



covering kids™
& families

NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
August 9, 2006 12:01 a.m.

CONTACT: Nicole Peckumn
Office: 515-281-6692
npeckumn@idph.state.ia.us

Number of Uninsured Kids Declines as Enrollment in *hawk-i* Program Increases

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

DES MOINES - 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 Iowa, 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 *hawk-i*.

“The State of Kids’ Coverage” was released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) at an event to kick off the *Covering Kids & Families Back-to-School Campaign*, a nationwide effort to enroll eligible children in health insurance 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 Iowa, the number of kids enrolled in Medicaid and *hawk-i* has increased by 58 percent during this time – meaning that more than 46,000 more kids now have public coverage. These programs have helped reduce the number of uninsured kids by nearly 20,000 since 1997, demonstrating the importance of public health coverage programs as a safety net for Iowa families.

Locally, the Des Moines based Healthcare Coverage for Kids Coalition (HCKC) will push an intensive two-month campaign to enroll eligible, uninsured children in *hawk-i*. HCKC membership includes Visiting Nurse Services, Mercy Hospital, Iowa Health Systems, Mid Iowa Health Foundation, Neighborhood Health Initiative, Polk County Health Department, Des Moines Public Schools and the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH).

hawk-i, also known as Healthy and Well Kids in Iowa, is the state’s effort to make affordable health insurance coverage available to children in families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid, but too low to afford private family coverage. There are more than 50,000 uninsured kids in Iowa, and many of them are eligible for low-cost or free health coverage.

“We know that children who have health insurance are better prepared to learn in school and better equipped to succeed in life,” said IDPH director Mary Mincer Hansen, R.N., Ph.D. “The back-to-school season is an ideal time to make sure that children have the health coverage they need.”

-more-

The latest Census data shows that of the 8.3 million children who remain uninsured nationwide, more than 50,000 live in Iowa. Most of these children are eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage through *hawk-i* or Medicaid, but have not yet enrolled. Iowa families of four earning up to \$40,000 or more may qualify, and parents can call toll-free **1 (877) KIDS-NOW** to find out if their children are eligible.

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 www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org.

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.

The Iowa Department of Public Health is observing 125 years of “Advancing Health through the Generations.” Check our web site to learn more about Iowa’s public health efforts.