



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
ONE UNION STATION
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

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Contact: Katherine Linwood, Communications Manager
401.351.9400, Ext. 22 / klinwood@rikidscount.org

New Census Data Shows Rhode Island Ranked 2nd for Children's Health Insurance Coverage; 10th in Child Poverty

In 2022, 2.1% of Rhode Island children did not have health insurance

In 2022, 11.7% of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty

*Nationwide, more than 1 million children have lost Medicaid coverage since
the Public Health Emergency ended.*

Rhode Island must work to keep children and families insured.

Providence, RI (September 14, 2023) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) today. The ACS provides national and state-level data on poverty, income, and health insurance coverage.

Children's Health Insurance Coverage

Children who have health insurance coverage are healthier and have fewer preventable hospitalizations. They are more likely to receive preventive care, be screened for the achievement of developmental milestones, miss fewer days of school, and get treatment for illnesses and chronic conditions. Uninsured children are less likely to have medical homes and have fewer visits to doctors or dentists.

- **In 2022, 2.1% (approximately 4,541) of Rhode Island children did not have health insurance.**
- Rhode Island ranks 2nd among all states, and 2nd in New England for children's health insurance coverage.

Policy Measures to Keep Rhode Island Children Healthy

- Usually, Medicaid beneficiaries need to renew their coverage once a year. During the pandemic, Medicaid renewals were suspended, so that people did not lose critical health insurance coverage during the national public health emergency.

- Additionally, the *Cover All Kids* legislation that passed in 2022 restored coverage to all income eligible kids regardless of immigration status. As of July 2023, over 3,000 Rhode Island Children have been enrolled in RItE Care due to this policy, decreasing the state's uninsurance rate.
- Prior to the pandemic states had the option and could act on changes in family circumstances that may impact eligibility between renewal periods before the 12 months. Starting in January 2024, Rhode Island will provide children with 12 months of continuous Medicaid coverage as is now required by federal law. Twelve months of continuous health coverage for children enrolled in Medicaid ensures children maintain health coverage throughout the year reducing the administrative burden and the process that occurs as family income can fluctuate from month to month. The policy promotes health equity by limiting gaps in coverage for low-income children who experience disproportionate rates of health disparities, particularly Children of Color.

Medicaid Redeterminations: Beginning in April 2023, the state started to renew coverage for all Medicaid beneficiaries. This 'return to normal' redetermination and renewal process will happen now until March 2024. Children's and families' renewals will start in December 2023. It is estimated nationally that millions of children will lose coverage, and many will lose coverage solely due to administrative or procedural reasons. In neighboring states that have already started renewals, thousands of children have already lost coverage. It is important to minimize these procedural terminations for children in Rhode Island to keep our health insurance rate high and not lose progress made.

- Medicaid households with children under 19 will receive a renewal notice in the mail between December 2023 and April 2024. Members can check in their online account or through the quick look-up tool at www.ri.gov/EOHHS/medicaid_renewal.

There are three things households with children can do to make sure they're ready for redeterminations/renewals and stay covered:

- **Update contact information.** Make sure the state Executive Office of Health and Human Services has their current address, phone number, and email so families can get important updates about their coverage.
- **Watch for yellow or green notices in the mail.** The State may tell families that their coverage is being automatically renewed or will ask for more information.
- **Take action right away.** Families must submit signed forms and any other documents the State requested by the deadline given – as soon as possible is best.

“We are thankful that during the pandemic, all Medicaid families maintained their health insurance coverage,” said Paige Clausius-Parks, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Nationwide, more than 1 million children are estimated to have lost Medicaid coverage since states started this redetermination process. Without health coverage, or with gaps in coverage, early screenings and supports for children and youth may not occur on a timely basis or may be missed altogether, resulting in children with routine illnesses being brought to emergency departments for diagnosis and treatment, and early

developmental delays being missed. We will watch this process closely and work hard with nonprofit partners and state leaders to get the word out to families. Community leaders and organizations can direct families to www.staycovered.ri.gov to learn more.”

Children Living in Poverty

Children in poverty, especially those who experience poverty in early childhood and for extended periods, are more likely to have physical and behavioral health problems, experience difficulty in school, become teen parents, and earn less or be unemployed as adults.

Key Poverty Findings

According to the ACS, in 2022:

- 11.7% (an estimated 23,487) of Rhode Island’s children lived in poverty.
 - The poverty data are based on the federal poverty threshold, which was an annual income of \$23,578 for a family of three with two children and \$29,678 for a family of four with two children.
- Rhode Island ranks 10th best in the nation — and 5th best in New England — for the percentage of children in poverty.
- 6.2% (an estimated 12,400) of Rhode Island’s children lived in extreme poverty.
 - In 2022, the extreme poverty threshold was \$11,789 for a family of three with two children and \$14,839 for a family of four with two children.

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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 with a core focus on equity.