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16th Annual Celebration of Children's Health Luncheon

Luncheon celebrates the progress Rhode Island has made in increasing access to high-quality health coverage — Rhode Island is ranked 15th best in the nation for children's health coverage

Luncheon also celebrates the 10th anniversary of RItE Smiles, Rhode Island's dental insurance for children who have RItE Care health coverage.

Providence, RI (November 14, 2016) – More than 225 community leaders, elected officials, and health care advocates gathered for the sixteenth annual Celebration of Children's Health Luncheon to reflect on the progress that Rhode Island has made in achieving positive health outcomes for children — including the 10th anniversary of RItE Smiles, Rhode Island's managed care dental insurance for low-income children.

Covering Kids Awards were presented to elected officials for their contributions to increasing access to health insurance coverage and health care for children, including Senator Jack Reed; Governor Gina Raimondo; Senate President Teresa Paiva Weed; Representatives Deborah Ruggiero, Teresa Tanzi, and Carlos Tobon; and Senators Joshua Miller and Juan Pichardo.

Deborah Florio, Deputy Medicaid Director at the RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and Susan Orban, Coordinator of the Washington County Coalition for Children, were this year's community leaders and partners honored with *Covering Kids Awards* for their commitment and dedication to ensuring that children have access to coverage that connects them to primary health and dental care.

Desiree Oles and Deanna Dandy shared their family's perspective as RItE Care and RItE Smiles members.

This event also celebrated:

- The progress that has been made in covering kids in Rhode Island,
- The strength and quality of RItE Care, Rhode Island's health insurance program for children and families with low and moderate incomes that has demonstrated positive health outcomes, and
- The 10th anniversary of RItE Smiles, Rhode Island's managed care oral health program for children with RItE Care coverage.

More Rhode Island children have health coverage

A new national report ([*Children's Health Coverage Rate Now at Historic High of 95 Percent*](#)) recently 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 two-year period following the federal *Affordable Care Act* taking effect. The report estimated that the number of uninsured children in Rhode Island declined from about 12,000 (5.4% of all children) in 2013 to about 7,000 (3.4% of all children) in 2015.

Rhode Island was highlighted as a leader among states for children's coverage, with nearly 97% of Rhode Island children with health insurance coverage. Rhode Island ranks 15th best in the nation (and 5th best in New England) for children's 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 has long been 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 recognize that RItE Care is an affordable investment in the health of Rhode Island's children and families. We need to continue to make this worthwhile investment to make sure that all children are covered."

Rhode Island's positive health outcomes for children

Rhode Island leads the nation in many children's health outcomes:

- Teen Deaths (1st)
- Adolescent Cigarette Use (1st)
- Childhood Immunization (1st)
- Infant Mortality (3rd)
- Child Deaths (4th)
- Preventive Dental Care (5th)
- Teen Births (7th)
- Adolescent Obesity (7th)
- Adolescent Alcohol Drinking (8th)
- Adolescent Overweight (9th)
- Preterm Births (12th)
- Children's Health Coverage (15th)
- Low Birthweight Infants (15th)

Rlte Smiles Celebrates 10th Anniversary

Launched in 2006, Rlte Smiles is Rhode Island's managed oral health program for children with Rlte Care and other Medicaid coverage.

In 2006, 31,000 children were enrolled in Rlte Smiles. In 2016, 95,737 Rhode Island children (45% of all children under age 18 in the state) have Rlte Smiles dental coverage.

Of the children enrolled in Rlte Smiles, 63% had a dental visit in 2014 (the most recent year for which national data are available). Of the dental visits, 44% were at a private dental practice, 26% were at a Federally Qualified Health Center that offers dental services, and 30% were in a hospital-based dental center.

"Oral health is an important part of overall health. Rlte Smiles dental coverage connects children with preventive dental care, as well as effective treatment. Rhode Island's leadership in creating Rlte Smiles — when few other states were prioritizing dental care — has helped put our children on the path to healthy smiles for a lifetime," said Burke Bryant.

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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.