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NEW REPORT SHOWS THAT KIDSCARE IS REDUCING THE NUMBER OF UNINSURED ARIZONA KIDS; BACK-TO-SCHOOL ENROLLMENT PUSH BEGINS

Miguel Batista and the Arizona Diamondbacks urge parents to call 1(877) KIDS NOW to find out if their uninsured children are eligible

PHOENIX- Even though the total number of Americans without health insurance has been on the rise, a new study analyzing government data suggests that the number of uninsured kids – including those in Arizona – 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 *KidsCare*.

“The State of Kids’ Coverage” was released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to kick off the *Covering Kids & Families* Back-to-School Campaign, a nationwide effort with an intensive focus in Phoenix to enroll eligible children in Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) during the back-to-school season. The local kick off event featured Miguel Batista, pitcher for the Arizona Diamondbacks, as spokesperson.

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 Arizona, the percentage of kids enrolled in *KidsCare* or Medicaid increased by 71% during this time -- meaning at least 218,000 more kids now have public coverage in Arizona. These programs have helped reduce the number of uninsured kids by 125,000 since 1997, demonstrating the importance of public health coverage programs as a safety net for families.

“Medicaid and *KidsCare* have provided a much-needed safety net for Arizona’s children,” said Carol Kamin, president and CEO of Children's Action Alliance, a member of the Covering Arizona Kids 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 Lillian Garcia of Phoenix Day Child and Family Learning Center—another coalition member. “The back-to-school season is an ideal time to make sure that children have the health coverage they need.”

“While *KidsCare* has gone a long way in reducing the number of uninsured kids in Arizona, a lot of families still don’t know that *KidsCare* is available to them. This low-cost health insurance program helps a family of four earning up to \$40,000 a year. It allows kids to visit the doctor for well checks, see

the dentist when needed, and visit the hospital when necessary without families going deep into debt,” said Miguel Batista of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

The latest Census data shows that of the 8.3 million children who remain uninsured nationwide, more than 226,000 live in Arizona. Many of these children are eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage through *KidsCare* or Medicaid, but have not yet enrolled. 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 Arizona families during August and September by:

- Advertising *KidsCare* on local radio and television channels;
- Organizing local enrollment activities to encourage parents to seek information about enrolling their eligible children in Medicaid or *KidsCare*;
- Distributing information on *KidsCare* through schools, churches, local businesses, after school programs, and back-to-school clothing and supply efforts;
- Collaborating with the Arizona Diamondbacks to distribute information to families on August 9; and
- Working with coalition partners to promote the **1(877) KIDS-NOW** toll-free number statewide.

The local *Covering Arizona Kids* coalition includes Children's Action Alliance, Mountain Park Community Health Center, St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, Arizona Small Business Association, Phoenix Children's Hospital, HealthCare Connect, Phoenix Day/HealthLinks and the BHHS Legacy Foundation.

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.

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Fast Facts:

226,000 kids are uninsured in Arizona, many of whom are eligible for Medicaid or *KidsCare*.

Children in a family of four in Arizona earning up to \$40,000 a year 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.

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.