



CHILD DEFENDER - NEW YORK

A Call to Action from the Children's Defense Fund - New York
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LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

New CDF Report Focuses on Racial and Income Health Differences and Practices That Reduce Disparities

A new study released by the Children's Defense Fund this week finds Black and Latino children are twice as likely as White children to not have health insurance. The report, *Improving Children's Health: Understanding Children's Health Disparities and Promising Approaches to Address Them*, documents health disparities among children and explores effective community-based strategies designed to tackle these differences.

The CDF analysis outlines stark racial and ethnic differences in health insurance coverage as well as access to needed medical care. Findings include the following:

- Latino children are more than three times as likely and Black children are nearly twice as likely as White children to be uninsured.
- Among uninsured children, Black children are almost 60 percent more likely than White children to have an unmet medical need.
- Black children are almost three times as likely as White children to have elevated blood lead levels which would show an elevated risk for lead poisoning.
- Black children under the age of five are almost three times as likely as young White children to be hospitalized for asthma.

While New York has made tremendous progress in decreasing the number of uninsured children by 36 percent over the past six years, there are still almost 500,000 children without health insurance. Twenty-three percent of these children are Black, 26.7 percent of them are Latino, and 10.5 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander. The remaining 37.7 percent are White children.

With almost half a million children without health insurance, the State suffers the burden of high health care costs incurred through emergency room and uncompensated care. Children without health insurance are five times more likely to go to an emergency room for their regular source of care.

Donna Lawrence, Executive Director of CDF-NY says, "It's not only morally correct to provide health insurance, but it's also a more fiscally sound way to approach the problem of health costs. An average visit to an emergency room in New York costs about \$400, compare that to the average cost of a doctor visit in New York, which is about \$60."

"When they are really, really sick, when they're running a fever and they have to go in and get that prescription; they go to the emergency room and it costs us all a lot more money," she adds.

In order to eliminate unnecessary health care costs and address racial and ethnic health disparities, we must do more to expand New York's outreach and enrollment strategies and simplify the enrollment process to make it easier for all children to enroll in public health insurance.

To download the report go to www.childrensdefense.org

Senate Minority Proposal to Expand Health Insurance Coverage for Children

In an effort to reach the nearly half a million children who are currently without insurance in New York, the Senate Minority has unveiled its plan to expand Child Health Plus B coverage from its current levels at 250 percent of the federal poverty level to 350 percent. The plan also proposes various program simplification measures that would make it easier for families to access public health insurance.

In response to the proposal, Donna Lawrence, Executive Director of CDF-NY, says, "The Children's Defense Fund applauds the Senate Minority for their leadership and vision on the critical issue of health insurance coverage for children. Their proposal is an important first step toward the goal to which we should all strive—ensuring that every single child in New York State has comprehensive affordable health insurance coverage."

In addition, the Senate Minority plan includes proposals to decrease asthma rates for children, lower prescription drug costs and expand funding for the facilitated enrollment program.

Women Leaders from Across the Globe Gather in Jordan with Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah and Marian Wright Edelman to launch the Global Women's Action Network for Children

Every minute, somewhere in the world, a mother dies during pregnancy or childbirth; every hour 450 newborn babies die; and every three seconds a child under five dies. Added together, that's more than 11 million women and children dying each year from mostly preventable causes. More than 100 million children across the globe do not attend school. The majority of them are girls.

This weekend, women leaders from around the globe - including heads of state, leading advocates for children, philanthropic leaders, and Nobel Laureates - gather at the Dead Sea in Jordan for a three day conference designed to address these critical issues. The goal of the conference, entitled *Mobilizing for Action*, is to determine the most effective way to turn the tide on maternal and newborn mortality and to ensure that girls everywhere have access to education.

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia will speak at Sunday's opening ceremony on June 11th. The three-day conference also marks the launch of the *Global Women's Action Network for Children*, a new international advocacy group led by prominent women from around the world dedicated to identifying, funding, and supporting programs to help women, girls, and infants.

The Conference and the Global Women's Action Network is convened by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; UN Human Rights Commissioner and former President of Ireland Mary Robinson; Melanne Vermeer, CEO of Vital Voices; Mahnaz Afkhami, Founder and President of the Women's Learning Partnership; and Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund.

Other conference participants include: the First Ladies of Ukraine, Bahrain, Egypt, Rwanda, Zambia, Mauritania; and a group of Nobel Peace Laureates including Betty Williams, Jody Williams and Dr. Shirin Ebadi.

The conference is held under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah and is organized by the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA), in Jordan, and the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), in the United States.

Hunger Awareness Day Reveals City Council Aware and Moving Forward to Combat Hunger

In honor of Hunger Awareness Day on June 6, the New York City Council and former Senator George McGovern unveiled a citywide campaign to increase the number of children who participate in the school breakfast and summer meals programs at a press conference on the steps of City Hall. They were joined by a dozen city council members, the Public Advocate, and dozens of food and nutrition advocates, including CDF-NY.

Data analysis by CDF-NY on Summer Meals shows there has been a steady decline in participation. Last summer in July, the highest participating month, the number of children who participated in Summer Meals was 40,000 less than the number of children who participated two years earlier.

"We are here to support a simple, common sense idea: when kids eat well in the morning, they do well at school all day long," Speaker Christine Quinn said at the press conference. "Eating breakfast may sound basic, but the reality is that too many children across New York go to school hungry each morning. We are working to change that. And, as hunger does not take a vacation, we are also working to enroll more kids in the Summer Meals program. By launching these initiatives, we are taking a big step toward reducing hunger across the City."

"It is a sad, true fact that New Yorkers are at risk of going hungry every day," said Council Member Eric Gioia. "The City has a moral obligation to provide our neediest citizens with access to nutritious meals. By removing needless bureaucratic red tape, our plan can feed thousands of more New Yorkers and take a huge step towards ending hunger in our City."

"Knowing how important nutrition is to child development, we have a responsibility not only to make sure that our kids have books and computers when they go to school, but to see that they start the day with a healthy breakfast," said Council Member Robert Jackson. "By helping more children across the City access nutritious food, we will be giving them the chance to reach their potential."

To encourage participation in the school breakfast program, the City Council will enlist high school students to enter a competition to create a poster promotion campaign. The winning poster will be posted in public schools citywide.

In addition to increasing the number of participants in school meals, Speaker Quinn has proposed initiatives to coordinate the more than 20 City Agencies that interact with the food system, enroll more eligible New Yorkers in the food stamp program, and increase the number and accessibility of Farmers' Markets, especially in less affluent communities.