



**Press Release**  
For Immediate Release  
September 10, 2009

**Contact:**  
Patricia Tennen  
812-391-0109  
ptennen@kyyouth.org

**Lack of Health Insurance, Continued Decline in Job-Based Coverage Serious Problems in Kentucky, New Census Bureau Data Show**  
Recession Likely to Further Expand Ranks of Uninsured

**Louisville, KY** – Roughly one in seven Kentuckians lacked health coverage in 2007 and 2008, according to Census Bureau data released today, this is slightly below the national average of 15.4%. Employer-provided health insurance continued to decline nationwide. The percentage of Kentuckians with employer-provided coverage was 60.2 percent, a decrease of 7.8 percent from 2000 and 2001. These findings, which will almost certainly worsen in 2009 because of the recession, highlight the need for realistic and common sense reform to our health care system.

“While Kentucky is in better shape than many other states, far too many Kentuckians lack adequate health coverage or are at risk of losing coverage. Today’s numbers also do not reflect the full impact of the recession. The severity of job loss we’ve seen and the continued financial crisis in our state suggest we’ll see bad news in the numbers for 2009,” said Terry Brooks, executive director of Kentucky Youth Advocates.

The data were released today on the Census Bureau's website and represent the only data available on state health insurance trends over time. (On September 22, Census will release additional estimates of state and local health insurance status from a different survey, the American Community Survey. However, that release will not provide information on health insurance trends because health insurance questions were not asked on that survey before 2008.)

Some 626,000 Kentuckians, 14.8 percent of the population, were uninsured in 2007-2008, compared with 488,500, or 12.2 percent lacking coverage at the start of the decade (2000-2001).

The Census figures for Kentucky average two years of survey data in order to improve the reliability of the estimates.

Erosion of employer-sponsored health insurance is the primary cause of the lost ground in coverage, which in turn reflects the rising cost of health care. Both employers and employees are having greater difficulty affording health insurance.

In 2000-2001, 68 percent of individuals in Kentucky had employer-sponsored health insurance. That share dropped to 63.9 percent in 2005-2006 and to 60.2 percent in 2007-2008.

The number of uninsured individuals in Kentucky would have been even higher if public coverage had not increased from 11.4 percent of individuals in 2000-2001 to 16.9 percent in 2007-2008 – a 5.5 percent increase which likely compensated for much of the loss in employer-sponsored insurance over the same period.

The number of uninsured in Kentucky is expected to be much higher in 2009 because of accelerated job loss in the state resulting from the recession. Kentucky lost 17,900 jobs in 2008 compared to late 2007 but has already lost an additional 79,000 jobs through July of this year.

“As working parents lose their jobs and employers cut back benefits, many families are finding themselves uninsured. More families are turning to Medicaid, or rely on more costly interventions like emergency room visits and chronic care rather than prevention. This shifts costs to the public-sector,” said Brooks.

Kentucky’s policymakers will face tough budgeting decisions for 2010 and 2011. While today’s release of state revenue receipts show continued decline, ensuring adequate revenue to minimize cuts in public health insurance programs will be critical to helping hard-pressed families stay afloat during these difficult economic times.

###

***Kentucky Youth Advocates*** is the home of Kentucky’s Tax and Budget Initiative, a member of the nationwide State Fiscal Analysis Initiative.