

Rhode Island



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

***77% of Warwick's fourth-graders read at or above proficiency,  
higher than the state rate***

***In 2011, 82% of students graduated high school in four years,  
up from 66% in 2007***

***12.5% of pregnant women in Warwick received no prenatal care  
or delayed prenatal care from 2006-2010***

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**Warwick, RI (November 14, 2012)** – Community leaders, policy makers and parents learned about the well-being of children and families in Warwick today. Stephanie Geller, Policy Analyst for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, presented data from the *2012 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook*. The *Data in Your Backyard* presentation, which took place at the Warwick Public Library, included highlights of improvements and declines in the well-being of children and youth in the city. After the presentation, community members discussed opportunities to improve outcomes for the city's children. The presentation was brought to the community in partnership with the Warwick Coalition to Prevent Child Abuse.

**Warwick students continue to make progress in reading and math**

Students in Warwick are making steady progress in reading proficiency. Between 2005 and 2011, the percentage of fourth-grade students in Warwick that read at or above proficiency increased from 71% to 77%, and remained higher than the state rate, which was 71% in 2011. The percentage of eighth-grade students in Warwick that read at or above proficiency increased even more dramatically from 59% in 2005 to 84% in 2011, and also remained above the state rate, which was 77% in 2011.

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“Reading proficiency is critical for academic success. Prior to third grade children are learning to read; after third grade children are reading to learn,” stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Students who have poor reading skills will have trouble completing coursework and graduating from high school. Early warning systems can help identify students who are struggling with reading and falling behind their peers.”

Improvements in math proficiency also are being made, although more work needs to be done. Between 2005 and 2011, the percentage of fourth-grade students in Warwick who were at or above proficiency in math increased from 63% to 70%, and was higher than the state rate of 65% in 2011. The percentage of eighth-grade students in Warwick at or above proficiency in math increased from 52% in 2005 to 58% to 2011, the same as the state rate of 58% in 2011.

Geller added, “Improvements in curriculum, instructional materials, assessments, classroom practice, teacher preparation, and professional development all can help to increase math proficiency among students.”

### **High school graduation rate improves substantially**

Warwick’s high school graduation has increased in recent years. In 2011, 82% of students graduated from high school in four years, up from 66% in 2007. The four-year graduation rate for Rhode Island as a whole was 77% in 2011. High school graduation is the minimum requisite for college and most employment. In Rhode Island, adults without high school diplomas are more than three times as likely to be unemployed as those who have bachelor’s degrees.

Noted Geller, “While Warwick has made great improvements in its graduation rate in recent years, the district’s graduation rate for low-income students (68%) continues to lag behind that of higher-income students (89%). Warwick can continue to improve its graduation rate for all students by identifying students at-risk for dropping out and providing individualized supports to keep them on the path to graduation, creating eighth to ninth grade transition programs, and supporting personalized learning.”

### **Fewer women receiving early prenatal care**

Early prenatal care is critical to identify and treat health problems and prevent behaviors that can compromise fetal development, infant health and maternal health. Between 2006 and 2010, 12.5% of pregnant women in Warwick received no prenatal care or delayed prenatal care, an increase from 6.5% between 2001 and 2005. The state’s rate of delayed prenatal care was 15.6% between 2006 and 2010, mirroring a similar increase statewide.

“Timely prenatal care is important for the health of mothers and their babies,” said Bryant. “Prenatal care allows caregivers to screen for and treat conditions that increase the risks for poor birth outcomes, such as having babies who are low birthweight or who die in infancy, and

to educate parents on caring for newborns. It is especially important for women who face multiple risks for poor birth outcomes.”

### **Births to Warwick teens**

Between 2006 and 2010, the birth rate among teen girls in Warwick was 21.3 births per 1,000 teen girls ages 15 to 19, lower than the state rate of 27.0 births per 1,000 teen girls ages 15 to 19. The birth rate for older teens (ages 18 and 19) was slightly higher in Warwick (44.1 births per 1,000 girls ages 18 and 19) than the state as a whole (37.5 births per 1,000 girls ages 18 and 19). In Warwick between 2006 and 2010, 28 births were repeat teen births, making up 11.8% of the 237 teen births in Warwick during the time period.

“Children of teen parents face a number of challenges,” stated Bryant. “They are more likely to have learning problems, live in poverty, enter the foster care system, drop out of high school, spend time in prison and become teen parents themselves.”

### **Child abuse and neglect rate lower in Warwick than surrounding communities**

In 2011, the rate of child abuse and neglect in Warwick was 9.8 victims per 1,000 children, lower than the state rate (14.0 victims per 1,000 children) and lower than nearby Coventry (17.1 victims per 1,000 children), Cranston (11.1 victims per 1,000 children), and Johnston (12.2 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 Bryant. “Increasing access to health care, work supports, 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”

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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.*