KIDS COUNT*

**Lucille Bush**

*CVS/pharmacy*

**Edwin Cancel**

*Progreso Latino*

**Lisa Churchill**

*NBC 10*

**Kerrie Jones Clark**

*RI Health Center Association*

**Patrice Cooper**

*UnitedHealthcare of  
New England*

**Karen Davis**

*Hasbro Charitable Trust*

**Deborah DeBare**

*RI Coalition Against Domestic  
Violence*

**Dr. Hans Dellith**

*Pawtucket School Department*

**Francis Dietz**

*Memorial Hospital of RI*

**Mary Dowd Struck**

*Women and Infants’ Hospital*

**Myra Edens, RN**

*Rhode Island Hospital*

**Michael Fine, MD**

*Hillside Avenue Family and  
Community Medicine*

**Patricia Flanagan, MD**

*Hasbro Children’s Hospital*

**Jeff Grybowski**

*Governor’s Policy Office*

**James Hagan**

*Greater Providence Chamber of  
Commerce*

**Dr. Mark Hawk**

*Association of RI Administrators  
in Special Education*

**Jane Hayward**

*Office of Health and Human  
Services*

**William Hollinshead, MD**

*RI Department of Health*

**Linda Hutnak**

*netWORKri*

**Melody Johnson**

*Providence School Department*

**Linda Katz**

*The Poverty Institute at RI  
College School of Social Work*

**H. John Keimig**

*St. Joseph Health Services  
of Rhode Island*

**Christopher F. Koller**

*Neighborhood Health Plan of RI*

**Jack Kramer**

*CVS/pharmacy*

**Dennis Langley**

*Urban League of Rhode Island*

**Amy Lapierre**

*Covering Kids and Families RI  
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT*

**Ray Lavoie**

*Blackstone Valley Community  
Health Care*

**Joseph Le**

*Socio-Economic Development  
Center for Southeast Asians*

**Ron Lebel**

*RI Department of Human  
Services*

**Tricia Leddy**

*RI Department of Human  
Services*

**Jay G. Lindgren, Jr**

*RI Department of Children,  
Youth and Families*

**Patricia Martinez**

*Office of the Governor*

**Commissioner  
Peter McWalters**

*RI Department of Elementary  
& Secondary Education*

**Mark Montella**

*Lifespan*

**Linda H. Newton**

*Blue Cross & Blue Shield  
of Rhode Island*

**Patricia Nolan, MD**

*RI Department of Health*

**Adelita Orefice**

*RI Department of Labor and  
Training*

**The Honorable  
Mary A. Parella**

*Rhode Island State Senate*

**Edward Quinlan**

*Hospital Association of  
Rhode Island*

**The Honorable  
Elizabeth Roberts**

*Rhode Island State Senate*

**Pablo Rodriguez, MD**

*Women & Infants’ Hospital*

**Marti Rosenberg**

*Ocean State Action Fund*

**Arthur Sampson**

*Newport Hospital*

**Sharon Santilli**

*RI Division of Taxation Child  
Support Enforcement*

**James Sattel**

*Newport CATCH*

**Susan Schenk**

*East Bay Community Action  
Program*

**Deborah Silvia**

*RI Health Center Association*

**Richard Smith, MD**

*American Academy of Pediatrics-  
Rhode Island Chapter*

**Merrill Thomas**

*Providence Community Health  
Centers*

**Susan Urso**

*RI Department of Attorney  
General*

**Luisa Valencia**

*Blue CHiP*

**Christine Vallee**

*St. Joseph Hospital for Speciality  
Care*

**Karen Voci**

*The Rhode Island Foundation*

**Catherine B. Walsh**

*Rhode Island KIDS COUNT*

**Dawn Wardyga**

*Family Voices of Rhode Island*

**Brenda Whittle**

*Neighborhood Health Plan of RI*

**John Young**

*RI Department of Human  
Services*

# Census Bureau Releases Latest Children's Health Insurance Numbers

*Rhode Island ranks second in the nation with the lowest rate of uninsured children. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 4.8% of Rhode Island children under age 18 do not have health insurance.\**

On August 26, 2004, Covering Kids & Families held a press conference at Hasbro Children's Hospital to announce the latest data on children's health insurance from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. This event was held as part of the annual Back-to-School campaign to inform families and the public about RItE Care health insurance. Public officials including Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Mayor David N. Cicilline, Senator Elizabeth Roberts, Jane Hayward, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Patricia Nolan, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Health and Providence



*The annual Back-to-School campaign focuses on access to health insurance.*

School Superintendent Melody Johnson expressed their support for RItE Care and the positive health outcomes that have benefited children and pregnant women.

Kathleen Spoerer and Sheila Silva from Hasbro Children's Hospital Immunization Clinic spoke about how the clinic successfully assists the families' of uninsured children who receive their shots at the clinic to enroll in RItE Care and find primary care providers.

*\* Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2002-2004 average.*

## Thank You!

*Covering Kids & Families Rhode Island thanks all of our funders for their generous support of our efforts to ensure that Rhode Island's children and families have access to affordable, quality health insurance.*

*The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*

*Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island*

*Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island*

*The Rhode Island Foundation*

*Prince Charitable Trusts*

*CVS Charitable Trust*

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation*

*Ocean State Charities Trust*

*UnitedHealthcare of New England*

**covering Kids  
& families**

RHODE ISLAND

### LEAD AGENCY

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

One Union Station

Providence, RI 02903

401-351-9400 phone

401-351-1758 fax

[www.rikidscount.org](http://www.rikidscount.org)

[www.coveringkids.org](http://www.coveringkids.org)

### COVERING KIDS & FAMILIES PARTNERS

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Foundation

Progreso Latino

St. Joseph Health Services of Rhode Island

netWORKri

RI Health Center Association

Ocean State Action Fund

The Poverty Institute at RI College School of Social Work

RI Department of Human Services

RI Department of Health

RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

### LOCAL COALITION

#### LEADERS

*Pawtucket*

netWORKri

401-722-3100

*Central Falls*

Progreso Latino

401-728-5920

*Providence*

St. Joseph Hospital for Specialty Care

401-456-4480