

New Statistics Reveal No Change in Child Poverty

NCCP Dismayed that Number of Children Without Health Insurance Rises by 8 Percent

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The U.S. Census Bureau's annual release of data on poverty, income, and health insurance revealed that the official child poverty rate in the United States remained unchanged in 2006, hovering at about 17.5 percent. We at the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) are extremely concerned not only that child poverty did not decline, but also that the number of uninsured children increased for the second year in a row.

According to the new figures, 12.8 million children live in families with incomes below the official poverty level—\$20,000 a year for a family of four in 2006. Since 2000, the annual Census Bureau figures have shown that the number of children living in poverty has either increased or remained stagnant each year. In fact, there were 1.2 million more poor children in 2006 compared to 2000. And the number of children without health insurance increased by more than 600,000 in just one year, reaching 8.7 million. Nearly one in five children living in poverty is uninsured.

Today's data release revealed another troubling fact—real median earnings of full-time, year-round workers fell by more than a full percentage point. "Although some areas of the economy appear strong, today's numbers are a troubling reminder that prosperity is benefiting only the very highest earners," says Dr. Jane Knitzer, Director of NCCP.

It's clear that child poverty has dramatic, negative consequences both for those who experience it—and for our society as a whole. Moreover, flaws in the official poverty measure mean that it fails to capture the true extent of economic hardship in America. The actual number of children growing up in families who struggle to meet their basic needs is closer to 30 million than 13.

We know that sound public policies can make a difference. "To provide for their children, low-income workers need higher wages, and they need assistance paying for expensive budget items like child care and health care," asserts Dr. Nancy Cauthen, NCCP's Deputy Director. "It's rather ironic that we're having to fight to preserve and expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program at a time when the number of uninsured children is increasing. We should—and can—do better," continues Dr. Cauthen. "It's simply a matter of priorities."

Learn more about child poverty and low-wage work at: www.nccp.org.

To speak with an NCCP expert about the new poverty numbers, contact Jodie Briggs at (646)284-9619 or briggs@nccp.org.

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The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is the nation's leading public policy center dedicated to promoting the economic security, health, and well-being of America's low-income families and children. Part of Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, NCCP uses research to inform policy and practice with the goal of ensuring positive outcomes for the next generation.