

For Immediate Release
August 29, 2006

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Wisconsin Families in Poverty Continue to Struggle *Health Insurance Coverage Improved*

Madison – US Census Bureau reports released today show the rate of Wisconsinites with health care coverage increased, the rate of all in poverty dropped slightly, while children in poverty remained statistically the same. However, the median household income in Wisconsin dropped significantly.

Median Income: Median household income in Wisconsin dropped significantly in 2004-05 to slightly less than \$46,000 per year – a decrease of \$2,226, or 4.6 percent.

“The drop in the median income shows that families are still struggling. However, that drop did not result in a significant increase in the number of people living in poverty, which could mean the policies like the increase in Wisconsin’s minimum wage have succeeded in helping Wisconsin’s working families stay above poverty,” said Charity Eleson, executive director of WCCF.

“As a nation and in Wisconsin, the rate of poverty continues to remain stagnant despite the economic recovery,” said Eleson. “That recovery has not trickled down to average households or to Wisconsin’s struggling families.”

Health care insurance coverage: The number of uninsured in Wisconsin dropped from about 580,000 in 2003-04 to 550,000 in 2004-05. That means an estimated 30,000 fewer people went without any health insurance last year. Wisconsin continues to rank 4th best in terms of the percentage of the population (10 percent) that is uninsured.

“We can take pride in the fact that the number of uninsured people in our state dropped slightly last year, and we continue to rank 4th best nationally. However, with more than half a million people who don’t have health insurance, we need to build on our successes and work to cover Wisconsin’s remaining uninsured,” said Jon Peacock, research director for WCCF.

Poverty rate for all: Both US Census Bureau surveys released today show poverty rates in Wisconsin have nearly stayed about the same, with data from American Community Survey showing a drop from 11 percent to 10.2 percent. In 2004, Wisconsin had the highest rate of growth in poverty in the nation, according to Current Population Survey data.

Child poverty rate: The rate of children in Wisconsin living at or below the poverty line in 2005 is 13.9 percent. That number is essentially unchanged from 14.0 percent in 2004.

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“It is good news that Wisconsin’s poverty rate has declined slightly. Our increase last year was significant, so the improved numbers are spelling relief for some households,” said Eleson. “However, the number of children living in poverty is roughly at the same rate and represents a substantial increase since 2000. As a consequence, it’s important to continue to improve policies that can positively affect children and families in need.”

Extremely Poor Children: Nearly 84,000 children are living at or below 50% of poverty, which is roughly the same as last year. Annual income for a family of four at 50 percent of poverty is \$10,000.

“The number of children in these lowest income categories has grown significantly since 2000, and we need to learn more about what’s behind this trend so we can fine-tune appropriate responses,” said Eleson.

Recommendations:

- Education and training that meets the specific needs of Wisconsin families and new economy businesses by providing targeted training to potential employees.
- Improve the effectiveness of the state’s economic development incentives for businesses to ensure the public investments made are producing family supporting jobs.
- Continue to find ways to reach the more than 550,000 uninsured people in Wisconsin.
- Support and improve policies that help negate the effects of poverty on children, specifically quality early education opportunities for every child in Wisconsin.
- Maintain Wisconsin’s critical income support programs, including child care tuition assistance, BadgerCare and Medicaid, the refundable Earned Income Tax Credit and food security programs.

Complete US Census Data is available at www.census.gov

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families: Celebrating 125 years. www.wcc.org

WCCF: Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count

**Percent of Children Under 18 Years Below Poverty Level
in the Past 12 Months** (For Whom Poverty Status is Determined)

For the first time this year, the American Community Survey includes data for many Wisconsin counties. The child poverty figures are shown below.

	2004	2005
Wisconsin	14.0	13.9
Cities		
Appleton	NA	10.4
Green Bay	NA	22.2
Kenosha	NA	15.9
Madison	NA	18.3
Milwaukee	41.3	38.1
Racine	NA	31.5
Waukesha	NA	5.9
Counties		
Brown County	NA	13.7
Dane County	10.7	11.7
Dodge County	NA	7
Eau Claire County	NA	18.7
Fond du Lac County	NA	11.6
Jefferson County	NA	10.9
Kenosha County	NA	12.3
La Crosse County	NA	16.6
Manitowoc County	NA	11.1
Marathon County	NA	6.9
Milwaukee County	28.9	27.8
Outagamie County	NA	10.2
Ozaukee County	NA	1.5
Portage County	NA	10.7
Racine County	NA	15.5
Rock County	NA	9.7
St. Croix County	NA	6.8
Sheboygan County	NA	7.6
Walworth County	NA	6.6
Washington County	NA	6.5
Waukesha County	3.0	4.0
Winnebago County	NA	10.5
Wood County	NA	8.9

Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey

NOTE. Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see Survey Methodology.