

Child Health Plus Enrollment: The Curve Bends Back Up, Sharply

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The Medicaid Institute at United Hospital Fund is working to improve the Medicaid program in New York by providing information and analysis and developing a shared vision for change.

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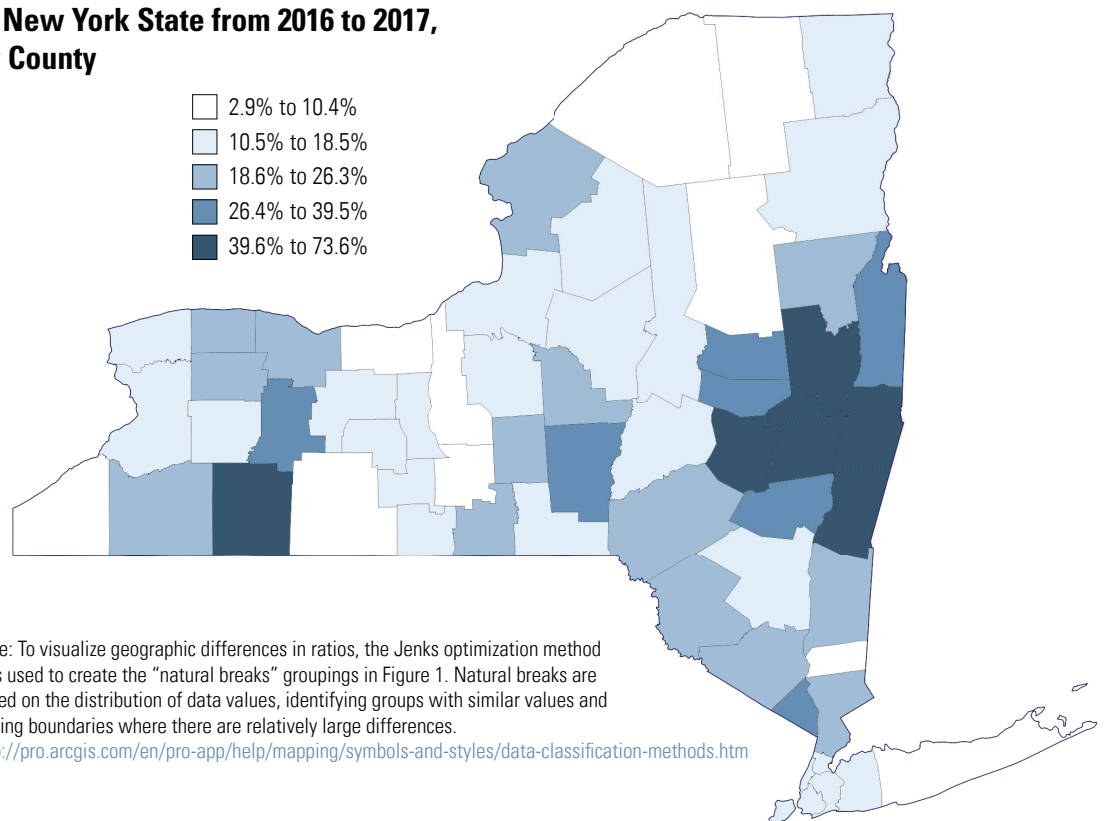
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Having health insurance is critically important for children's health. Uninsured children are much less likely than those with health insurance coverage to receive recommended preventive care or appropriate treatment for chronic conditions. And these may have long-term consequences for health and economic well-being as these children grow into adults. For nearly 30 years, New York State has helped lower-income families afford health insurance coverage for their children through the state's Child Health Plus (CHP) program. This has helped reduce the children's uninsured rate in New York from 12% in 1997 to approximately 2% in 2016. Since Congress passed the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in 1997, substantial federal funds have been available to support the cost of New York's program (\$526.5 million in FY 2016), along with other states' coverage programs for children. In September 2017, however, that federal funding will end unless Congress acts to extend it. The gravity of this funding uncertainty is accentuated by the surprising rise in CHP enrollment in every county in New York over the past year, resulting in a statewide jump of 17% between July 2016 and July 2017 (Figure 1).

Over the past ten years the monthly enrollment in CHP has fluctuated, rising from 365,005 in July 2008 to 411,066 in July 2011 and then declining steadily over the following four years to a low of 276,881 by July 2015 (Figure 2). The growth from 2008 to 2011 is generally attributed to the recession, and the decline from

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**Figure 1. CHP Enrollment Growth
in New York State from 2016 to 2017,
by County**



Note: To visualize geographic differences in ratios, the Jenks optimization method was used to create the "natural breaks" groupings in Figure 1. Natural breaks are based on the distribution of data values, identifying groups with similar values and setting boundaries where there are relatively large differences.

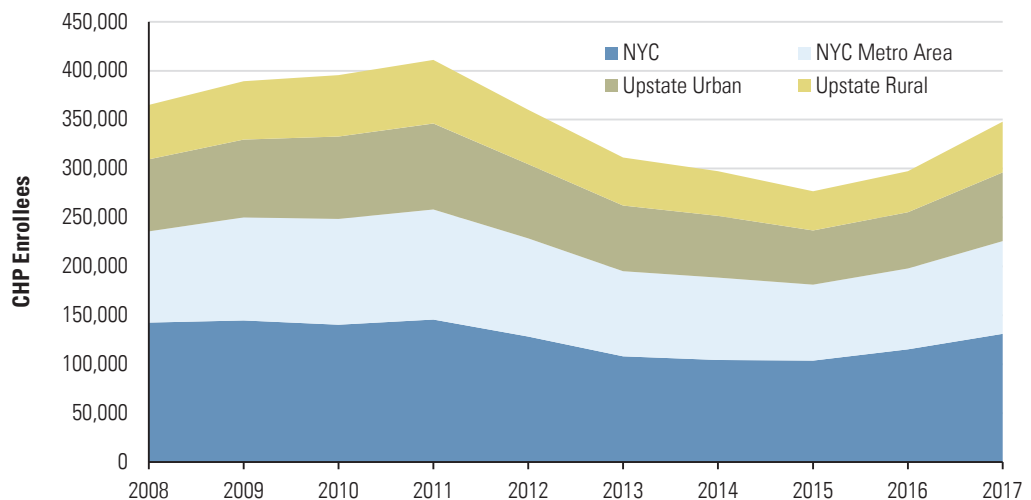
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2011 through 2015 to an improving economy and changes in federal Medicaid eligibility policy that resulted in some children and adolescents being eligible to enroll in Medicaid rather than CHP. In May 2016, however, monthly enrollment started to rise again, and it increased steadily every month thereafter to 347,855 by July 2017 (Table 1, following page). It is not clear what precipitated this marked jump in enrollment, but one factor may be the implementation of New York’s new Basic Health program, the Essential Plan, beginning in the winter of 2016. The Essential Plan offers coverage to adults who are ineligible for Medicaid coverage and whose family incomes are less than or equal to 200% of the federal poverty level. Although children are not eligible for coverage under the Essential Plan, the outreach effort accompanying its launch may have reached families unaware of the availability of CHP.

After September 30th, under federal law, New York will be permitted to draw down any unspent federal funds from prior years to fund CHP, but state officials project that these funds will be exhausted by early 2018. Ready access to comprehensive, consistent health care is central to ensuring that children receive the support they need to develop into healthy adults. New York’s commitment to CHP over the years has enabled hundreds of thousands of children to have that access. Whether or not Congress approves new CHIP funding, at what level, and for how long will all have major implications for the future of CHP and for nearly 350,000 current CHP enrollees and their families.

—Lee Partridge and Misha Sharp
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Figure 2. CHP Enrollment by New York State Region, July 2008 to July 2017



New York State Regions were compiled using New York counties as follows: **NYC:** Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, and Richmond. **NYC Metro Area:** Nassau, Rockland, Suffolk, and Westchester. **Upstate Urban:** Albany, Broome, Chemung, Dutchess, Erie, Monroe, Niagara, Oneida, Onondaga, Orange, Putnam, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Tompkins. **Upstate Rural:** Allegany, Cattaraugus, Cayuga, Chautauqua, Chenango, Clinton, Columbia, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Montgomery, Ontario, Orleans, Oswego, Otsego, Schoharie, Schuyler, Seneca, St. Lawrence, Steuben, Sullivan, Tioga, Ulster, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates.

Table 1. CHP Enrollment and Percent Growth in New York State by County, July 2016 and July 2017

County	July 2016	July 2017	Percent Growth
<i>Statewide</i>	<i>297,390</i>	<i>347,855</i>	<i>17.0%</i>
Albany	2,863	4,971	73.6%
Rensselaer	1,698	2,772	63.3%
Schoharie	348	539	54.9%
Columbia	871	1,306	49.9%
Allegany	406	607	49.5%
Schenectady	2,247	3,299	46.8%
Saratoga	2,942	4,288	45.8%
Greene	622	868	39.5%
Rockland	8,900	11,752	32.0%
Livingston	796	1,051	32.0%
Montgomery	908	1,192	31.3%
Fulton	986	1,282	30.0%
Washington	1,298	1,687	30.0%
Chenango	722	937	29.8%
Orange	7,018	8,864	26.3%
Sullivan	1,194	1,508	26.3%
Tioga	621	781	25.8%
Monroe	10,365	12,985	25.3%
Warren	1,199	1,499	25.0%
Genesee	850	1,051	23.6%
Delaware	526	648	23.2%
Dutchess	4,349	5,334	22.6%
Cortland	820	1,005	22.6%
Westchester	13,233	16,138	22.0%
Jefferson	1,542	1,871	21.3%
Cattaraugus	926	1,120	21.0%
Orleans	676	814	20.4%
Madison	1,051	1,259	19.8%
Ulster	3,115	3,691	18.5%
Seneca	478	564	18.0%
Essex	668	786	17.7%

County	July 2016	July 2017	Percent Growth
Ontario	1,938	2,280	17.6%
Oneida	3,863	4,533	17.3%
Erie	9,238	10,690	15.7%
Yates	411	475	15.6%
Chemung	782	901	15.2%
Queens	43,141	49,653	15.1%
Schuyler	265	305	15.1%
Oswego	2,076	2,370	14.2%
Otsego	1,018	1,161	14.0%
Onondaga	6,693	7,616	13.8%
Kings	42,015	47,719	13.6%
Richmond	5,978	6,783	13.5%
Niagara	2,752	3,118	13.3%
Wyoming	727	822	13.1%
Nassau	26,336	29,562	12.2%
Bronx	15,784	17,699	12.1%
Herkimer	1,482	1,657	11.8%
Broome	2,447	2,729	11.5%
Lewis	695	775	11.5%
Clinton	1,295	1,442	11.4%
New York	8,284	9,214	11.2%
Hamilton	77	85	10.4%
Cayuga	1,350	1,475	9.3%
Suffolk	34,090	37,237	9.2%
Franklin	650	708	8.9%
Chautauqua	1,603	1,745	8.9%
Steuben	1,330	1,444	8.6%
St. Lawrence	1,587	1,692	6.6%
Wayne	2,145	2,285	6.5%
Tompkins	1,268	1,325	4.5%
Putnam	1,832	1,886	2.9%