



Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903
401/351-9400
401/351/1758

Press Advisory

What?

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the New England Alliance for Children's Health will release results of a poll on children's health coverage in New England, with specific information on Rhode Island.

When?

Monday, March 5, 2007, 11:00 a.m.

Where?

**St. Joseph Hospital (front lobby)
21 Peace Street
Providence, RI**

Who?

Speakers will include:

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

John Keimig, President & CEO, St. Joseph Health Services of Rhode Island

Representative James Langevin

Rebekah Pierce, RIte Care Member

Gary Alexander, Acting Director, RI Department of Human Services

Christopher Koller, Health Insurance Commissioner

Andrew Snyder, MD, President, Rhode Island Chapter of the
American Academy of Pediatrics

Representative Patrick Kennedy

Mayor David Cicilline

For more information contact:

Raymonde Charles, Communications Coordinator,
(401) 351-9400, ext. 22

*The poll was conducted by Lake Research Partners and
funded by The Rhode Island Foundation and
the National Association of Children's Hospitals.*



Embargoed for Release

Until 11:00 a.m., March 5, 2007

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Children's Health Care a Top Priority for Rhode Islanders

94% say Rlte Care is an important program.

83% favor expanding Rlte Care to cover all uninsured children.

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Providence, RI, March 5, 2007 – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the New England Alliance for Children's Health released findings from a recent poll that shows support among Rhode Island voters for children's health insurance and the Rlte Care program. The results were released at a press conference attended by health care providers, government officials, advocates, and community leaders on **Monday, March 5, 2007 at 11:00 a.m.** at **St. Joseph Hospital**, 21 Peace Street, Providence, RI.

An overwhelming number of Rhode Island registered voters support investments in children's health care according to a poll released today. In the poll of registered voters conducted by Lake Research Partners, 94% say Rlte Care is an important program. More than 8 in 10 (83%) respondents favor expanding Rlte Care so that every uninsured child in Rhode Island can get health care coverage. More than nine in ten (91%) agree that providing preventive health care to children and avoiding costly emergency care is a smart investment of taxpayer dollars.

"Rhode Island residents join their fellow New Englanders in valuing children's health insurance coverage," said Amy Rosenthal of the New England Alliance for Children's Health. "Rhode Islanders overwhelmingly support Rlte Care and expanding the program to cover all children."

The poll of 2,401 registered voters from all six New England states – including 400 registered voters in Rhode Island – was conducted by Lake Research Partners and funded by The Rhode Island Foundation and the National Association of Children’s Hospitals. The poll was sponsored by the New England Alliance for Children's Health, a regional coalition of consumers, health care providers, business leaders, educators, interfaith organizations and advocacy groups working to ensure that all children have access to high quality health care.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT opened the press conference with a call to action. “We know that investments in affordable, comprehensive health insurance coverage result in healthier children who are ready to learn and thrive at home and at school,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Rhode Island has long been a leader in providing access to affordable health insurance coverage for children and families. It’s time to finish the job and cover all kids.”

Federal funding for RIte Care is provided through the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid. "SCHIP is a vital safety net for many Rhode Island families. It has successfully helped thousands of young people get the medical care and assistance they need," said Senator Jack Reed. "Instead of making it harder to enroll low-income children, we should be seeking ways to expand successful programs like SCHIP so we cover more kids and families who need it."

The federal law authorizing SCHIP is set to expire at the end of September. Continued funding for SCHIP and possible expansion are currently being debated at the federal level. Senator Jack Reed has been a strong champion of the SCHIP program in the U.S. Senate. Most recently he was successful in gaining emergency budget relief for Rhode Island by providing \$18 million in federal funding to prevent SCHIP program cuts in the state while a solution is found to address SCHIP's long-term funding needs.

Congressman Patrick Kennedy, an active supporter of SCHIP in the House of Representatives, stated, “Until SCHIP is reauthorized, children’s low-cost health care coverage in Rhode Island and all other states is in jeopardy. The U.S. Congress must reauthorize and expand the SCHIP program to ensure that states can continue to provide health insurance to children. Our ultimate goal should be to provide health insurance coverage for all of our 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 than children without health insurance. Nearly all children enrolled in RIte Care (92%) have an annual check-up with their doctor.

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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.

The New England Alliance for Children's Health is a regional coalition of consumers, health care providers, business leaders, educators, interfaith organizations and advocacy groups working to ensure that all children have access to high quality healthcare. Rhode Island members of the New England Alliance include Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, The Poverty Institute at Rhode Island College, Ocean State Action, the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island and The Rhode Island Foundation.

Lake Research Partners (LRP) is a national public opinion research firm with offices in Washington D.C., and Oakland, CA. Research on health coverage for the uninsured is an expertise of the firm, and LRP is currently working with foundations such as the Kaiser Family Foundation, Packard Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on the issue.