

HEALTH AND HEALTH INSURANCE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



- **D.C. has the highest rate of potentially preventable deaths in the nation.** In 2002, 160 people per 1,000 died when timely and effective medical care might have prolonged their lives. D.C. rates of death from breast cancer and colorectal cancer—both often treatable if detected in time—are also the highest in the nation.¹
- **The infant mortality rate in D.C. is more than twice the national rate.** In 2005, 14 of every 1,000 children in D.C. died before the age of one, as compared to 6.9 for the nation as a whole. This was the highest rate in the country and the highest D.C. rate since 1996.²
- **The District has the third highest rate of low birth weight babies in the nation.** In 2005, 11.2% of babies born in D.C. weighed less than 5.5 pounds.³ Babies born this small are at high risk of serious long-term health and developmental problems. Lack of early prenatal care is a factor in low birth weight. In 2003–5, 22.8% of D.C. mothers received only late-state or no prenatal care.⁴
- **The District has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS cases in the nation.**⁵ More than 3% of District residents—15,120 individuals—have HIV/AIDS. The percentage is three times the official threshold for a “generalized and severe” epidemic and represents a 22% increase over 2006.⁶
- **One of every six D.C. residents lacks health insurance.** In mid-May 2009, an estimated 90,000 D.C. residents had no health insurance.⁷ This represents a higher percentage than in 2007. In 2005–7, 7.3% of D.C. children were without health insurance.⁸
- **At least 25% of low-income D.C. adults have no regular source of health care.** Residents in low-income D.C. neighborhoods are more likely to have chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes and hypertension that call for regular monitoring and treatment by a primary care physician. Yet they are three times more likely not to have a regular doctor than residents in more affluent parts of the city.⁹
- **More than half of DC's residents live in medically underserved areas.** D.C. has one of the highest physician to population ratios in the country. Yet 300,000 D.C. residents live in areas that have been officially designated as medically underserved. Almost all low-income residents who are uninsured or rely on publicly-funded health insurance live in such areas. They lack ready access to primary care because the District does not reimburse providers for anything close to their costs.¹⁰

¹ Commonwealth Fund Commission on a High Performance Health System, *Aiming Higher: Results from a State Scorecard on Health System Performance* (2007).

² Children's Defense Fund, *The State of America's Children 2008*; State Center for Health Statistics, *Briefing Paper on the 2005 Infant Mortality Rate for the District of Columbia* (2007).

³ Children's Defense Fund, *The State of America's Children 2008*.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Early prenatal care by race and Hispanic origin of mother, geographic division, and state.

⁵ Kaiser Family Health Foundation, Aids Case Rate Per 1,000 Population, All Ages, Reported in 2007.

⁶ District of Columbia, *HIV/AIDS Epidemiology Update* (2008).

⁷ Center for American Progress, *Dramatic Increase in the Uninsured Rate in Every State* (2009); U.S. Census Bureau, District of Columbia Quick Facts.

⁸ Children's Defense Fund, *The State of America's Children 2008*.

⁹ Brookings Institution and Rand Corporation, *Health Status and Access to Care Among Low-Income Washington, DC Residents* (2007).

¹⁰ District of Columbia Primary Care Association, *Where We Are, Where We Need to Go: 2005 Update*.