

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families: Medicaid is vital for children in northern Wisconsin

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Medicaid provides health care for nearly 1.2 million Wisconsinites in all parts of the state, but a new study shows that it is especially important for children in northern counties.

The [new analysis](#) by the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families found that in 2014-15 Medicaid provided health coverage for at least 40 percent of children in 18 northern Wisconsin counties. Only one other county, Milwaukee, was above the 40 percent level.

The report, [“Medicaid in Small Town America: A Lifeline for Children, Families and Communities,”](#) finds that 34 percent of children in rural areas and small towns in Wisconsin receive health coverage through Medicaid and BadgerCare, compared to 31 percent of kids in metropolitan areas.

Medicaid participation is also higher in Wisconsin’s rural areas for adults, but the difference is narrower than it is for children. The new study reports that 14 percent of adults in Wisconsin’s small towns and rural areas are covered by Medicaid, compared to 13 percent in metro areas.

Because of changes made by the Affordable Care Act, the number of uninsured Wisconsinites has dropped sharply across the state in recent years, but especially in

Wisconsin's small towns and rural areas. Between 2008/09 and 2014/15, the percentage of uninsured adults dropped from 15 to 9 percent in Wisconsin's non-metro areas, and the rate of uninsured children in rural areas dropped from 6 percent to 5 percent.

"When children and families have health insurance, whole communities are stronger," said Sashi Gregory, the Health Policy Analyst at the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. "Reliable access to health coverage means fewer visits to the ER, less uncompensated care, and a larger and healthier workforce. We must not turn our backs on the substantial progress we've made in strengthening Wisconsin by getting our children and families the health coverage they need to succeed."

Health care advocates are worried that Medicaid cuts proposed by Congress and President Trump would be harmful for children and adults in rural areas. According to the latest estimates by the Congressional Budget Office, the House bill to repeal and partially replace the Affordable Care Act would cut \$834 billion from federal Medicaid funding over the next 10 years.

Joan Alker, Executive Director of the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families expressed concerns about the implications for rural families of the proposed Medicaid cuts. "Medicaid provides critical access to life-saving treatment and protection from rising health care costs to many children and families living in small towns and rural America," Alker said. "Cuts to Medicaid and other health care programs would take those protections away from many and risk financial ruin, denial of health care, or both."

The report primarily relies on data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). The full report along with interactive maps showing a county-by-county breakdown on health care coverage data are available at:
<https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2017/06/06/rural-health-report/>.

A table showing the counties with the highest Medicaid participation rates for kids is attached.

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The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families is a multi-issue policy research and advocacy organization promoting statewide policies that ensure a safe and healthy future for every child in Wisconsin. For more information, visit www.wccf.org.

Top 20 Counties in Wisconsin with the Highest Percentage of Children with Medicaid (ACS 2014/15)

County	# of Children with Medicaid (2014/15)	% of Children with Medicaid (2014/15)
Menominee County	710	47%
Vilas County	1,720	46%
Forest County	910	45%
Langlade County	1,840	45%
Sawyer County	1,570	45%
Burnett County	1,310	44%
Ashland County	1,680	43%
Milwaukee County	107,750	43%
Rusk County	1,380	43%
Washburn County	1,370	43%
Bayfield County	1,220	42%
Iron County	410	42%
Marinette County	3,540	42%
Oneida County	2,750	42%
Price County	1,070	42%
Douglas County	3,970	41%
Florence County	330	41%
Lincoln County	2,430	41%
Taylor County	2,050	40%
Door County	1,890	39%