



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON

**children  
& families**

Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count

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## **Wisconsin Uninsured Children on the Rise: Rural Kids Biggest Jump** *Need for Expansion of BadgerCare Validated*

**Madison** – The jump in uninsured children in Wisconsin confirms the need for health care coverage options through expansion of programs like BadgerCare. Wisconsin has long been a leader in the nation in the number of children with health insurance coverage; these statistics prove the need to carry that movement forward.

“The jump in the number of uninsured children will invigorate plans to cover all children in Wisconsin. In Wisconsin, we know the true value of health care coverage for our children and have always made it a top priority; this news gives us increased motivation for the final push to enact cost effective coverage plans like BadgerCare Plus,” said Charity Eleson, executive director of Wisconsin Council on Children and Families.

The Department of Health and Family services released today its health care survey for 2005. The 22 percent increase in uninsured children last year appears to be a result of declining employer coverage, particularly for dependents, as well as increased paperwork that has made it harder for some families to enroll in BadgerCare.

“This fall many candidates ran on the issue of health care coverage for Wisconsin’s working families. That promise will translate into action with these statistics. Covering every child in Wisconsin is an achievable first goal in health care coverage and one we can quickly enact in this biennial budget,” said Eleson.

Some of the other findings in the new report include:

- An estimated 562,000 Wisconsinites were uninsured for all or part of 2005, compared to 545,000 in 2004 and 496,000 in 2003.
- Among the state’s 110,000 uninsured children, 93 percent had at least one parent who was working.
- About 21 percent of people with incomes below the poverty level were uninsured at the time of the survey, compared to 4 percent of people with incomes of at least 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

“The decline in insurance coverage has particularly been a problem in the more rural parts of the state. The department’s data show that about four-fifths of the increase in the uninsured over the last two years has been in ‘non-metro’ areas,” said Jon Peacock, WCCF research director. “The Governor’s BadgerCare Plus proposal would help address that problem by making it possible for many farm families to enroll and by removing paperwork barriers to enrollment in the state program.”

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The BadgerCare Plus proposal will be submitted by the Governor early in the next session of the Legislature. It would allow virtually all children in the state to have access to health insurance, but DHFS estimates that the proposal would have little or no net cost because of administrative savings and increased use of managed care.

Several other states have recently approved universal health care coverage for children, including Illinois, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. Minnesota's Republican Governor also recently proposed making health insurance available for all of that state's uninsured children.

*Wisconsin Council on Children and Families is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan child advocacy organization. Celebrating 125 years raising voices to make every kid count.*

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