

Still Too Many Uninsured Children

Over 8.1 million American children—one in 9—were uninsured in 2007.

- New Census data show that 8.1 million children under the age of 18 were uninsured in 2007. This is a slight decrease since the previous year, but 428,000 more than in 2004, the last year there was a decline in the number of uninsured children.¹
- Just as they did during the last recession, Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)—the health care safety net for low-income children—were able to stave off increases in the number of uninsured children last year: 800,000 more children were covered by Medicaid and CHIP last year.²
- A weakening economy, a growing number of poor children, the continued erosion of employer-based coverage, and the Administration's antagonistic policies will put additional pressure on those programs to keep up with the increasing demand.
- Without coverage, children are less likely to have a regular source of health care, receive the preventive care they need, and get their other health care needs met.³

The Bush Administration's policies are contributing to the growing problem.

- Congress twice passed bipartisan legislation last year that would have reauthorized and strengthened CHIP, covering up to 3.9 million additional children who are currently uninsured. The President vetoed both of those bills.
- As the CHIP reauthorization debate unfolded in Congress, the Administration issued a harmful new rule that prevents states from covering children in families with income greater than 250 percent of poverty (\$44,000 for a family of three). This jeopardizes coverage for tens of thousands of children currently eligible for CHIP. It also jeopardizes coverage for uninsured children in states that planned to expand CHIP but were unable to do so because of the rule.
- In 2006, the President strongly supported and signed legislation that imposes onerous citizenship documentation requirements on all Medicaid enrollees and applicants. Evidence suggests that this is preventing thousands of eligible people—most of them children—from getting Medicaid coverage.⁴

- The economy has plummeted over the last year, making it even harder for working families to afford health coverage. The demand for programs like Medicaid and CHIP is increasing, but the Administration continues to stubbornly stand between these families and health coverage for their children.

Congress and the next President must take action.

- The newest data from the Census Bureau reflect what happened last year, in 2007. Since then, the economy has worsened considerably; the number of children turning to Medicaid and CHIP because their families lost job-based health coverage is likely growing this year.
- CHIP must be reauthorized with significant new funding so that states can realize their expansion plans and cover as many eligible children as possible. Congress should help states deal with the influx of Medicaid enrollees by temporarily increasing federal funding for Medicaid.
- The Administration's new CHIP eligibility rule and the citizenship documentation requirement in Medicaid must be overturned. These policies yank the health care safety net out from under children and their families when they need it most, and only serve to increase the ranks of the uninsured.

¹ Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor, Jessica C. Smith, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007, Current Population Reports, P60-235* (Washington: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008), available online at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/p60-235.pdf>

² DeNavas-Walt, op. cit.

³ *Why Health Insurance Matters for Children* (Washington: Campaign for Children's Health Care, July 2006). Available online at <http://www.familiesusa.org/assets/pdfs/campaign-for-childrens-health-care/kids-why-insurance-matters.pdf>.

⁴ Donna Cohen Ross, *New Medicaid Citizenship Documentation Requirement is Taking a Toll* (Washington: Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, Revised March 2007), available online at <http://www.cbpp.org/2-2-07health.htm>.



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