



For Immediate Release
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Past Efforts at Increasing Coverage and Enrollment Outreach Resulted in 27% Drop in Uninsured Children and Helped Stem Illinois' Total Uninsured Population.

Current Economic Downturn Cause for Significant Concern.

Chicago-April 21, 2009- According to a report released today by the Gilead Outreach and Referral Center and based on the most recent data available (2007), the number of uninsured Illinois children dropped by 27 percent (by almost 90,000 to 236,000) compared to 2006. Gilead's 7th annual report, entitled *Taking a Closer Look at Illinois' Uninsured*, found that the expansion of governmental health care coverage programs such as AllKids and Family Care and the outreach and enrollment efforts by community-based organizations like Gilead were factors in the decrease to Illinois' uninsured children (0-18) population. Additionally, the more robust Illinois economy during this time contributed to the slight decrease in the state's overall uninsured population, to fewer than 1.7 million or 15 percent of all Illinoisans.

However, since December of 2007, the U.S. has entered a severe economic recession that has seen unemployment numbers jump. As of March, 2009, Illinois unemployment levels are at 9.1 percent, the highest in 25 years. Recent studies suggest that a 1 percent increase in unemployment translates to one million more uninsured Americans. Gilead anticipates that future reports will likely show that Illinois' uninsured population grew significantly in 2008 and 2009.

"While the numbers are encouraging for the 2007 reporting period, we recognize that the economy has taken a sharp turn for the worse, likely resulting in higher numbers of uninsured," said Steve Derks, President of the Board of Directors for the Gilead Outreach and Referral Center. "On a positive note, the report provides our elected officials, policy makers, hospitals and health care providers with proof positive of the significant and potentially life-saving impact an expansion of coverage, backed with community-based outreach and enrollment efforts can provide Illinois' children and working families."

As with past years, *Taking a Closer at Illinois' Uninsured* provides a closer look at Illinois' uninsured by looking at the socioeconomic, racial and educational levels of this vulnerable population not only in Chicago, but also the metropolitan suburban areas and downstate Illinois. For the first time, the Report includes a breakdown of the number of uninsured for each of Illinois' 102 counties.

Other Key Findings

The report found that in 2007:

- 68% of uninsured Illinoisans were employed- a significant factor when we consider the rising unemployment numbers our state currently faces.
- 42% of uninsured Illinoisans' are lower income adults ages 19 and older who do not qualify for public insurance.
- 25% of Illinois families have at least one member who is uninsured.
- The uninsured problem is widespread across all ethnicities in Illinois. The highest percent of uninsured individuals was the non-Hispanic White population with 49% being uninsured; the percent of uninsured Hispanic individuals was 27%, and the percent of uninsured for non-Hispanic African Americans was 20%.

Taking a Closer at Illinois' Uninsured was commissioned by the Gilead Outreach and Referral Center, a non-profit that connects the uninsured with health care benefits for which they are eligible and conducted by faculty at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health. The full report can be viewed online at www.gileadcenter.org.

The Gilead Outreach and Referral Center is a not-for-profit organization that connects uninsured and underinsured individuals and families throughout metropolitan Chicago with affordable health care benefits and services for which they are eligible.