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Michigan Makes Marked Improvements in Children's Health Coverage



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October 27, 2016

More Michigan kids had health insurance in 2015 compared to 2013. (Kourtlyn Lott/Flickr)



LANSING, Mich. -- It's being called a historic milestone: a [report](#) released Thursday shows 95 percent of children in the U.S. had health care coverage in 2015, following the largest two-year decline of the uninsured rate on record.

In Michigan, the uninsured rate for kids dropped by 24 percent between 2013 and 2015, according to the analysis from the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families. Matt Gillard, president and CEO at Michigan's Children, said he credits the expansion of the Affordable Care Act in Michigan with the decline.

"Continued commitment from the state government towards the Michild program has helped as well," Gillard said. "And its something that Michigan should be proud of that we are having success in making sure that children have access to health insurance."

The report also found that Michigan is doing better than the national average, with 97 percent of kids in the state having health care coverage in 2015.

The drop in the number of uninsured children was widespread across income, racial and geographic lines, according to Joan Alker, executive director at Georgetown University Center for Children and Families and the report's lead author. She said that many Americans are not aware of the tremendous progress being made.

"We just did a poll and about half of Americans thought the number of uninsured children was actually increasing," Alker said. "Only 28 percent were aware that the number is actually gone down. So this is a success that we've had as a country, it's not well known and it's something we can all feel good about."

Gillard said that strengthening the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program - also known as CHIP - is vital in keeping the trend moving toward improved access to health insurance. But, he said, there's also a need for reinvestment in programs that serve the educational, social-emotional and economic needs of families.

"While we're doing well on the health insurance side, and that's certainly important," Gillard said, "there's many other areas that we'd love to see policymakers and the administration focus on to make sure that we're doing all that we can for kids and families here in Michigan."

The report showed there are still an estimated 68,000 thousand uninsured Michigan children.

Mary Kuhlman, Public News Service - MI

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