



New Census Data Shows 1.3 Million Children Have Fallen into Poverty Since 2000

Number of Uninsured Children Rising

Since reaching a historic low in 2000, over the last seven years, the number of children living in poverty in the United States has grown by 11.3 percent to approach 13 million, even after a 145,000 child improvement in 2005, according to an analysis by CDF of U.S. Census Bureau data released this week.

A child's likelihood of being poor has increased by almost 9 percent. Today's Census Bureau report also showed that, contrary to recent trends, the number and percent of uninsured children increased in 2005. Children in poverty were more likely to be uninsured than other children.

"Poor families and children are being left behind as the benefits of a steadily growing economy fail to trickle down. The persistently high level of child poverty and lack of health coverage for children reflects conscious and misguided political choices," said Marian Wright Edelman, President and Founder of CDF.

"How can the Bush Administration and Congressional leaders give enormous tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans who have benefited most from the economic recovery while threatening to cut funding for Medicaid, food stamps and other programs that assist poor children who continue to be left behind? What kind of country are we that we can't seem to figure out a way to provide health care coverage to our children who represent our future?"

Edelman also pointed out the fact that according to today's report, seven out of every 10 poor children in 2005 had at least one parent who was employed. A CDF analysis of U.S. Commerce Department data finds that the share of national

income going to the wages and salaries of employees was lower in 2005 than it has been in any year since the data started being collected in 1929.

"Today's report shows that sadly, in this country, working hard and playing by the rules is not enough to lift families out of poverty. We need action and leadership from Washington and across the country to start to address the root causes of poverty and the crying need for health and mental health care coverage for our children. Far less wealthy industrialized countries have committed to end child poverty, while the United States is sliding backwards. We can do better. We must demand that our leaders do better," Edelman said.

Child poverty is significantly up among all racial groups. Key findings from the Census data show that since 2000:

- The number of non-Latino White children living in poverty has increased by more than 230,000 to reach 4.3 million.
- More than 600,000 Latino children have fallen into poverty.
- The number of Black children living in poverty has increased by 260,000 so that, in 2005, one in every three Black children living in America is poor.
- More than a million children have fallen into extreme poverty (22 percent increase) over the past five years – now gripping over 5.6 million children. Extreme poverty means living with annual income below \$7,870 for a family of three.

The Children's Defense Fund will release further state specific poverty and health care numbers reports based on today's Census Report in coming days.

For more information, visit www.childrendefense.org.



Visit www.childrensdefense.org to get involved!

CHILD WATCH: KATRINA'S CHILDREN, ONE YEAR LATER

By Marian Wright Edelman

It's been a year since Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, leaving the entire world horrified by the images of desperate people left trapped by the storm. We saw then that even though our government promises to defend freedom around the world, it wasn't prepared to protect its own citizens before or after the storm. Twelve months later, how are Katrina's survivors doing? Shamefully, many are still struggling mightily to put their lives back together with far too little help from federal, state and local governments.

It is morally intolerable that a year after Hurricane Katrina, many thousands of children and families are still suffering and going without critical supports like health and mental health care and housing and schooling in the richest nation on earth. Experts testified at a July Congressional hearing in New Orleans that mental health needs are a critical concern for survivors. There are only ten mental health pediatric and youth beds available in New Orleans although the number of children with unresolved mental health problems has increased. There were 3200 physicians in Orleans and surrounding parishes before the storm; only 1400 are practicing now requiring many families to see unfamiliar doctors and to drive many miles for health care. Homelessness is on the rise, and thousands of people continue to live in shelters, trailer parks, and with relatives and strangers with no relief in sight—just *stuck on stuck*, as a homeless state employee said.

Only 22 of New Orleans's 125 public schools reopened during the 2005-2006 school year and countless children lost much school time in that city and other cities. They hope to increase that number to 56 this year but are still struggling to find enough teachers to fill the 400 empty slots. Children are returning without schools or child care spaces or after-school programs, roaming the streets or remaining idle in barren trailer camps. More and more teenagers are returning to New Orleans without a parent or a permanent place to live.

Juvenile crime is increasing. Concerns about youth violence and crime reached a peak when five teenagers were killed on a single night in June.

The Children's Defense Fund is doing everything it can to help through 15 CDF Freedom Schools programs which provided positive summer and after-school opportunities for children, six of which were enabled by the group of prominent women from Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. who joined us in New Orleans for a Katrina Child Watch visit in May. They also brokered funds for a new Mobile Health Van which is about to become operational. Their quick action and that from other organizations and the faith community have been bright spots in the city's recovery struggle. But these are tiny fingers in the dikes of need that cry out for effective government and private sector system response. The federal government needs to provide Emergency Disaster Relief Medicaid to ensure health and mental health care and emergency services to survivors. Children need more and better quality schools and after school programs and safe havens from New Orleans streets. And all Gulf Coast children need, as one young boy said, "*hope*."

We need to make sure our nation – *their nation* – doesn't forget Katrina's children, ignore them, neglect them, and continue to leave them behind, invisible and uncared for, like the debris still littering the Ninth Ward and other devastated communities across the Gulf Coast. We need a forward looking national disaster policy and health and mental health care for every child *now*. The storm is still raging for many of Katrina's children a year later. Our children need hope and help *now*. You can help. See www.childrensdefense.org.

Marian Wright Edelman is President and Founder of the Children's Defense Fund and its Action Council.

MARCH AND RALLY IN D.C. FOR JUST IMMIGRATION REFORM Thursday, September 7, 2006 4:00 p.m.

Join groups from across the county as we call for:

- Path to citizenship for millions of hard-working immigrants
- Keeping all our families together by reducing backlogs and ending deportations
- Protections for immigrant and U.S. born workers
- Strong protections of civil rights and civil liberties for all

Organized by the New York Immigration Coalition. For more information, please contact: Angela Lee at (212) 627-2227 ext. 229, alee@thenyic.org or Avidah Moussavian at (212) 627-2227 ext. 244, amoussavian@thenyic.org.