A new U.S. Census report yesterday confirmed our worst fears: in 2018, Tennessee saw an alarming increase in the number of people without health insurance.

As reported in the *Tennessean* today, "about 46,000 more Tennesseans were without health insurance last year, one of the largest increases in the rate of uninsured residents in the nation," according to a new U.S. Census Bureau report.

Tennessee’s uninsured rate rose 0.6 percent in 2018, the Census report states. Although the percentage may seem small, it tied with Alabama and Arizona for the third-largest rate increase nationwide. Only Idaho and South Dakota had larger increases.

The Census Bureau now estimates more than 675,000 Tennesseans — or about one in 10 state residents — have no insurance coverage."

We are disappointed but not surprised by the new data, as we have seen dramatic cuts in TennCare and CoverKids enrollment at the state level. Below, you can find more information about the new data and how you can take action to get and keep kids covered in Tennessee.

**ICYMI**

- **Texas v. US** - A new issue brief, *Beyond the Coverage Expansions: How the Lawsuit to Overtturn the Affordable Care Act Would Further Harm Medicaid and CHIP Coverage of Children*, from Georgetown Center for Children and Families, walks us through how efforts to overturn the Affordable Care Act would inflict severe damage to children’s coverage under Medicaid and CHIP. Tennessee’s Attorney General is party to the lawsuit to get rid of the Affordable Care Act in its
entirety.

- **2020 Census** - Participation in the U.S. Census is vitally important, as we know from the most recent U.S. Census Bureau report. It helps measure our progress, monitor alarming trends, and accurately understand and serve our community. The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth recommends the following in their Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget Recommendations:

  Having an accurate census count is critically important to Tennessee children and the state budget. The 2020 Census will determine not only apportionment of seats in Congress, but also the amount of funding each state will receive for about 300 different programs over the next decade. Many of these programs provide services to children, such as TennCare, the state’s Medicaid program, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), special education, the school lunch program, Head Start, foster care assistance and the Child Care and Development Fund among others. An undercount of Tennessee children will lead to less federal funding for these and other critical programs available to the state’s children with the greatest need. **State leaders should make efforts to promote participation and encourage all Tennesseans to submit their responses.**

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**THE MORE YOU KNOW**

**U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey**

As mentioned above, Tennessee had the third largest increase in the rate of uninsured people in the nation.

The [new data](https://www.census.gov) also shows that 425,000 more children were uninsured in 2018, a 0.6 percent increase. Tennessee was one of only nine states to see a statistically significant increase in the percentage of uninsured children in 2017. We expect forthcoming state data, set to be released September 26, to show another significant increase in uninsured children in Tennessee. There is no doubt that our state’s errors in cutting at least 220,000 children from TennCare and CoverKids without a proper eligibility determination added to this depressing trend.

The multi-pronged assault on the safety net from both the state and federal government has reversed years of gains in children’s coverage and continues to jeopardize the health of our children and families.

We are calling on our elected officials to reverse the damage caused by the cuts in TennCare and CoverKids and meaningfully address the systemic issues that caused our dramatic increase in uninsured residents.

[Email Governor Lee and your legislators and ask them to get and keep kids covered!](https://email.everyaction.com/EmailMessage/PreviewMessage/defd9b44-b2d4-e911-bcd0-2818784d4349)
LOOKING FORWARD

Federal updates

- **Public charge** - The public charge rule change is still on track to go into effect on October 15. The "chilling effect" continues to alarm us. The chilling effect refers to eligible beneficiaries disenrolling from vital programs out of fear of negative consequences or interactions with the government, even if they would not be subject to the test. The rule change is legally complex. Before making decisions about disenrolling in benefits, families or organizations serving immigrant clients should call TIRRC's hotline: 615-414-1030.

State updates

- **Block grants** - Our legislature passed a law earlier this year requiring the state to submit a proposal to the federal government asking to convert federal funding for TennCare into a "block grant." The nation's most respected patient advocacy groups oppose block grants as a threat to patients, and the Washington Post warned that TN is about to sabotage its own health care system. But Gov. Lee is forging ahead anyway, with a proposal to be released in the coming weeks.
  - **Here's what you can do:**
    - Join TJC's webinar on Thursday, Sept. 26 from 11:30am-12:30pm CT to learn more about the harmful Medicaid block grant proposal, and what we can do about it. [Click here to register](#).
    - [Take 2 minutes to fill out this survey](#) about how you're willing to take action to oppose the Medicaid block grant proposal.

JOIN US

**Navigating TennCare**
St. Thomas West
October 17, 10AM - 5PM CT
[REGISTER HERE](#)
Cost: $250/attendee
FREE scholarships available*
More details about the training.

*A limited number of scholarships are available to employees of a nonprofit with annual revenues below $5 million or a federally qualified health clinic. Scholarships cover the cost of the training only and excludes meals and parking, if applicable.

To apply for a scholarship please email Thomas Bynum at tbynum@tnjustice.org. Please specify which training you are applying.
You can pay online! When registering, you will be redirected to a PayPal secure webpage for payment processing. Please note, you do NOT need a PayPal account to complete the transaction, just your credit card. Attendees qualifying for a scholarship will be provided a different link to register.

Please join the Tennessee Justice Center at Dentons in DC for drinks after work on October 22, 2019. Come enjoy Tennessee whiskey (and non-Tennessee wine) and learn about exciting justice work happening in Tennessee. Dentons worked alongside us for over 6 years to improve the healthcare system for hundreds of thousands of Tennessee children, donating many millions of dollars in free legal services. We are so grateful for the extraordinary generosity of pro bono partner Dentons for sponsoring a DC reception so we can share our story with friends and partner in DC. Help us spread the word by sharing the invite with anyone who you think needs a little southern inspiration.

[RSVP HERE]

As a reminder, the Tennessee Justice Center also helps with:

1. Enrollment onto TennCare and CoverKids
2. Service Issues
3. Redetermination Issues

If you ever encounter anyone who is having trouble getting health insurance or getting health services, please call TJC: (615) 255-0331.

If there is any information you would like us to share on your behalf, including events and resources, please reply to this email.

Sincerely,

[Image of Kinika Young]

Kinika Young
Director of Children's Health
Tennessee Justice Center

{{Disclaimer}}
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