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## **NUMBER OF UNINSURED KIDS DECLINES AS ENROLLMENT IN MONTANA CHIP PROGRAM INCREASES**

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

*Back-to-school campaign urges parents to call 1(877) KIDS-NOW to find out if their uninsured children are eligible*

**HELENA** – 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 Montana – 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 *Montana CHIP*.

“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 with an intensive focus in Helena to enroll eligible children in Medicaid and the *Montana Children’s Health Insurance Plan (CHIP)* during the back-to-school season.

The study shows that the percentage of children who have private health care coverage in Montana decreased nearly 15 percent since 1997-98 – meaning that over 44,000 fewer kids have private coverage. During the same period, the number of kids enrolled in public health programs such as *Montana CHIP* has increased by 52%, providing an important safety net for families.

“Medicaid and *Montana CHIP* have provided a much-needed safety net for Montana’s children,” said Betty Hidalgo of Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies: The Montana Coalition. “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 Superintendent of Public Instruction Linda McCulloch. “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 35,000 live in Montana. Most of these children are eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage through Medicaid or *Montana CHIP*, but have not yet enrolled. Montana families of four earning up to \$30,000 a year or more may qualify, and parents can call toll-free **1(877) KIDS-NOW** to find out if their children are eligible.

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

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- Organizing a local Health and Enrollment Fair on Saturday, August 12 at Capital Hill Mall from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to encourage parents to seek information about enrolling their eligible children in Medicaid or *Montana CHIP*;
- Purchasing air time in the Helena area for television advertisements;
- Collaborating with the Helena Brewers to host a children's health coverage day at the ballpark;
- Distributing material to potentially eligible families through the Office of Public Instruction, Montana Head Start, and local schools; and
- Working with coalition partners to promote the **1(877) KIDS-NOW** toll-free number statewide.

The Montana *Covering Kids & Families* coalition includes Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies: The Montana Coalition, St. Peter's Hospital, The Cooperative Health Center, and the Montana School Board Association.

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](http://www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org).

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#### **Fast Facts:**

There are 35,000 uninsured kids in Montana, and most are eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage through Medicaid or *Montana CHIP*.

Children in a family of four earning up to \$30,000 a year or more may qualify.  
Eligibility is based on family size and income.

Parents should call toll-free **1(877) KIDS-NOW**  
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](http://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](http://www.shadac.umn.edu).*