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Just Released: Idaho's 2020 Uninsured Children Report

Federal protections kept Idaho's uninsured rate from skyrocketing last year, but more needs to be done to prevent child health coverage loss moving forward.

Boise, ID: [A new report](#) released by Idaho Kids Covered shows 2020 health coverage trends for children and explains how policies put in place during the national public health emergency declaration kept the uninsured rate for Idaho kids from drastically increasing during COVID-19. The report also shows that children living in poverty nationally experienced an increase from 7.8 to 9.3 percent in the child uninsured rate while higher income families saw a decrease from 2.6 to 2.2 percent.

Every year the American Community Survey produces yearly uninsured rate estimates, but due to census data collection challenges caused by the pandemic the U.S. Census Bureau's survey was unable to produce these estimates by state. [Idaho Kids Covered 2020 Uninsured Kids Explainer](#) highlights how other trends in Medicaid and national data from the Current Population Survey can help highlight children's coverage in 2020. Emergency Medicaid flexibilities and protections provided enhanced funding for Medicaid and suspended disenrollment preventing Idaho children from losing Medicaid coverage during the pandemic.

"We have seen troubling trends in children's coverage over the last several years, with over 24,000 kids in Idaho lacking coverage just before COVID-19 and the economic recession" said Logan Dennis, Health Policy Research and Communications Associate with Idaho Voices for Children. "Fortunately, federal emergency Medicaid protections enacted during the public health crisis created a safety net during the pandemic ensuring continuous coverage for over 36,000 Idaho children. When these protections end next year and state officials resume normal operations, using all available avenues to carefully update information will be crucial to ensure that no eligible child loses their health coverage."

Expiring Medicaid protections could lead to gaps in coverage for children. Research shows that interruptions in continuous coverage is associated with delayed care, unmet medical needs, and unfilled prescriptions. Consistent access to health coverage improves child health and wellbeing in the long and short term. It reduces administrative burden and costs for families and state officials, while driving more efficient healthcare spending.

"The healthy development of children relies on the ability to access healthcare services on time. When children have a delay in well child visits, developmental screenings, and other services

because of gaps in coverage, we are missing critical opportunities to intervene and ensure they are accessing what they need to be on track” says Dr. Sara Swoboda, a pediatrician in the Treasure Valley. “I know we all share the goal of ensuring that Idaho’s kids have access to health coverage and care, so they have the best chance to be healthy, do well in school, and succeed in life.”

To prevent the state’s uninsured child rate from increasing, Idaho Kids Covered outlined the following steps officials and policymakers can take to ensure no eligible children lose their health insurance due to procedural errors as Medicaid continuous coverage protections expire:

- 1) Taking advantage of extended expiration timelines,
- 2) Upgrading systems and technology to process influx of Medicaid renewals,
- 3) Funding the state’s full share of Medicaid for children and families,
- 4) Coordinating with private health insurance providers to ensure smooth transitions between public and private coverage,
- 5) Utilizing multiple forms of contact to reach enrollees and update eligibility information including phone calls, traditional mail, email, and text messages, and
- 6) Conducting timely and robust outreach, education, and notification to enrollees about all upcoming deadlines, administrative changes, and coverage changes.

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About Idaho Kids Covered

Idaho Kids Covered is a statewide network of health care advocates and stakeholders working to support affordable access to health coverage and care for all children in Idaho. Idaho Kids Covered is a project of Idaho Voices for Children, visit idahokidscovered.org to learn more.