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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Illinois' uninsured population remains high, growing in middle-class** *26 percent of Chicago residents uninsured*

(Chicago) April 27, 2006 – Findings of a new report indicate the uninsured population in Illinois remains high, impacting more middle-class Illinoisans, primarily due to several trends: An increase in the number of uninsured in Chicago regardless of economic status and an increase in the number of middle-class uninsured due to the rising cost of health insurance and the inability to pay health premiums through employer sponsored health care programs. To download the full report, visit [www.gileadcenter.org](http://www.gileadcenter.org).

The report, *Real People – Real Stories: A Detailed Description of Illinois' Uninsured*, released by the Gilead Outreach and Referral Center, a not-for-profit advocacy group, also reported a slight decline in the overall number of uninsured Illinoisans. Gilead Center President Vincent Keenan, MSPH, attributes this in part to state government efforts over the last two years.

“The decrease in the number of Illinoisans who are uninsured is testimony to the steady efforts of state government and other organizations, like Gilead Center, to qualify more Illinoisans for KidCare and FamilyCare,” he said.

“While this is good news, we can’t lose sight of the fact that there are still nearly 1.75 million Illinoisans who are uninsured.”

In 2004, the number of uninsured in Chicago increased. As a result, approximately 539,750 people, nearly 26 percent of the city’s population, are uninsured. Statewide, more than 679,340 full-time employees are without insurance.

The uninsured issue impacts people from every ethnic group, education and income level. While it is commonly believed the poor and near-poor have the greatest risk of being

uninsured, a large majority of uninsured are people who work or are members of working families.

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#### **Add one/Uninsured**

For example, 20 percent of those earning between \$50,000 and \$75,000 annually and nearly 14 percent of those with full-time jobs had at least one family member without insurance. Even in higher income families, those earning more than \$75,000 annually, nearly 16 percent have at least one family member without insurance.

The Gilead Center continues to connect uninsured and under-insured people with health care services, providing a compassionate patch for the problem until a solution is found.

“The activities of the Gilead Center and other organizations that link uninsured persons to health care insurance and health care services must continue. The Gilead Center alone has linked more than 100,000 persons in the Chicago area with health care in the last four years,” said

Dr. Lawrence Haspel, senior vice president with the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council and Gilead Center board member.

“Until a more comprehensive approach to health care delivery is developed, the work of Gilead and others is critical,” Keenan said.

#### **Among the findings of this year’s study:**

- Overall, 1,744,185, or 15.8 percent, of the population ages 0-64 in Illinois were without insurance in 2004, down from 1,801,839, or 16.2 percent, in 2003.
- Statewide, 20 percent of uninsured children ages 0-11 and 26 percent of uninsured children ages 12-18 are eligible for KidCare. The Gilead Center has linked more than 17,000 families with KidCare and FamilyCare since 2000.
- Throughout Illinois, there are an increasing number of uninsured individuals working for companies with more than 1,000 employees.
- Throughout Illinois, people ages 19-29 have the highest uninsured rate at 27 percent compared to 12 percent for ages 0-18 and 15.5 percent for ages 30-49.
- Statewide, Hispanics have the highest uninsured rate at 28.9 percent. That compares to 23.7 percent for African Americans, 15.1 percent for other and multiethnic and 11.4 percent for non-Hispanic whites.
- Chicago has the highest rate of families with at least one uninsured member.

- **The metropolitan Chicago area has a large number of uninsured full-time employees, approximately 331,180.**

**###**

The source of data for the Gilead Outreach and Referral Center's report, *Real People – Real Stories: A Detailed Description of Illinois Uninsured*, is from the U.S. Bureau of Census' *Health Insurance Coverage 2004* and *Annual Social and Economic Supplements* March 2005. Numbers and percentages in the report are based on 2004 data. The data analysis was prepared by Deborah Rosenberg, Ph.D., and Andrew Cooper, MPH, faculty from the University of Illinois at Chicago's School of Public Health.