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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Presents:
*Newport Data in Your Backyard***

From 2007 to 2010 the four-year graduation rate in Newport increased from 60% to 78%, the largest percentage gain in the state.

During the 2009-2010 school year, 25% of Newport middle school students and 42% of Newport high school students missed 18 or more days of school.

Newport's rate of child abuse and neglect (28.3 victims per 1,000 children) now the highest in the state.

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**Newport, RI (October 4, 2011)** – Community leaders, policy makers and parents learned about the well-being of children and families in Newport today. Stephanie Geller, Policy Analyst for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, presented data from the *2011 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook*. The *Data in Your Backyard* presentation, which took place at the Newport Public Library in Newport, included highlights of improvements and declines in the well-being of children and youth in Newport. After the presentation, community members discussed opportunities to improve outcomes for Newport children. The presentation was brought to the community in partnership with the Newport Partnership for Families.

**Fewer children living in Newport**

According to the 2010 decennial Census, fewer children lived in Newport in 2010 than in 2000 when the last Census was conducted. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of children living in Newport declined by 21% with 4,083 children living in the city in 2010, compared to 5,199 children living there in 2000. This decline was the largest percentage decrease in any Rhode Island community and compares to a decrease of 12% in the state as a whole.

## **Child abuse and neglect on the rise**

An area of concern facing the city of Newport is the increasing rate of child abuse and neglect. In 2010, the rate of child abuse and neglect was 28.3 victims per 1,000 children, a substantial increase from the 2009 rate of 17.3 victims per 1,000 children. Newport's rate of child abuse and neglect is the highest in the state, and much higher than nearby Middletown (11.6 victims per 1,000 children) and Portsmouth (4.6 victims per 1,000 children). The immediate effects of child abuse and neglect can include isolation, fear, inability to trust, injury and even death. Long-term effects include juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, mental health problems, teen pregnancy and low academic achievement.

"It is critical that we continue to focus on ways to prevent child abuse and neglect in all of our state's cities and towns," stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "Increasing access to income supports, health care for parents and children, and enrollment in high-quality early learning programs and out-of-school time programs can help stabilize at-risk families and keep children safe."

Research also shows that child abuse and neglect can be prevented when vulnerable families with infants and toddlers participate in evidence-based home visiting programs. Added Bryant, "Effective home visiting programs help parents develop the skills to nurture and support their children's development and improve the health of both the parent and the child"

## **Gains and losses in childhood health**

Early prenatal care can identify and treat health problems and influence health behaviors that can compromise fetal development, infant health and maternal health. While the state's delayed prenatal care rate has been slowly increasing, Newport's rate has been decreasing. Between 2005 and 2009, 10.2% of Newport women received delayed prenatal care or no prenatal care, compared to the state rate of 14.9%. Newport's infant mortality rate is also lower than the state rate. In 2005 to 2009, Newport's infant mortality rate was 6.1 deaths per 1,000 live births, while the state rate was 6.3 deaths per 1,000 live births.

"Newport has made impressive gains in infant health. Increasing access to evidence-based programs that offer expectant mothers support early in their pregnancies through programs like the Nurse Family Partnership, Early Head Start and Healthy Families, will help ensure that more new moms receive critical care, additional support, and continued education that will improve their family's future over the long-term," added Bryant.

Newport's teen birth rate for young girls (ages 15-17) has been declining, but it is still the fifth highest in the state. Between 2005 and 2009, Newport's birth rate among girls

ages 15 to 17 was 21.1 births per 1,000 girls, while the state rate among girls ages 15 to 17 was 18.9 births per 1,000 girls. The number of teen births among older teens (ages 18 to 19) is substantially lower in Newport (26.5 births per 1,000) than both the state rate (42.8 births per 1,000) and neighboring Middletown (52.9 births per 1,000) during the same time period.

### **High rate of absenteeism a problem the city is working to address**

Students who are absent from school miss critical opportunities to develop skills and approaches to learning that are crucial for ongoing success, especially in the early years. Chronic early absence is the percentage of children in kindergarten through third grade (K-3) who have missed at least 10% of the school year (18 days or more). During the 2009-2010 school year, 19% of Newport's children in grades K-3 were chronically absent, higher than the state rate of 13%.

Absenteeism is an even greater problem among Newport's middle and high school students. During the 2009-2010 school year, 25% of Newport middle school students and 42% of Newport high school students missed 18 or more days of school. These rates were among the highest in the state. Truant students are at-risk of disengagement from school, academic failure and dropping out. The Newport School Department recognizes the risks associated with high rates of absenteeism and in August brought together civic leaders, education professionals and other key community stakeholders to work on addressing this problem.

### **Substantial improvements in reading and math proficiency and graduation rate**

Newport is making impressive gains in reading and math proficiency among its students. Between 2005 and 2010, the percentage of Newport's fourth-graders who were proficient in reading increased from 46% to 66%, approaching the state rate of 69%. Similar improvements were made among the city's eighth-graders. Between 2005 and 2010, Newport's eighth-grade reading proficiency rate increased from 50% to 68%, compared to the state increase from 56% to 74%. Newport has seen sizable improvements in both fourth-grade and eighth-grade math proficiency since 2005 as well, although the proficiency rates continued to be lower than the rate for the state as a whole.

The district is also showing remarkable progress when it comes to increasing the high school graduation rate. In 2010, Newport's four-year graduation rate was 78%, higher than the state rate of 76%. From 2007 to 2010 the four-year graduation rate in Newport increased from 60% to 78%, the largest percentage gain in the state during that time

period. The dropout rate for the 2010 school year was 12%, lower than the state rate (14%) and significantly lower than the core city rate (23%).

“Newport has made great progress in increasing its graduation rate and decreasing its dropout rate,” noted Stephanie Geller, Policy Analyst for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Continuing to implement strategies that identify at risk students in elementary or middle school and provide them with personalized academic and social support can help the city make additional gains in both areas.”

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*Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.*