



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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For immediate release

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

Providence's child poverty rate is 37.3%, among the highest in the state

*More Providence students benefit from the School Breakfast Program
now that breakfast is offered in the classroom*

*Eighth-grade reading proficiency rates continue to steadily rise,
up from 25% in 2005 to 53% in 2012*

Providence, RI, (June 11, 2013) - Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Analyst, Stephanie Geller, EdM, presented data from the *2013 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* to an audience of community leaders and policy makers. The *Providence Data in Your Backyard* presentation included highlights of improvements and declines in the well-being of children and youth in Providence. After the presentation, community members discussed opportunities to improve outcomes for children in Providence. The presentation was brought to the community in partnership with Providence's Children and Youth Cabinet and was held on **Tuesday, June 11, 2013 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Gilbert Stuart Middle School**, 188 Princeton Avenue, Providence, RI.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Executive Director, welcomed participants, saying "Today's event is one of many ways in which City, District, and community leaders are working together to examine data trends, identify successes and opportunities for improvement, and develop ways to collectively improve outcomes for Providence children and youth across sectors."

Providence has high rates of poverty and extreme poverty among children

Although childhood poverty exists in every Rhode Island community, it is particularly concentrated in the core cities of Providence, Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket. 37.3% (15,428) of children in Providence live in poverty, including 7,418 Providence children who live in extreme poverty (18.0% of all children in Providence and 48.1% of poor children). In 2012, the federal poverty level was \$18,498 for a family of three and \$23,283 for a family of four. A family is considered to be in extreme poverty if its income is less than half the poverty threshold.

Providence School Breakfast Program Continues to be a Success

Students who eat breakfast have higher math and reading scores, fewer absences, improved attentiveness, and lower incidences of social and emotional problems. Providence is one of five school districts in Rhode Island with a district-wide Universal School Breakfast Program. This Program offers free breakfast to all children in elementary school classrooms, regardless of income. Providence also is a leader in offering school breakfast in the classroom. Providence's school breakfast participation rate has increased from 38% of low-income students participating in 2008, to 56% in 2012.

“The lingering recession and high unemployment in Rhode Island continue to have a negative impact on children and families,” noted Geller. “Programs like the Universal School Breakfast Program in Providence are critical to ensuring that children get the nutrition they need to pay attention and excel in school.”

Improvements in 8th grade reading; 4th grade reading showing slower improvement

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 Providence public schools who were proficient in reading increased from 31% to 45%; however progress has slowed since 2008. Between 2005 and 2012, we have seen steady progress in the percentage of eighth grade students in Providence schools who scored proficient in reading which has increased from 25% to 52%.

Infant outcomes need improvement

Early prenatal care is important in order to identify and treat health problems and influence positive health behaviors to promote fetal development, infant health and maternal health. At 20.9%, Providence has the highest percentage of women receiving delayed or no prenatal care in the state. Other infant health measures show a need to focus on improving prenatal and infant health. Between 2007 and 2011, 9.1% of all Providence babies were born with a low birthweight. This is the 2nd highest (worst) low birthweight rate, ranking only above Woonsocket's 10.1%. Providence also has the highest preterm birth (13%) and infant mortality (8.7 per 1,000) rates in the state.

New data presented on Preschool Special Education, Schools Identified for Intervention, and Gun Violence

Preschool Special Education

Beginning at age three, children are eligible for special education through their local school district if they have a specific disability or a developmental delay. During the 2011-2012 school year in Rhode Island, there were 2,927 preschool-age children who received special education services. In Providence, 6% (486) of children ages three to five were enrolled in preschool special education.

“Preschool special education provides critical early learning opportunities to nearly 3,000 preschool-age children across Rhode Island, including 500 young children in Providence,” stated Bryant “The earlier we are able to include children with developmental delays in high quality special education programs, the better.”

Schools Identified for Intervention

The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has implemented a classification system for all public schools, to recognize outstanding performance and provide support to low-achieving schools and options for intervention to improve student achievement. In 2012, 29 schools (10%) across Rhode Island were identified for intervention, and over half (57%) of Providence's public schools were identified for intervention.

Gun Violence

Nationally, of the 2,711 children and youth under age 20 killed by firearms during 2010, 86% (2,331) were ages 15 to 19. In Rhode Island between 2007 and 2011, there were 75 hospitalizations of children and youth for gun-related injuries. Nearly two-thirds (47) of the hospitalizations were youth who lived in Providence.