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New Report from Georgetown University Finds Wisconsin No Longer a National Leader in Reducing Uninsured Children's Rate

*Wisconsin dropped eight places in rankings and is struggling to insure children in rural parts of the state
– Analysts warn that ranking could continue to drop*

Madison, WI – A [new report](#) from the Georgetown Center for Children and Families finds that Wisconsin is no longer a national leader in insuring children. The state slipped from having the 6th highest percentage of children with health insurance in 2008 to a rank of 14th in 2013. Researchers also found that children living in rural areas of the state are more likely to be uninsured.

“We can do better for our kids,” said Jon Peacock, research director at the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF). “It’s time to cut the red tape and make it easier for families to sign their children up for insurance and keep them signed up. It’s also time for Congress to renew funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program, which has very successfully reduced the number of uninsured children nationally.”

The study examined all 50 states and found that in Wisconsin:

- Approximately 61,000 kids, or 4.7 percent of the state’s children, were uninsured last year.
- The figures have remained stagnant since 2008, despite the national uninsured rate for children dropping by 24 percent in the same time period.
- While U.S. Census Bureau data show that 30 percent of Wisconsin children live in rural parts of the state, these areas account for 42 percent of Wisconsin’s uninsured children.

Analysts warned that the state’s ranking could drop further since the Georgetown report does not reflect insured rates from 2014. Over the past 12 months, the number of kids participating in BadgerCare, the state insurance program, dropped by nearly 11,000. The decrease appears to be an indirect effect of ending BadgerCare eligibility for approximately 60,000 parents.

“When Governor Thompson and the legislature created BadgerCare and expanded eligibility for parents in 1999, the state significantly improved enrollment among children who were already eligible,” said Sashi Gregory, WCCF’s health care analyst. “Restoring eligibility to cover low-wage workers who are barely above the poverty level is a key step to Wisconsin again becoming a leader in children’s coverage.”

Families in Wisconsin currently have multiple opportunities to sign up for health insurance. On November 15, a new open enrollment period starts for people interested in getting health insurance

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through the federal Marketplace. People who are eligible for BadgerCare or Medicaid can sign up at any time during the year.

WCCF encourages families who would like help enrolling to call 1-800-362-3002 or visit the [BadgerCare Plus Customer Help](#) page online.

“Research shows that when children have health insurance, they enjoy better health throughout childhood and do better in school,” said Joan Alker, executive director of the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families. “Improving children’s health today is a smart investment in the future.”

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The new report from the Georgetown Center for Children and Families can be found here:

<http://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Childrens-Coverage-at-a-Crossroads.pdf>

WCCF is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, engaged in research, policy analysis, public education and advocacy on a wide range of issue to improve outcomes for Wisconsin’s children and families.