

## Child Uninsured Rate in Florida Stabilized During Pandemic, Georgetown University Report Finds

*Florida organizations urge state leaders to release plan for when federal “continuous coverage” protection expires*

**ORLANDO, Fla.** - The number of uninsured children declined during the COVID-19 pandemic largely due to a federal law that provided states with enhanced funding to ensure that children, parents, and others enrolled in Medicaid had stable coverage during the public health emergency (PHE), [according to a report](#) by the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families (CCF). The new data confirms a reversal of a trend from 2016 to 2019 when the number of uninsured children had been going up for the first time in recent memory.

The national child uninsured rate dropped from 5.7 percent in 2019 to 5.4 percent in 2021, according to the U.S. Census data examined by CCF researchers. Florida’s uninsured rate dropped from 7.6 percent to 7.3 percent during this same time period. Children in low-wage working families with annual income between approximately \$30,000 and \$55,000 for a family of three saw the biggest reductions in their uninsured rates.

“Thanks to Congress, Florida parents have been able to retain Medicaid coverage for themselves and their children amid the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic downturn,” said Sadaf Knight, CEO of Florida Policy Institute (FPI). “But there’s still a big question mark in our state as to what will happen when the continuous coverage protection under the federal public health emergency expires. While more than half a million Florida kids became enrolled in Medicaid since the start of the pandemic, our state has yet to release a plan around outreach efforts and guidance for families in preparation for the end of the public health emergency. The state must build a plan alongside community partners that ensures that no eligible child, family, or parent goes without health care.”

“Not only does health coverage increase access to care and improve health outcomes, but it is also a stabilizing force for individuals and families. It decreases the burden of medical debt, thereby increasing financial stability, and it increases the ability to search for and retain employment,” said Alison Yager, executive director of Florida Health Justice Project (FHJP). “Increased coverage has been a critical factor in recovering from the pandemic. The state needs to accelerate the pace of preparation for the unwind, so that coverage loss is mitigated to the extent possible.”

“The improvement in the child uninsured rate has been a bright spot during the dark days of the pandemic,” said Joan Alker, executive director of the Georgetown University research center and lead author of the report. “This is welcome news for America’s children, but it may be short lived as millions of eligible children will likely fall through the cracks and become uninsured in states that are inattentive when the federal continuous coverage protection expires.”

The continuous coverage protection, put in place as part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, is expected to remain in place at least until April 11, 2023. When it expires, Florida will begin the unprecedented task of redetermining eligibility for 5.5 million individuals enrolled in Medicaid.

A group of 40 Florida-based organizations today [sent a letter](#) to Gov. Ron DeSantis in which they urged the state to publish its plan for when the PHE expires. The letter cited a [recommendation](#) from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services that states take up to 12 months to return to pre-pandemic operations for Medicaid renewals and noted that this “would allow for Florida to ensure that eligible beneficiaries maintain coverage and have seamless transitions to other forms of coverage if they no longer qualify for Medicaid.”

According to a separate analysis conducted by CCF, an estimated 6.7 million children in the United States are at risk of losing coverage when the continuous coverage protection expires, which could more than double the number of uninsured children. Most of the children losing coverage will remain eligible but their coverage will be dropped due to procedural rather than eligibility reasons.

The latest report from Florida’s Agency for Health Care Administration shows that there over 2.8 million children enrolled in Medicaid in Florida.

The full report is available [here](#) and more in-depth state data is available on the center’s [Interactive state data and policy hub](#).

[FPI](#) is an independent, nonpartisan and nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing state policies and budgets that improve the economic mobility and quality of life for all Floridians.

[FHJP](#) works to increase access to healthcare for Florida’s most vulnerable and marginalized residents, and to promote health equity.

[CCF](#) is a nonpartisan policy and research center based at Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy.