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Rhode Island Children Still Insured, Despite the Recession

RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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Providence, RI (September 13, 2011) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2010 Current Population Survey (CPS) today. According to the CPS, 93.7% of Rhode Island’s children had some form of health insurance in the three-year period from 2008-2010. Data show that 6.3% of Rhode Island’s children were uninsured, the same percentage as in the period from 2005-2007, before the recession. Rhode Island ranks 13th best in the nation for children’s health insurance coverage.

The percentage of children with employer-sponsored health coverage dropped from 67.1% in 2005-2007 to 60.8% in 2008-2010. Yet, the children’s health insurance coverage rates held steady, with more children enrolled in RItE Care, Rhode Island’s combined Medicaid/Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Approximately one-third of children in Rhode Island had public/government insurance during 2008-2010.

Comparable U.S. data based on three-year averages from the CPS show that the U.S. rate of uninsured children was 9.7% in the period from 2008-2010, down from 10.7% in 2005-2007. The single year U.S. rate for uninsured children in 2010 was 9.8%, compared to 9.7% rate in 2009.

“The data released today show the success of RItE Care and Medicaid in protecting children’s health when families do not have access to affordable health insurance through their employer,” stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “For many Rhode Island families, the loss of a job means the loss of employer-sponsored health insurance coverage. We are fortunate that RItE Care is available to help ensure that children have the health coverage they need to keep them healthy,” stated Bryant.

The percentage of Rhode Island children insured through employer-sponsored health insurance (ESI) has experienced a downward trend throughout the past decade, with 60.8% having ESI in the three-year period from 2008-2010, compared to 73.1% having ESI from 1999-2001. In Rhode Island between 2008 and 2010, there were an average of 139,333 Rhode Island children under age 18 who were covered by private health insurance (including employer-sponsored coverage and direct purchase coverage) each year and an average of 84,667 Rhode Island children who were covered by government insurance (including Medicaid, RItE Care, Medicare and military insurance) each year. RItE Care, Rhode Island's Medicaid managed care program for low-income families, covers about one-third of Rhode Island's children. The number of uninsured children under age 18 was 14,333 in 2008-2010.

"As Rhode Island moves forward with the implementation of the federal Affordable Care Act, it is important to maintain and build upon effective programs, like RItE Care, that provide access to health care for Rhode Island's children and families. It is crucial that our state leaders continue to implement policies that keep RItE Care strong, high-quality and affordable," noted Bryant. "Congressional leaders also have an important role to play in ensuring that Medicaid continues to provide a safety net to our most vulnerable children."

Insured children are more likely to receive preventive care, be screened for developmental milestones, miss fewer days of school, and get medical treatment for common illnesses, chronic conditions and emergencies than uninsured children. Uninsured children are less likely to have a usual place for health care than children with coverage, and they have fewer visits to doctors and dentists. Children are more likely to receive preventive health care if their parents have health insurance. Uninsured children and adults are more likely to have costly hospitalizations and emergency room visits that could have been prevented with access to standard health care.

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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.