



Poverty Numbers Particularly High For Maine's Youngest Children

Dean Crocker, Maine Children's Alliance

AUGUSTA, ME (September 22, 2011)—Families continue to feel the effects of the recession here in Maine and nationwide, and children in particular are being affected by the slow economy, according to 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) data released today.

Because the ACS is conducted every year and surveys a large population size, this latest U.S. Census provides one of the most accurate looks at how families are doing.

"This survey gives us a clear picture of how kids are faring in Maine and across the country, and the picture is not good," said Maine Children's Alliance President/CEO Dean Crocker. "There are a disproportionately high number of children living in poverty—particularly younger children. Because of the recession, families are struggling, and a staggering number of children have lower chances of having their basic needs met."

Among the findings: The median household income in Maine has dropped by 5.1 percent since 2007; the same downward trend is happening across the country. The poverty rate for children under 18 in Maine rose to 17.8 percent—and is even higher for kids under age 5 at 23.3 percent. A startling 41 percent of children in Maine are living at low-income levels.

"Without economic supports like unemployment insurance, SNAP/food stamps, and the Earned Income Tax Credit, these kids are less likely to grow up with good outcomes in school, in their physical and mental health and in their success as adults," said Crocker. "We must look beyond short-term budget savings and invest in long-term solutions that protect our children and the future of our country."

Maine's numbers look better in terms of health coverage for children. The rate of children with no health insurance is 4 percent, better than the 7 percent rate three years ago. Maine ranks 6th in the nation for health coverage. Children without health insurance nationally stands at 8 percent.

“The relatively positive news is that some of the programs we have in place are working to help meet kids’ health needs. It underscores the fact that we can’t go backwards and cut funds from programs that provide vital services to Maine’s children,” said Crocker.

2010 ACS Data Highlights:

INCOME--Median household incomes have fallen in the state and nationally

- Median household income in Maine decreased 5.1% between 2007 and 2010—from \$48,265 to \$45,815. Maine’s median income is well below the national level.
- The median household income for the United States decreased 6.2% (\$3,280) between 2007 and 2010—from \$53,326 to \$50,046. No state saw an increase in median income.

POVERTY--Poverty is on the rise in Maine and nationally; the rate for children is disproportionately high compared with the total population.

- 17.8% of children under age 18 in Maine are living in poverty (17.1% in 2009).
- 21.6% of children under age 18 in the United States are living in poverty (20% in 2009).
- 23.3% of Maine children under age 5 are living in poverty (20.4% in 2009).
- 25.0% of U.S. children under age 5 are living in poverty (23.2% in 2009).
- 12.9% of the total population in Maine is living in poverty.
- 15.3% of the total population in the United States is living in poverty.

LOW-INCOME—A growing number of Maine children are “low-income” (200% of poverty level; “low-income” is an income of \$36,620 for a family of three)

- 41% of children in Maine are in low-income households (2010). That is a 14 percent increase from the 36% low-income kids in 2000.
- 44% of children in the United States are in low-income households (2010); the rate was 39% in 2000.

HEALTH INSURANCE--Maine is doing better than the national average in covering children

- 4% of children in Maine do not have health insurance.
- 8% of children in the United State do not have health insurance.

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