



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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**Statement by Elizabeth Burke Bryant,
Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**
on
**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Secretary Kathleen Sebelius'
Connecting Kids to Coverage Challenge**

***RlTe Care and Rhode Island's Family Resource Counselor Program
Highlighted as National Models***

September 3, 2010

Providence, RI – On Friday, September 3, 2010, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius issued a challenge to the nation: Enroll the five million uninsured children who are currently eligible for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) over the next five years.

The Secretary chose Rhode Island to be one of three states highlighted in a video at the event. Rhode Island's successful RlTe Care health insurance program and its Family Resource Counselor program were featured as models of community-based outreach and enrollment.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is proud of what Rhode Island has achieved for children. We have high rates of insured children and RlTe Care has a long history of documented positive health outcomes for children and families enrolled in the program. We call on our partner organizations to join with us in accepting the Secretary's Challenge to finish the job and cover all eligible children.

New data released at the event by the Urban Institute and published in the journal *Health Affairs* show that 83.5% of children in Rhode Island whose family incomes would make them eligible RlTe Care enrolled in the program. This places Rhode Island 22nd in the U.S. for its Medicaid/CHIP participation rate. Rhode Island's participation rate was not statistically different from the national participation rate of 81.8%. RlTe Care is Rhode Island's combination Medicaid and CHIP program that provides health insurance coverage for low- and moderate-income children, their parents and pregnant women.

Family Resource Counselors (FRCs) are specially trained staff members of community health centers, hospitals, and community organizations who assist families with applying for health coverage through RlTe Care. FRCs assist families in completing the application, assembling all of the supporting documentation that is required for applications and help families resolve any problems that may occur during the application process. The Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) contracts with the Rhode Island Health Center Association (RIHCA) to administer the FRC program. In place since 1998, the FRC program has been a long-term public-private

partnership that serves as an important outreach mechanism for Rhode Island children and families.

Secretary Sebelius has called upon leaders from all levels of government and the private sector to help ensure that children get the health care they need. The message of the Secretary's *Connecting Kids to Coverage Challenge* is simple and clear. While there will be more opportunities for everyone to secure affordable coverage once the *Affordable Care Act* is fully implemented, most uninsured children don't have to wait. Eligible children can be enrolled in RItE Care right now.

Rhode Island can once again lead the nation in making sure that all of our children have health coverage. The RItE Care program is a national model of high-quality, cost-effective, and affordable coverage. RItE Care's two managed care health plans (Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island and United Healthcare of New England) were ranked in the top 11 Medicaid health plans in the U.S. last year. We must do all that we can to make sure that all uninsured children are enrolled in RItE Care. Health coverage means that children stay in the classroom, concentrating on their studies so that they can become productive citizens. Children's health coverage is one of the most cost-effective investments a state can make.

In Rhode Island, children in a family of three earning up to \$45,775 who are citizens or lawfully residing immigrants may qualify for RItE Care. Income guidelines vary according to income and family size. Eligible families with children who are not enrolled may not realize they are eligible or know how to apply. Unemployed and working families who need health insurance can apply for RItE Care coverage today by going to www.dhs.ri.gov or by calling 401-462-5300. Families that would like help with the application process can find a Family Resource Counselor who can explain how to apply and help with paperwork at www.rihca.org or by calling 401-271-1171, extension 217.

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the economic well-being, health, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.