

## **2009 BRFSS Medicaid Data Summary**

Selected Results from the North Carolina Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) for Medicaid Recipients: Data Collected from January through December 2009

In the 2009 BRFSS survey, for those respondents who reported that they did have health insurance coverage, the following question was asked: “What is your primary health insurance plan? This is the plan which pays the medical bills first or pays most of the medical bills.” If the adult respondent chose “Medicaid or Carolina ACCESS or Health Choice” then they are counted as “Medicaid” for purposes of this report. BRFSS results for Medicaid recipients are compared to the results for all North Carolina adult BRFSS respondents.

Out of a total of 13,277 BRFSS respondents during January-December 2009, 345 or 3.0 percent indicated that Medicaid was their primary health insurance plan. The figure of 3.0 percent is a weighted percentage, designed to represent the entire non-institutionalized adult population of North Carolina, and thus cannot be calculated directly from the numbers of survey respondents in the table. This percentage is substantially lower than the percentage of the total population of the state who are Medicaid recipients, due to several factors: 1) the BRFSS survey is conducted only for persons age 18 and older, while the majority of Medicaid recipients in North Carolina are under the age of 18 or in institutions and are therefore not surveyed; 2) a higher proportion of Medicaid recipients do not have telephones, or may have cell phones only which were not represented in the 2009 survey; and 3) low-income persons with phones may be more likely than others not to respond to the survey for various reasons.

Due to budgetary constraints, the NC BRFSS sample size has declined substantially over the past five years, from a high of almost 17,000 interviews in 2005 to just over 13,000 in 2009. Subsequently, the number of BRFSS interviews completed by Medicaid respondents has also declined, from 612 interviews in 2005 to 345 interviews in 2009. Given that 345 is a small number on which to calculate percentages and other statistics, the results in the attached report should be interpreted with caution. (Note that when the confidence intervals for a specific indicator, such as doctor-diagnosed diabetes, overlap for the Medicaid and statewide BRFSS population, this usually indicates that the respective rates are not statistically significantly different.)

In the following, we focus on several key changes that have occurred within the Medicaid sample population for years 2007 through 2009. We also highlight several comparisons regarding the Medicaid population versus the state sample (all BRFSS respondents) population for 2009.

#### The BRFSS Medicaid Population (2007-2009)

- The percentage of African Americans in the BRFSS Medicaid sample has increased from 30.5 percent in 2007, to 32.6 percent in 2008, to 41.6 percent in 2009; this increase represents a significant linear trend ( $p=0.048$ ). Similarly, the results show that, from 2007 to 2009, the percentage of all Medicaid respondents in the lowest income group ( $< \$15,000$  dollars) has increased steadily over the years, ranging from 41.8 percent in 2007 to 53.1 percent in 2009. This increase in low income rates over the three-year period was also close to a significant linear trend ( $p=0.058$ ).
- Though not statistically significant, there was a noticeable increase in no leisure time activity for Medicaid respondents in 2009 (41.8%), compared to the rate of no leisure time activity in 2008 (32.7%). There was also a noticeable increase in the percentage of Medicaid respondents with a disability in 2009 (65.9%), compared to corresponding disability rates for 2008 (56.4%) and 2007 (58.9%).
- The rate of obesity for Medicaid respondents also changed over the years. In 2007 the obesity rate was 35.1 percent, and then in 2008, the obesity rate climbed to 45.3 percent, which was a statistically significant increase ( $p=0.051$ ). In 2009, the obesity declined somewhat to 41.4 percent.
- A potentially encouraging trend suggests that the rate of diabetes may be declining, to some degree, among Medicaid respondents. In 2007, 14.3 percent of Medicaid respondents had diabetes; this compares to 11.1 percent in 2008 and 10.0 percent in 2009.

### The BRFSS Medicaid Population Compared to the BRFSS State Population (2009)

- Even though the Medicaid population is considerably younger than the state population, the general health status of Medicaid respondents is substantially worse than that of all BRFSS respondents: for 2009, 36.8 percent of Medicaid respondents versus 18.1 percent of all BRFSS respondents reported being in fair or poor health. The poor health of Medicaid respondents was also reflected in the greater number of days (eight or more days out of the past 30 days) when mental health was not good or when poor health impaired usual activities.
- For most of the chronic diseases examined in the 2009 tables, including diabetes, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and arthritis, the difference in the prevalence rates between Medicaid respondents and all BRFSS respondents was not statistically significant. As in previous years, the only statistically significant difference was found among those who ever had asthma; the rate was about 1.6 times higher for Medicaid respondents.
- There are two important risk factors that are significantly (statistically) elevated among Medicaid respondents, compared to their statewide counterparts. Medicaid respondents are significantly more likely to be everyday smokers (32.0%), and significantly more likely to have a disability (65.9%). These findings were also evident in 2008 and in 2007.