



## NEWS RELEASE

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## Statewide telephone survey will ask Alabamians about their health insurance status

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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How many people in Alabama have health insurance? How many people in Alabama are uninsured? Where do they live? Are they employed? What options do they have available? What are the barriers to exercising those options? A statewide telephone survey being conducted over the next few months will ask thousands of Alabamians to answer questions about their health insurance.

Alabama is one of 12 states to receive a grant this year from the Health Resources and Services Administration to conduct a survey to look at residents' insurance status. Currently, not enough is known about Alabama's uninsured population to make specific plans to reduce this number.

A recent report from the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured found that between 1994 and 2000, a period of great economic prosperity, the uninsured rate nationally was essentially unchanged from 17.3 percent in 1994 to 17.2 percent in 2000. However, current demographic data, since the economic downturn in the country, is just not available.

"We want to better understand who does and who does not have health insurance to better explore what options the state has available," said Dr. Donald Williamson, State Health Officer. "After the survey is completed, basic health insurance coverage data about our population will be made available on a sub-state basis. We want to look at what other states have done and figure out what might be done in Alabama to assist with those who are uninsured."

The Alabama Health Care Insurance and Access Survey will complete 6,000 to 7,000 telephone surveys from October through February 2003. Telephone calls are estimated to take about 20 minutes. A toll-free number will be provided so that people who are called can verify that the survey is legitimate and get answers to any other questions that they have.

All ages of Alabama residents will be surveyed. Data analysis will provide information for the state's metropolitan statistical areas, the Black Belt, North Alabama rural counties and South Alabama rural counties. Responses may be categorized as insured, uninsured, underinsured or unstably insured.

Most of the questions on the survey will be similar to those asked in other states, but Alabama's survey has a few extra questions such as inquiries about dental health coverage and the availability of mental health coverage.

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