

- Children with health insurance are more likely to receive immunizations, prescribed medications and screenings for health conditions. RIte Care Health Insurance has improved immunization rates for children, reduced reliance on costly emergency room hospitalizations, and decreased mortality rates.
- While Rhode Island has been either first or second in the nation for insuring children over the past several years, in 2006 we dropped to 11th place. This is due in part to the continued erosion of employer-based coverage as well as limitations on access to the RIte Care program.
- A survey of Rhode Island employers conducted in 2005 found that employers are passing on the increased cost of insurance to employees. The percentage of employers paying the full premium for individual coverage dropped from 61% to 38% between 1999-2005, while employers covering the full premium for family coverage declined from 43% to 26% over this time period.
- Every month approximately 150 families lose their RIte Care health insurance for failing to pay their monthly premium. Rhode Island has among the highest premiums for children's health insurance in the country.
- Pain caused by dental disease can significantly reduce a child's ability to perform in school and receive adequate nutrition. About 80% of tooth decay occurs in only 25% of children who are primarily from low-income families. Fewer than half of the children receiving dental coverage through Medical Assistance received a service during 2005. In 2006, the number of children age 6 and under who received increased primary and preventive dental care increased due to the RIte Smile Program.

One RI Proposals

Expand access to RIte Care for all children.

Increase eligibility for publicly funded health insurance through RIte Care for children in families with incomes above 250% of the Federal Poverty Level. All other New England states cover children with incomes above 250% of the FPL.

Provide RIte Care coverage for non-citizen children and parents.

Restore eligibility for all children regardless of immigration status to assure that all RI children have access to primary and preventive care. Restore RIte Care eligibility for parents who are legal permanent residents and will become eligible for federal-state Medical Assistance coverage after the mandatory waiting period.

Expand access to dental coverage for children in RIte Care. Provide eligibility for the RIte Smiles program for children over age 6. The program has been a resounding success and cited as a national model. The number of participating dentists has increased as has the number of children who received preventive and primary dental care.