Children's Defense Fund
Black Child Health Fact Sheet



September 2009

Today, 1 in 7 children in America is Black. Almost 665,000 of the more than 4.2 million births in the United States in 2006 were to Black mothers.

- There are 8.1 million uninsured children in America; one out of nine Black children is uninsured.
- Almost one half of black children are covered by either Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program.
- Approximately two-thirds of uninsured Black children are income eligible for CHIP or Medicaid, yet do not have health coverage.
- More than three-quarters of uninsured Black children have a working parent, and more than half have a parent who works full-time throughout the year.
- Black children in working families are almost one-third less likely to have private health coverage than White children in working families.
- Black infants are more than twice as likely as White infants to die before their first birthday.
- Babies born to Black mothers are almost twice as likely as those born to White mothers to be born at low birthweight and are 58 percent more likely to be pre-term. A child born at low birthweight is more likely to have health, behavioral, and learning problems down the road.
- Black children are 73 percent more likely than White children to have an unmet medical need, and 35 percent more likely to have an unmet dental need.
- Uninsured Black children are 75 percent more likely than uninsured White children to have gone without needed medical care because of cost.
- More than one-fourth of uninsured Black children had to delay needed medical care and more than one-fifth of uninsured Black children did not get needed medical care because of cost.
- When uncontrolled, asthma can affect a child's ability to learn, play, and sleep, and can require hospital treatment or visits to the emergency department. Black children are almost 50 percent more likely to have asthma than White children.
- More than one in four Black two-year-olds is not fully immunized. Yet every dollar spent vaccinating children against measles, mumps and rubella saves $16 in future costs.
- Black two-year-olds are the only racial/ethnic group whose immunization rates showed no improvement from 2007-2008.
- Although only a small percentage of all children in America are in fair or poor health, Black children are more than twice as likely as White children to be in only poor or fair health.
- Poor children are more likely to face barriers to health coverage than other children. Two out of five Black babies are born into poverty, and 1 in 3 Black children is poor. The number of poor Black children increased by about 297,000 from 2000 to 2008, to 3.9 million.
- Half of all poor Black children live in extreme poverty. Out of the 6.3 million children living in extreme poverty in America, 2 million are Black.