

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

Children's health luncheon celebrates increased access to insurance



PROVIDENCE — More than 175 community leaders, elected officials, and health care advocates gathered for the 15th annual Celebration of Children's Health Luncheon to reflect on the progress that Rhode Island has made in achieving positive health outcomes for children.

Covering Kids Awards were presented to elected officials and community partners for their contributions to increasing access to health insurance coverage and health care for children, including U.S. Sens. Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse, U.S. Reps. James Langevin and David Cicilline, Gov. Gina Raimondo, R.I. Senate President Teresa Paiva Weed, Reps. Deborah Ruggiero and Joseph McNamara, and Sens. Gayle Goldin and Louis DiPalma.

The City of Providence's Healthy Communities Office and Marie Jones Bridges, RDH, co-chair-elect of the Rhode Island Oral Health Commission, were this year's community leaders honored with Covering Kids Awards for their commitment and dedication to ensuring that children have access to health coverage that connects them to primary health and dental care. Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza accepted the award on behalf of the

City of Providence.

This event also celebrated the progress that has been made in covering kids in Rhode Island, as well as the strength and quality of Rite Care, Rhode Island's health insurance program for children and families with low- and moderate-incomes.

In 2015, Rite Care was named the best Medicaid-managed health care program for children by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service (CMS), which administers Medicaid and CHIP programs throughout the country. Categories ranked in the CMS report included Perinatal and Infant Care, Well Child Care, Adolescent Well Care, Management of Acute and Chronic Conditions, and Dental.

A new national report (Children's Health Insurance Rates in 2014: ACA Results in Significant Improvements, released by Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families) found that the number of Rhode Island children without health insurance fell significantly over a one-year period following the Affordable Care Act taking effect. The report estimated that the number of uninsured children in Rhode Island declined from about 12,000 in 2013 to about 7,000 in 2014.

The report also found that the rate of uninsured children in Rhode Island fell from 5.4 percent in 2013 to 3.3 percent in 2014.

Rhode Island was highlighted as a leader among states for children's coverage, with nearly 97 percent of Rhode Island children with health insurance coverage.

The report attributes Rhode Island's gains to the strong Rite Care program and improvements to Rhode Island's health coverage system brought about by implementing the Affordable Care Act.

"Rhode Island is being recognized nationally for prioritizing the health and well-being of our children through Rite Care, Rhode Island's managed care program for kids, pregnant women, and families," said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "Continued positive health outcomes for Rhode Island children depends on high-quality health coverage. We're proud to have state leaders who have made wise investments in health coverage for our families for more than two decades. We need to keep staying the course with Rite Care and reach out to make sure that all children are covered."