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Kids Count releases statistics on children living in poverty

By BENJAMIN BRANCHAUD

SOUTH KINGSTOWN - A survey released by Rhode Island Kids Count claims that in 2013, Rhode Island was home to more children living in poverty than any other state in New England.

According to the survey, 21.5 percent of children living in the state are living in poverty. The next highest statistic in New England comes from Maine, at 17.7 percent.

Most of the representation comes from the four core cities, Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence and Woonsocket; the numbers here in Southern Rhode Island have actually decreased in the past ten years.

South Kingstown, where it was estimated that 5.3 percent of children were living in poverty in 2000, now shows 4.9 percent - a difference of 77 children. Narragansett showed an even greater decrease between the two years studied, cutting its 235 children statistic from the year 2000 almost in half.

In the state, Kids Count shows that the majority (38 percent) of the children living in poverty are ages five or younger. A staggering 76 percent of all children living in poverty are living with a single parent - 67 percent with a single mother.

More than half of the children living in poverty in Rhode Island are white, with the next highest

statistic at 20 percent being "some other race." Though white children make up the majority of children living in poverty, Kids Count notes that minorities as a combined group are much more likely to be living in poverty.

Of the 44,923 children living below the poverty threshold in Rhode Island, 43 percent are living in what Kids Count considers "extreme poverty." In total, an estimated 9 percent of all children in Rhode Island live in extreme poverty, which is characterized by an income below 50 percent of the federal poverty threshold.

The Kids Count report goes further than the statistics, explaining the effects of poverty on young children.

Compared with children in families with incomes at least twice the federal poverty threshold, children who are poor between the prenatal stage and age five complete less school, earn less as adults, work fewer hours, receive more food stamp assistance, are more likely to report poor health, are more likely to be arrested and are more likely to give birth while under 21 and unmarried, according to the report.

Kids Count suggests earlier, evidence-based interventions into cases of family poverty as one way to improve the situation in Rhode Island.

More information from the report will be available in upcoming issues of The Standard Times.