



**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**  
ONE UNION STATION  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903  
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

**Embargoed until 12:01 a.m., EDT, October 1, 2013**

**Contact:**

John Neubauer, Policy Analyst  
401.351.9400, ext. 17 / jneubauer@rikidscount.org

**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Presents:**

***Newport Data in Your Backyard***

*Infant health outcomes improving, including delayed prenatal care, low birthweight*

*Rate of victims of child abuse and neglect decreasing*

*Education outcomes show improvements, including reading and math skills*

**Newport, RI, (October 1, 2013)** - Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Analyst, John Neubauer, presented data from the *2013 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* to an audience of community leaders and policy makers. The *Newport Data in Your Backyard* presentation included highlights of improvements and declines in the well-being of children and youth in Newport. After the presentation, audience members discussed opportunities to improve outcomes for children in Newport. The presentation was brought to the community in partnership with the Newport Partnership for Families and was held on **Tuesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, from 9:00am – 10:30am at Newport Public Library**, 300 Spring Street in Newport, RI.

Neubauer welcomed participants, saying “Today’s event, co-sponsored by the Newport Partnership for Families, highlights how community groups can work together to support families and improve outcomes in child health, family economic well-being, and education.”

**Improvements in Infant Outcomes**

Newport has made gains in infant health outcomes in recent years.

- *Decreased Delayed Prenatal Care:* 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 rate of delayed prenatal care has been increasing, Newport’s rate has been decreasing. Between 2007-2011, 8.9% of women received delayed or no prenatal care, an improvement from 14.2% in 2001-2005.
- *Low Birthweight:* An infant’s birthweight is a key indicator of newborn health, and low birthweight infants are at greater risk for physical and developmental problems than infants of normal weight. Newport’s low birthweight rate has dropped from 8.3% (in 2006-2010) to 7.7% (in 2007-2011).
- *Decreased Teeth Birth Rate:* Babies born to teen mothers are at increased risk for low birthweight, prematurity, and death in infancy. Newport’s teen birthrate declined to 23.9 births per 1,000 girls ages 15-19 during 2007-2011, down from 25.3 births per 1,000 girls ages 15-19 during 2002-2006. The birthrate for Rhode Island teens during 2007-2011 was 25.5 births per 1,000 girls, slightly above Newport’s teen birth rate.

## **Reading, Math Skills Improving**

- *Reading Skills:* Early reading difficulties have an impact on academic achievement and future employment success. Students who do not read proficiently by fourth grade have a much more difficult time with literacy and language development than their peers. Between 2005 and 2012, the percentage of fourth grade students in Newport public schools who were proficient in reading has increased from 46% to 64%. This trend has continued among eighth graders. Between 2005 and 2012, Newport's eighth grade reading proficiency rate increased from 50% to 85%.
- *Math Skills:* The ability to understand math is critical for performing many important daily activities of adulthood. Between 2005 and 2012, the percentage of fourth grade students proficient in math increased from 34% to 57% and the percentage of eighth grade students proficient in math increased from 39% to 55%.

## **Absenteeism Down for Middle and High School Students**

- During the 2011-12 school year, 38% of high school students and 15% of middle school students were absent 18 or more days. This is an improvement from 2010-11, when 43% of high school students and 19% of middle school students missed 18 or more days of school.
- The percentage of middle school students chronically absent has steadily declined since 2008-09, when 26% of students missed 18 or more days. For high school students, the percentage of students chronically absent is up from 35% during 2008-09.

## **Child Abuse and Neglect Declining, But Remains High**

- In 2012, there were 96 victims of child abuse and neglect (a rate of 23.5 per 1,000 children) in Newport, compared to 131 victims (a rate of 32.1 victims per 1000 children) in 2011. Although this is a positive trend, Newport had the second highest rate of child abuse and neglect victims in Rhode Island in 2012. This includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as emotional, educational, physical, and medical neglect.

In closing the event, Jill Beckwith, Deputy Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, stated "Newport has made progress in reducing incidents of child abuse and neglect. Community organizations, schools, the police, and other key leaders in Newport are committed to identifying vulnerable families and keeping children safe. Strong collaborative efforts such as the Newport Partnership for Families are an example of the way Newport comes together to improve child well-being and will help to ensure that progress continues in reducing child abuse and neglect."