



Press Release
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Health Coverage Weakens in Kentucky and U.S.

New Census Bureau Data Shows Large National Increase in Poverty

Jeffersontown, KY – The rate of uninsured Kentuckians increased in 2009, primarily due to a decrease in employer-sponsored health insurance. The number of uninsured across the country increased as well. Nearly one in five Kentuckians lacked health coverage in 2008 and 2009, according to new Census Bureau data, which is the same as the nationwide rate. To improve reliability of the estimates, the Census Bureau averages two years of survey data. Between 2008 and 2009, 58.9 percent of Kentuckians had employer provided coverage, down 2.5 percentage points from 2006 and 2007. The number of uninsured children has remained low.

Public programs, including Medicaid and KCHIP, have helped lessen the blow of decreasing employer coverage, particularly for children. In Kentucky, the coverage of children has risen 5.7 percentage points since 2006 and 2007.

“It is evident state-level efforts to enroll more eligible children in public health insurance programs through outreach and policy changes have paid off,” said Terry Brooks, Executive Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. “By making a commitment to invest in Kentucky’s children, ensuring their health and economic well-being, we are building a stronger future for Kentucky. In fact, there are practical and available next steps around other work supports that should be Frankfort imperatives. Those efforts will make a real difference for Kentucky families and will boost the overall economic climate in the Commonwealth.”

Nationally, 2009 brought a significant increase in poverty. Poverty rates for children jumped from 19 percent in 2008 to 20.7 percent in 2009, according to new Census Bureau data. The total poverty rate increased from 13.2 percent in 2008 to 14.3 percent in 2009. The data also includes preliminary state-level numbers indicating poverty rates in Kentucky did not

significantly change since 2008, however more reliable estimates to be released on September 28 could potentially tell a different story.

“These new numbers illustrate the deep effects of the recession on families and children across the country. Many Kentucky families continue to struggle as unemployment remains high,” said Terry Brooks, Executive Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. “Work supports like food stamps, and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) are critical tools to help families weather the downturn and provide for basic needs. We must preserve and extend these effective solutions.”

Due to continuing state budget shortfalls Kentucky policymakers will only continue to face difficult decisions about funding programs aiding children and families. Providing stable and predictable funding to ensure healthy children is important for building a strong, healthy future.

Note: The data released today on the Census Bureau’s website provide an initial look at state poverty levels and the only numbers available on state health insurance trends since the beginning of the recession. On September 28, the Census will release more authoritative estimates of state and local poverty as well as additional health insurance data from the American Community Survey.

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***[Kentucky Youth Advocates](#)** is home to the Kentucky Tax and Budget Initiative. We work to promote an adequate, sustainable and transparent budget upon which we can build strong public structures and the long-term economic vitality of the Commonwealth. Funding is provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Stoneman Family Foundation.*