NC Child

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Contact: Laila A. Bell, Director of Research & Data | laila@ncchild.org OR 919.834.6623 x225

4.4 Percent of Children in Bertie County Lack Health Insurance

Potential Federal Cuts Could Increase Uninsured in Bertie

BERTIE--Good health provides a strong foundation for children's success in all areas of life, and health insurance coverage is a critical resource that supports health and wellness. Ninety-six percent of children in Bertie have health insurance thanks in large part to expansions in coverage created by the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, and NC Health Choice. But new data released today by NC Child shows federal health care reform could significantly affect Bertie children's access to health insurance, particularly for the 2,862 children covered by public health insurance programs.

"The gains we have made in children's health insurance coverage are largely a result of investing in and strengthening public health insurance programs, like Medicaid and CHIP," said Laila A. Bell, director of research and data at NC Child. "If we want to build on our past progress, the U.S. Senate must reject the cuts to Medicaid and consumer protections in the American Health Care Act."

The data cards present local snapshot of key data points regarding children's well-being. These data points, including the children's health insurance rate, have the potential to worsen if the Senate approves the American Health Care Act (AHCA) or similar legislation, or if Congress fails to fund the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The AHCA rolls back key provisions of the Affordable Care Act and caps the Medicaid program, which would have a profound impact on Bertie children's coverage and the benefits that are available to them. CHIP provides health insurance to over 100,000 children in North Carolina-- 173 of whom live in Bertie. It's unclear how these children would maintain insurance coverage with the loss of federal funding.

The county data cards also show that not every child in Bertie enjoys the same opportunities for good health.

"Bertie has reached an all-time high in its children's health insurance coverage, mirroring the state and national trend," said Bell. "While we should celebrate this achievement, we should also look closely at the data regarding other factors that shape child health."

Bell says social and economic circumstance play a big role in children's health. In Bertie County:

- **The life expectancy for a newborn at birth is 76 years**, -5.9 years shorter than in Chatham County which has the highest life expectancy for babies in NC.
- **13.6 percent of babies are born at a low birthweight** placing them at greater risk for lifelong health challenges.
- **27.9 percent of children live in households that are food insecure** and struggle to provide consistent and adequate nutrition.
- **63.7 of children live in poor or low-income homes**, a significant risk factor for children's academic and health success.

If left unaddressed these preventable obstacles can turn into permanent roadblocks that result in dead ends for Bertie children's education, development, social and emotional outcomes.

"These health challenges are avoidable," Bell said. "We know that smart public policy decisions can help enhance local efforts to ensure all children in Bertie live in homes and communities that support their health and development."

The county data cards identify three investments leaders and policymakers in Bertie and North Carolina can make to significantly improve the health of its children and families:

- Increase health insurance access for low-income adults of reproductive age.
- Ensure children's access to health insurance.
- Strengthen public policies to promote health equity.

To download the county data cards, or to access supplementary materials including data notes and sources, visit http://www.ncchild.org/publication/2017-county-data-c/.

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NC Child builds a strong North Carolina by advancing public policies to ensure all children – regardless of race, ethnicity, or place of birth – have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.