



News Release

Today: September 20, 2007

Contact:

Lincoln Nehring;
(801)433-2299; (801)638-7695
lincoln@healthpolicyproject.org

New Report finds that 1 Out of 3 Non-Elderly Utahns Were Uninsured During 2006-2007

822,000 Utahns Were Uninsured At Some Point Over the Past 2 Years

Salt Lake City— Over thirty-five percent of non-elderly Utahns were uninsured at some point during 2006-2007,—according to a report released today by the health consumer organization Families USA.

<http://www.familiesusa.org/resources/publications/reports/wrong-direction.html>

Based mainly on Census Bureau data, the report showed that approximately 822,000 Utahns (and 89.6 million Americans)—more than one out of three people (34.7 percent in USA) under 65 years of age—were uninsured at some point of time during 2006-2007, most of these uninsured individuals lacked coverage for lengthy periods of time: nearly two-thirds (63.9 percent) were uninsured for six months or more; and over half (50.2 percent) were uninsured for nine months or more.

The number of states where more than one-third of non-elderly people went without health insurance for all or part of a two-year period more than doubled—rising from nine states in 1999-2000 to 20 states plus the District of Columbia in 2006-2007. Texas had the highest rate with 45.7 percent of the non-elderly population uninsured. Utah had the 13th highest rate in the nation at 35.2% or 822,000 people. Even more worrisome, between 2000 and 2007 Utah's rate of uninsured non-elderly adults grew much faster (by 7.1%) than the U.S. rate (5.1%). According to the latest US Census Data released last month, Utah currently has 442,000 uninsured people.

The Families USA report shows that 4 out of 5 of the uninsured (79.3%) were in working families: 70.6 percent were employed full-time, and 8.7 percent were employed part-time. In addition, nearly every age group was affected. Of the total 89.6 million uninsured, 64.2 million were between 18 and 64 years of age. More than one-third (34.9%) were ages 25 to 44—the age group that makes up the largest percentage of the uninsured.

The report also documents the large increase in the number of people who have experienced a loss or lack of health coverage. In the two-year period of 1999-2000, 72.5 million went without health coverage – more than 17 million fewer than the people experiencing a lack of coverage in 2006-2007.

Although nearly half of the uninsured were non-Hispanic whites, the report found that there were huge disparities in the uninsured rate based on race and ethnicity. Among people under 65 years of age, approximately 26.0 percent of non-Hispanic whites were uninsured in the past two years, compared to 44.5 percent for non-Hispanic blacks, and 60.7 percent for Hispanics.

“This report is just more evidence that our current system of funding health care is broken,” Lincoln Nehring, Medicaid Policy Director of the Utah Health Policy Project said. “Our current health insurance system fails to cover too many of us, it’s too expensive, and exasperates health disparities.”

Mr. Nehring said, “There are reform efforts underway in Utah that can improve the system. If we put our heads together, we can provide all Utah residents with quality, affordable coverage and higher quality care. We should not be deterred by those who claim the current health insurance system meets our needs, or that fixing these problems is just too hard. The Families USA report shows that the need for reform is real.” Mr. Nehring further noted, “Along the way to systemic reforms and beyond, we should make sure low-income families are able to access cost-effective programs like CHIP and Medicaid. To this end, Congress needs to fully re-authorize the CHIP program before it expires at the end of this month. If we care about our children’s future, we will encourage every member of Utah’s congressional delegation to work with Sen. Hatch to override President Bush’s promised veto.”

For a copy of the report please visit Families USA’s Web site at www.familiesusa.org

Note to Reporters: UHPP staff can arrange interviews with uninsured individuals and providers. Please call our office: (801) 433-2299.

#####