NEARLY 10,000 CHILDREN IN NORTH DAKOTA WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE

Children without health insurance have limited access to health care (whether preventive or ongoing) which can lead to a greater risk of illness and hospitalization. In addition, a lack of health insurance can have a negative influence on school attendance and participation in extracurricular activities, and increased financial and emotional stress among parents.

According to 2010 data, 6.1 percent of North Dakota’s youth do not have health insurance coverage (i.e., approximately 9,514 children ages 0 through 18). Nationally, 8.5 percent of youth are uninsured (i.e., approximately 6.5 million children).

This month’s Insights on Children publication from North Dakota KIDS COUNT at North Dakota State University focuses on children ages 0 through 18 without health insurance in North Dakota by county. The U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE) program produces estimates of health insurance coverage for states and all counties in the nation. Estimates are produced based on models that incorporate data from a number of sources including Medicaid and SNAP records, federal tax return data, population estimates, and the American Community Survey (ACS).

“While the overall rate of uninsured youth in North Dakota remains lower than the national average, there are many areas in our state where more than one in every 10 children lacks health care coverage” said Karen Olson with North Dakota KIDS COUNT. “In addition, while this report focuses mostly on the uninsured rates of children in the state, it is important to understand that many children who have insurance have inadequate coverage and limited access to health care,” Olson said.

Just over one-third of North Dakota children meet the quality of care standard established by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau in collaboration with the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). That is, 39 percent of North Dakota children have adequate insurance, a medical home, and had at least one preventive care visit in the past year. This means that the majority of children do not meet these criteria (61 percent or approximately 59,000 children).

Access to health insurance coverage is important for children as they develop and grow into adulthood. Even more important are efforts to ensure that coverage translates into high quality health care that leads to positive health outcomes for all children.

For more information, the new Insights on Children is available at http://www.ndkidscount.org.

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The North Dakota KIDS COUNT program, located at North Dakota State University and funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, tracks the status of children and families in North Dakota. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks for child well-being, North Dakota KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local and state discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children. For more information, visit http://www.ndkidscount.org.