



EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
August 9, 2006 – 12:01 a.m. (ET)

Contact: Sharon Pomeroy 504-813-1615
Cynthia Faulkner 202-572-2912

NUMBER OF UNINSURED KIDS DECLINES AS ENROLLMENT IN LACHIP/MEDICAID PROGRAM INCREASES

Report shows decline in number of kids being insured through private coverage

Back-to-school campaign urges parents to call 877-2LaCHIP (252-2447) to find out if their uninsured children are eligible

BATON ROUGE – Even though the total number of Americans without health insurance is on the rise, a new study analyzing government data suggests that the number of uninsured kids – including those in Louisiana – is on the decline. According to the study, that decline can be attributed to more kids being covered under public health care programs such as Medicaid and *LaCHIP*.

“The State of Kids’ Coverage” was released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) at a press conference and enrollment fair to kick off the *Covering Kids & Families* Back-to-School Campaign, a nationwide effort with intensive focus in Baton Rouge to enroll eligible children in Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) during the back-to-school season.

The study shows that the percentage of children who have private health care coverage decreased 5 percent since 1997-98 – that means 1.4 million fewer kids have private coverage nationwide. In Louisiana, the number of kids enrolled in Medicaid and *LaCHIP* increased by 62% during this time – meaning more than 170,000 more kids now have public coverage in Louisiana. These programs have helped reduce the number of uninsured kids by 77,000 since 1997, demonstrating the importance of public health coverage programs as a safety net for families.

“Medicaid and *LaCHIP* have provided a much-needed safety net for Louisiana’s children,” said Sharon Pomeroy, Project Coordinator for the Louisiana *Covering Kids & Families* Coalition at Agenda for Children. “Because of these programs, working parents don’t have to choose between filling the refrigerator and filling a prescription.”

“We know that children who have health insurance are better prepared to learn in school and better equipped to succeed in life,” said Donna Nola-Ganey, assistant superintendent for the Louisiana Department of Education’s Office of School and Community Improvement “The back-to-school season is an ideal time to make sure that children have the health coverage they need.”

The latest Census data shows that of the 8.3 million children who remain uninsured nationwide, more than 137,000 live in Louisiana. Many of these children are eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage through Medicaid or *LaCHIP*, but have not yet enrolled. Louisiana families of four earning up to \$40,000 or more may qualify, and parents can call toll-free **1-877-2LaCHIP (252-2447)** to find out if their children are eligible.

The *Covering Kids & Families* Back-to-School campaign will reach thousands of Louisiana families during August and September by:

- Organizing numerous local enrollment activities to encourage parents to seek information about enrolling their eligible children in Medicaid or *LaCHIP*;
- Purchasing air time in the Baton Rouge area for television advertisements;
- Distributing material to potentially eligible families through schools, businesses, faith-based groups and more;
- Working with coalition partners to promote the 1-877-2LaCHIP toll-free number statewide.

The Louisiana *Covering Kids & Families* coalition includes over 900 individual members and organizations.

Today's report was prepared by analysts at the State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC), located at the University of Minnesota. The report analyzes data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics 2003 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) and the U.S. Census Bureau's 1998, 1999, 2004, and 2005 Current Population Surveys (CPS).

To view the research report, locate *Covering Kids & Families* activities, or download materials in English or Spanish, log on to or www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org.

###

Fast Facts:

There are more than 137,000 uninsured kids in Louisiana, and many of them are eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage through Medicaid or *LaCHIP*.

Children in a family of four earning up to \$40,000 a year or more may qualify.
Eligibility is based on family size and income.

Parents should call toll-free **1-877-2LaCHIP (252-2447)**
to find out if their children are eligible.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

The University of Minnesota's State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC) helps states monitor rates of health insurance coverage and to understand factors associated with uninsurance. SHADAC provides targeted policy analysis and technical assistance to states that are conducting their own health insurance surveys and/or using data from national surveys. Information can be located at www.shadac.umn.edu.