

The 16th Annual Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook Breakfast is on Monday, April 12, 8-10am at Westin Providence.

Photo and image courtesy of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

more joy for women and children

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT on Early Head Start

by Elizabeth Burke Bryant

Pregnancy and the birth of a child are both joyful and stressful times as parents adjust to new roles and a new way of interacting as a family. In terms of stressors, new responsibilities place increased economic, social and emotional demands on mothers and fathers. All families need a positive and supportive network of relationships around them as they make the transition to parenthood.

Yet for many women, pregnancy and parenthood are challenging times filled with anxiety over health issues or lack of economic resources. Some women do not have a network of friends, neighbors and family members to rely on for guidance, help and advice. It is these families that benefit most from Early Head Start, a “two-generation” program with services provided for parents and children.

Established in 1994, Early Head Start is a comprehensive early childhood program serving low-income families during pregnancy and through the child’s third birthday. Early Head Start promotes healthy births for pregnant women, fosters healthy

family relationships, helps women and their families with education and jobs, and connects families to high-quality early learning programs and other needed services.

Early Head Start is a program that has been proven to make a difference in the lives of families with infants and toddlers. For example, children who participate in Early Head Start have significant gains in cognitive and language development, while parents have been found to have more positive interactions with their babies and toddlers. Early Head Start parents also provide greater opportunities for language and learning to their children – as compared to parents not participating in Early Head Start. Especially important to those working with teen parents is that mothers who participate have fewer subsequent births within two years of enrollment, and they are more likely to participate in education and job-training activities.

There are six Early Head Start programs in Rhode Island serving almost 400 families, but more



will receive help soon. Thanks to investments that were part of the President’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Rhode Island will receive federal funds to serve 134 additional families.

More families served, more moments of joy.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant is the executive director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. This statewide children’s policy organization works to improve and ensure the economic well-being, health, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children. Early Head Start is one of over 60 issues covered in the annual Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook available at www.rikidscount.org. Early Head Start Programs in Rhode Island: CHILD, Inc. Children’s Friend; Comprehensive Community Action Program; East Bay Community Action; and Meeting Street TriTown Economic Opportunity Committee.



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UrbanHealthWatch.net is a project managed by the Urban League of Rhode Island. It is funded by the RI Prevention Block Grant, a program of the RI Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The purpose of the blog is to advance health equity, and to promote culturally appropriate health messaging and chronic disease prevention.

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