

Percent of Utah Kids Without Insurance Stagnant Since 2000

Written by [Bryan Schott](#) on 17 September 2013. Posted in [Featured Articles](#)

In Utah, 8.5 percent of Utah children are living without health insurance, the same rate as in 2000, according to Census Bureau Current Population Survey data released today. While the percent of uninsured kids rose and fell from 2000 to 2012 and the percent of uninsured children has decreased from 11.4 percent in 2010 to the current rate of 8.5 percent, the reality is that the uninsured rate for kids is the same now as in 2000. The decline over the last few years for children contrasts with the trends in the adult uninsured rate.

Unfortunately, the adult uninsured rate has increased between 2000 and 2012, placing these adults at risk for economic hardship if confronted with a serious illness. In 2000, nearly 12 percent of Utah's adults were uninsured. That rate has increased to 14.4 percent in 2012. The increase is largely because private insurance coverage – in particular, job-based coverage – declined during this period. Unlike children who are likely to qualify for public health insurance when a parent loses private insurance, it is more difficult for adults to qualify for public health insurance. The Affordable Care Act will help those adults acquire health insurance rather than leave them uninsured.

“Right now, when hard-working Utahns lose their job-based coverage due to job loss or because coverage has become too expensive, most have nowhere else to turn,” said Lincoln Nehring, Senior Health Policy Analyst for Voices for Utah Children. “Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, and the new Healthcare.gov Marketplace, that will change dramatically starting in 2014.”

Starting on October 1, Utahns who cannot get affordable health insurance through their jobs but earn too much to qualify for Medicaid can sign up for coverage for 2014 through Healthcare.gov, the state's new health insurance Marketplace. The ACA also will provide new federal subsidies to help eligible Utahns pay their premiums and reduce their out-of-pocket health costs.

Unfortunately, many uninsured Utahns who are not eligible for the federal subsidy will not be able to afford insurance through the Marketplace and will be left out in the cold with no options. Utah currently does not provide Medicaid coverage to adults without children, and only provides coverage to parents with household incomes below 45% of poverty. Further, only families with incomes above poverty are eligible to receive tax subsidies to purchase coverage on the Healthcare.gov Marketplace leaving a gap in coverage for many Utah adults, if the state fails to expand Medicaid, as established by the ACA. Expanding Medicaid would provide coverage to 126,000 low income parents and childless adults in Utah.

“Although the October 1 launch of Utah's Healthcare.gov Marketplace is a great start, to make sure all Utah families have access to affordable health coverage, Utah must expand Medicaid to low income parents and adults,” says Nehring. “We have the chance to help those who can't afford health insurance receive the care they need at a very low cost to the state and to boost Utah's economy at the same time. It would be a mistake to let this opportunity pass.”

Additional Census information from the American Community Survey will be released on September 19, 2013. Information from this data source is based on a nationwide sample of 3 million households compared to only 100,000 from the Current Population Survey. Voices for Utah Children will be analyzing data on poverty and uninsured rates from this new data as well.