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HARC Research Shows Number of Medically Uninsured Children in Region Outpace County and State Totals

(PALM DESERT, CA) – When Healthy People 2010 previously announced its goal to have 100% of Americans covered by health insurance, some questioned whether it was possible. Research gathered and published by HARC, the Palm Desert-based Health Assessment Resource Center, suggests they raised a legitimate concern – particularly in Eastern Riverside County.

According to findings in HARC's landmark *Community Health Monitor*, an estimated 15.7% of all children from Banning to Blythe carry no healthcare coverage. That's nearly two and a half times the number of uninsured youngsters across California, based on comparative data provided by the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). The number represents over 23,000 kids living in an area that stretches west from the Coachella Valley to Banning, and eastward to Blythe.

Other significant findings include:

- Hispanic children are slightly more likely than Caucasian kids, by a margin of 19.4% to 11.8%, to lack any form of healthcare coverage.
- Slightly more than 25% of children in households with incomes below \$25,000 are the most likely to be without insurance; the proportion of uninsured decreases as household income increases.

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- Children ages 6-17 are much more likely than younger children to lack healthcare coverage – by a margin of 26.8% to 10.3%.

In comparative terms, Eastern Riverside County adults fared a bit better in the HARC survey. The number of uninsured adults in this region came in slightly less than the overall county and statewide totals reflected in the 2005 CHIS data. That said, nearly 81,000 people in the Coachella Valley and surrounding communities on both sides, lack health care insurance. The total represents 14.8% of the total population. Other notable findings include:

- Nearly five times as many adult Hispanic/Latinos (33.2%) are uninsured, when compared to Caucasians (6.9%)
- Close to equal proportions of men and women are uninsured.

HARC's *Community Health Monitor* contains data from more than 3,500 completed household surveys conducted throughout Eastern Riverside County. Respondents fielded questions related to health status, behavioral risks, quality of life issues, access, and utilization of services. A total of 172 questions comprised the adult survey and 136 for children.

The research initiative aims to deliver healthcare providers, cities, government agencies, and private interests a snapshot of public health in eastern Riverside County. HARC data will be used to facilitate decision-making on future issues such as program development, access, funding, utilization, and more.

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About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 30 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in eastern Riverside County every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501 ©3 organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities who contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 601-3663, or visiting the organization's website at www.harcddata.org.

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