Let’s Keep All Families Covered: New Report Finds Number of Uninsured L

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Written by: Ciriac Alvarez Valle



Georgetown University Health Policy Institute CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Let’s Keep All Families Covered: New Report Finds Number of Uninsured Latino Children in Utah on the Rise

2020 Utah Legislature Made Strides to Help All Children Stay Covered

Decades of progress improving health coverage rates for Latino children has begun to erode nationwide, and Utah is seeing significant increases in both the number and rate of children going without insurance, according to a new report by UnidosUS and Georgetown University Center for Children and Families. These findings raise concerns that many children may not be able to access the health care they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Utah’s rate of uninsured Latino children rose faster than the national average, a statistically significant increase from 11.1 to 17.3 percent between 2016 and 2018. The number of children increased by about 60 percent, from about 18,900 to more than 30,200. What’s more, Latino children are almost 3½ times as likely to be uninsured as non-Latino children in Utah in 2018, a gap that is greater than the national average.

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The report authors point to Trump Administration policies and rhetoric targeting immigrant families, as well as efforts to undermine health care programs, which have made it more difficult for families to sign their eligible children up for public health coverage. These national factors may influence children in Utah and the trend in the wrong direction.

During the 2020 Legislative Session, the Utah Legislature took a significant measure to reverse this trend and improve coverage for all Utah children by appropriating funding to keep children covered, a policy known as Medicaid 12-month continuous eligibility. Continuous eligibility ensures children can maintain stable, year-round health coverage, even if parents experience temporary changes in income or employment status, especially important given the abrupt changes many low-income families are experiencing now.

State Senator Luz Escamilla, champion for 12-month continuous coverage and children’s health care, said: “Health coverage is critical for all children because it improves their health and educational outcomes during childhood and sets them up for a healthier and more prosperous future with better opportunities to reach their full potential.” Said Senator Escamilla, “The actions this session show that working together we can make progress to help Utah kids.”

A policy of continuous coverage is a key priority of the 100% Kids Coverage Campaign, led by Voices for Utah Children, to ensure that all children in the state have health coverage. The campaign also calls for more Medicaid and CHIP outreach and coverage for children regardless of their family immigration status. Report lead author, Kelly Whitener notes, “The majority of uninsured children are eligible for affordable health coverage through Medicaid or CHIP but not enrolled.”

Voices for Utah Children policy analyst, Ciriac Alvarez Valle said, “Going forward, we will work to help more children and families get covered and overcome barriers to enrollment and care.” Alvarez Valle added, “No family should be afraid to get the care they need. We call on our state leaders to help Utah families feel safe getting health care now.”

For help enrolling in health insurance, visit: www.takecareutah.org or call 2-1-1

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report: https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2020/03/10/decade-of-success-for-latino-childrens-health-now-in-jeopardy/

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