



NEWS RELEASE

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Statement Regarding [New Census Estimates of Uninsured in Utah](#)

Salt Lake City—According to Current Population Survey estimates, the number of Americans living without health insurance increased slightly from 2008 (15.4%) to 2009 (16.7%). This 1.3% increase would have been much worse, were it not for public programs like Medicaid, and the role they play as a safety net for families that have fallen on hard times. Between 2008 and 2009 enrollment in Medicaid increased by 1.6% in the U.S. Over the same period, participation in employer-sponsored health insurance declined by 2.7%.

These issues look a bit different in Utah, with the caveat that CPS data are not as accurate for smaller states like Utah. In 2009 14.8% of Utahns found themselves uninsured. This is 1.6% higher than the uninsured rate for Utahns in 2008 (13.2%). From 2008 to 2009 participation in Utah Medicaid increased significantly from 6.9% to 9.2% and job-based coverage in Utah fell sharply by 3.8%. From 2007 to 2008 job-based coverage in Utah actually *increased* by 2.8%.

“This particular finding raises all sorts of red flags for us,” says Judi Hilman, Executive Director of the Utah Health Policy Project:

- “Utah is in its third year of state-based reforms designed to motivate employers to provide health insurance to their workers—and all we can show for it is decrease in workplace coverage and even more uninsured?!” In their testimony against federal health reform, Utah’s leaders touted Utah’s reforms as a model for the rest of the nation.
- “The irony here is that the longer we put off real solutions that make decent workplace coverage more affordable, the more we will grow programs like Medicaid—especially kids Medicaid. **Last year the percent of Utah children covered by Medicaid grew dramatically by 6%** (in the U.S. Medicaid kids coverage grew by 3.5%).
- **Workplace coverage of Utah children declined by 7.3%** (only by 3.1 in the U.S.). This is a reminder that state reforms should also look for ways to improve employer’s ability to provide or continue **family** coverage.

“For Utah children there was some good news in the Census report,” says Lincoln Nehring. “While their parents are losing health coverage at alarming rate, thanks to increased enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP, the uninsured rate for America’s kids has not changed significantly.”

“As the number of people without health coverage continues to grow, placing increased demand on strained state Medicaid budgets, it will be important to fully implement the ACA, particularly those provisions that make it possible for the private market to serve as the foundation of a reformed health care system, adds Hilman.

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