



Medicaid's Crucial Role in Early Childhood Health

Preventive care and developmental screenings during early childhood set children up for a lifetime of good physical, social, and emotional health, as well as financial stability.

Consistent health coverage ensures children get the care they need. Strengthening MO HealthNet, Missouri's Medicaid program, can help ensure all kids in our state receive continuous access to health coverage during early childhood.

Early Childhood is a Critical Period for Health Care Access

Early childhood is an especially important developmental period in a child's life, and access to consistent health coverage builds a foundation for children to reach their full potential.

- A child's first years are characterized by rapid brain development that sets the trajectory for future development and health.ⁱ
- Routine developmental screenings can identify developmental delays early, allowing early intervention and improving mental & physical health.ⁱⁱ
- Early intervention combined with prevention (such as immunizations administered at the recommended schedule) are cost effective, and reduce the need for more costly and complex care down the road.ⁱⁱⁱ

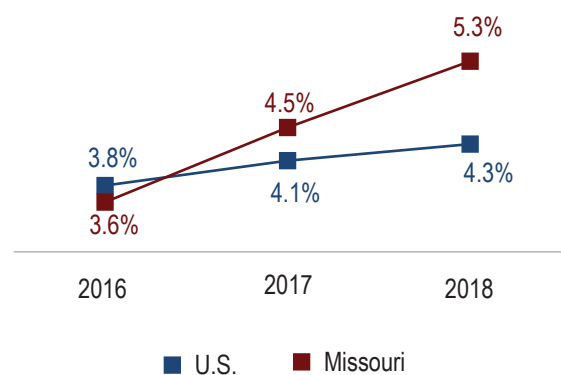
Missouri Kids Under 6 Are Less Likely to Have Health Coverage Than Kids in Other States

The numbers below reflect the status of coverage prior to the pandemic. The state has taken action to make Medicaid more accessible during the public health emergency. The pre-COVID data is used to illustrate coverage prior to the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, Missouri children were increasingly likely to lack health coverage during early childhood.

- As of 2018, 23,431 Missouri children under age 6 did not have health insurance, an increase of 7,380 children since 2016.^{iv}
- During the same time period, Missouri's rate of uninsured children under age 6 increased from 3.6% to 5.3%; **this was the largest increase in the rate of uninsured kids in the nation.**^v
- In 2016, Missouri children were more likely to have health insurance coverage than children in nearly half the other states in the nation. By 2018, they were less likely to have coverage - in fact, the share of uninsured children in Missouri was higher than all but 12 other states.

Percent of Missouri Children Under Age 6 Without Health Insurance: 2016-2018

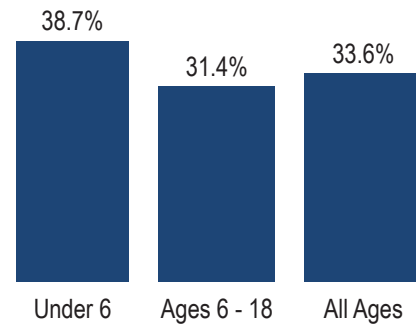


Medicaid Is a Critical Component of Healthcare Access for Kids in Families With Low Incomes, Especially During Early Childhood

The vast majority of uninsured children in Missouri, or nearly 8 in 10, come from families living in or near poverty.^{vi} MO HealthNet, Missouri's Medicaid and CHIP program, is the primary source of health coverage for these low-wage families and is a critical component in ensuring that young children maintain continuous, consistent access to health coverage.

Young children are especially likely to rely on Medicaid in Missouri. Nearly 2 in 5 children under age 6 are served by Medicaid, while fewer than 1 in 3 children ages 6-18 are served by Medicaid, making Medicaid an especially critical form of health coverage during early childhood.^{vii}

Percent of Missouri Children Under Age 19 With Medicaid/CHIP by Age, 2018



By strengthening Medicaid, our state can ensure all Missouri kids have continuous, consistent access to health coverage during early childhood, improving health and developmental outcomes and increasing opportunity for the next generation.

- i. Burak, E. (2018). Promoting Young Children's Healthy Development in Medicaid and CHIP. Washington: Georgetown University Center for Children and Families, 11.
- ii. Burak, E. W., & Odeh, M. (2018). Developmental Screenings for Young Children in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program. Washington: Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families.
- iii. Burak, E. W., & Rolfes-Haase, K. (2018). Using Medicaid to Ensure the Healthy Social and Emotional Development of Infants and Toddlers. Washington: Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families.
- iv. Burak, E. W., Clark, M., & Roygardner, L. Nation's Youngest Children Lose Health Coverage at an Alarming Rate. Georgetown Center for Children and Families.
- v. Burak, E. W., Clark, M., & Roygardner, L. Nation's Youngest Children Lose Health Coverage at an Alarming Rate. Georgetown Center for Children and Families.
- vi. U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey (ACS), 2018 1-Year Estimates, Table B27016.
- vii. U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey (ACS), 2018 1-Year Estimates, Table B27007.