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## **New Mexico Sees Slight Increase in Uninsured Rate in 2007**

**U.S. Census Survey Proof That Governor Richardson's Health Reform Policy is Needed to Turn Around Trend**

**Santa Fe, New Mexico** – The U.S. Census Current Population Survey released today shows a slight increase in the percentage of people in New Mexico without health coverage, especially when it comes to adults, with 21.9 percent uninsured for the 2005-2007 three year average, compared to 21.0 percent for 2004-2006.

“This report is proof that my Health Insurance Reform Package is necessary in order to get New Mexicans the coverage they need and deserve,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “The incremental steps we have made over the years are helping kids get and keep coverage, but are not doing enough to help hard working New Mexico adults.”

Most of the change in the uninsured rate for New Mexico comes from the adult population, with nearly 330,000 (23.4 percent) adults between ages 19 to 80 without coverage. The number of kids ages zero to 18 remained statistically unchanged with 18 percent uninsured over the three-year average. But the one-year survey for kids is promising. It shows a 2.5 percent decrease with 15.5 percent uninsured in 2007, compared to 18 percent in 2006.

During last week's special session, Legislators approved \$20 million to cover more children through the Medicaid and SCHIP programs. However, other initiatives to protect small employers from skyrocketing insurance premiums, allow people with pre-existing conditions get coverage, and requirements for kids to have coverage failed.

“This isn't something that is going to go away. That is why I will continue to call on the Legislature to make bold steps now to turnaround a culture of uninsurance in our state,” said Governor Richardson.

New Mexico began to see an increase in enrollment in public programs over the past few years after aggressive outreach to eligible populations, as well as easier options to recertify each year.

New Mexico is currently at an all time high enrollment in public health coverage programs through the *Insure New Mexico!* initiatives that include Medicaid and other premium assistance

programs. There were 460,908 people during the month of April, 2008 that were enrolled in a public program, with 290,783 of them children.

Since Governor Richardson took office several *Insure New Mexico!* initiatives have been implemented, making more affordable coverage available for New Mexico's small employers, nonprofit agencies, individuals and options for every New Mexico child under the age of 12 years old. The solutions include:

- State Coverage Insurance (SCI) Program – A public/private partnership to help small employers purchase affordable health insurance,
- Increased emphasis on children ages zero to five – Allowing more family earned income and child care costs to be disregarded to enroll more children under five in Medicaid,
- Premium Assistance for Kids (PAK) Program – State funded premium assistance for coverage for those uninsured children up to age 12, and up to age 18 with a sibling under 12, whose family income is too high to qualify for Medicaid and who does not have an employer to offer coverage for an employee's children,
- Premium Assistance for Maternity (PAM) – State funded premium assistance for pregnancy related services for women whose income is slightly too high to qualify for Medicaid and who has no coverage,
- Increased Eligibility for Medicaid Family Planning and Pregnancy – Increased enrollment to cover families with incomes up to 235 percent of the Federal Poverty level for pregnancy-related medical services, and
- Lower Health Insurance Alliance Rates – Lowered rates through the New Mexico Health Insurance Alliance so more small employers could afford coverage from private insurers.

The CPS survey was conducted over a three month period during the early part of 2008 for the calendar year 2007. During that time respondents were asked whether or not they have had health insurance at any period during the previous year. If the answer is yes, that person is considered "insured."

Medicaid and Medicare are considered insurance, however individuals who rely on the Indian Health Services, free clinics, and/or a hospital emergency room as providers of health care are considered "uninsured."

**Uninsured New Mexicans are encouraged to call the *Insure New Mexico!* Solutions Center at 1-888-997-2583 or visit [www.insurenwemexico.state.nm.us](http://www.insurenwemexico.state.nm.us) to find out if they qualify for a public sponsored program.**

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