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## **23 States Improve Children's Coverage Despite Economic Slump**

Washington, D.C. -- Twenty-three states expanded or improved children's health coverage programs this year despite a tough economic climate, according to a report by the Center for Children and Families (CCF) at Georgetown University's Health Policy Institute.

"Last year, the strong support for children's health coverage at the state and national level helped to drive the number of uninsured children to the lowest level in two decades," said Jocelyn Guyer, Co-Executive Director of CCF. "By making sure children's health care coverage continues to be a top priority, these states are extending a lifeline to uninsured children just when they need it most."

The report finds that an overwhelming majority of states have taken advantage of the passage of the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act and other federal support to maintain or strengthen their efforts to cover more children. Despite an extremely challenging budget climate, nearly all states have "weathered the storm" when it comes to coverage of children, according to the report.

In 2009, twenty-three states took steps to continue moving forward by expanding eligibility for their Medicaid or CHIP programs or made it easier for uninsured children already eligible to enroll and stay enrolled in the programs. The states moving forward on children's coverage include: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

"CHIPRA has been a big success and already has had a positive impact on children across the country," said Guyer. "As Congress debates health reform legislation, it should be encouraged by the impact its legislative efforts have had on children's health coverage. The experience with CHIPRA demonstrates that addressing the needs of the uninsured in a timely and cost effective manner is an attainable goal."

The report also concludes that coverage for children and their families is at a critical juncture as states face ongoing budget pressures and the prospect that national health reform will dramatically alter the coverage landscape for children and families.

“Children and their families have much to gain from health reform, but if reform doesn’t incorporate the key ingredients of the successful children’s coverage initiatives, the progress we’ve made in recent years may unintentionally be eroded,” said Guyer. “Health reform will need to ensure that children now covered through Medicaid and CHIP continue to secure affordable coverage options and a decent benefit package and extend these opportunities to uninsured parents and adults.”

While the U.S. Census data released last week paint an encouraging picture for uninsured children, the numbers are much more bleak for parents and other uninsured adults. According to the Census, the number of uninsured children declined to 7.3 million in 2008, the lowest number since 1987. Meanwhile, the number of uninsured adults increased by 1.5 million to 38 million.

“The health and wellbeing of children depend on whether they have access to affordable, high-quality health coverage, but can also be dramatically affected by the health of their parents and the financial stability of their families,” said Guyer.

For more information on the report, “Weathering the Storm: States Moving Forward Despite Tough Economic Climate,” visit [CCF’s website](#) or [Say Ahhh! A Children’s Health Policy Blog](#).

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