Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

We're Losing Ground on Children's Health Insurance Coverage in 200 Words

Population Health Sciences

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We've recently seen lots of new data and analyses on the state of children's health insurance coverage in the United States, and the news isn't good.

In a new report, Georgetown's Center for Children and Families show that 320,000 children lost health insurance coverage from 2018-2019, the biggest uptick in more than a decade. Notably these data pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic, and we expect to see uninsurance rise when we can fully account for the loss of employer-sponsored insurance in this economic crisis.

Digging deeper into these numbers, national level losses were most pronounced for Latino and White children. At the state level, 128,000 children in Pennsylvania were uninsured in 2019, an increase of approximately 12,000 since 2018.

The reasons for these losses are complex, and certainly include ongoing concerns within immigrant communities about the "public charge" rule, as well as inadequate funding for outreach and enrollment in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). In a separate new analysis, Urban Institute highlights that 2.1 million children, more than half of all those uninsured, were eligible for Medicaid/CHIP but not enrolled in 2018.

To address these worrying trends requires a concerted national effort and more financial support for the public insurance programs that are increasingly important for children's coverage. There are several proposals for how to leverage Medicaid/CHIP or the Affordable Care Act's health insurance marketplaces to achieve universal coverage for children, including our own and that of others. They all, however, require a recommitment to achieving adequate, affordable coverage for all children—or universal children's health coverage will only slip further from our grasp.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Strategic Operations & Communications Director Lauren Walens.

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