



2008 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a children's policy organization that provides information on child well-being, stimulates dialogue on children's issues, and promotes accountability and action. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT appreciates the generous support of The Rhode Island Foundation, United Way of Rhode Island, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Prince Charitable Trusts, CVS Caremark Charity Classic, Hasbro Children's Fund, Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Pre-K Now, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, UnitedHealthcare, and Citizens Bank Foundation.

The annual *Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* is one of fifty state-level projects designed to provide a detailed community-by-community picture of the condition of children. A national Factbook with comparable data for the U.S. is produced annually by The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Additional copies of the *2008 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* are available for \$20.00 per copy. Reduced rates are available for bulk orders. To receive copies of the *2008 Factbook*, please contact:

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Overview

Tuning Up

by Felice Holman

I'm at a concert
And the tuba moans.
 The tuba moans
And the bassoon groans.
 The bassoon groans
And the violin sings.
 The violin sings
And the cymbal rings.
 The cymbal rings
And the trumpet toots.
 The trumpet toots
And the flutist flutes.
 The flutist flutes
And the drummer drums.
 The drummer drums
And the cello hums....
Then ending all this dissonance
The baton raps and starts to dance.

The *2008 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* is the fourteenth annual profile of the well-being of children in Rhode Island. The annual Factbook is an important tool for planning and action by community leaders, policy makers, advocates and others working toward changes that will improve the quality of life for all children.

The *2008 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* provides a statistical portrait of the status of Rhode Island's children. Information is presented for the state of Rhode Island, each city and town and an aggregate of the six cities in which 15% or more of the children live in poverty. These six core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

The Factbook provides community-level information on indicators in order to emphasize the significance of the surrounding physical, social, and economic environment in shaping outcomes for children. Communities and neighborhoods do matter – the actions of community leaders, parents, individuals, businesses, government leaders and elected officials greatly influence children's chances for success and the challenges they will face.

By examining the best available data statewide and in Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT provides an information base that can result in more effective policy and community action on behalf of children. Tracking changes in selected indicators can help communities to set priorities, identify strategies to reverse negative trends and monitor progress.

The *2008 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* examines sixty-two indicators in five areas that affect the lives of children: Family and Community, Economic Well-Being, Health, Safety and Education. All areas of child well-being are interrelated and critical throughout a child's development.

A child's safety in his or her family and community affects school performance; a child's economic security affects his or her health and education. The *2008 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* reflects these interrelationships and builds a framework to guide policy, programs and individual service on behalf of children.



Early Investments Count

Improving outcomes for children of all ages requires investments in young children and their families. Yet, most resources are directed toward crisis intervention after children, youth, families and communities are already in trouble. Many of the difficult and costly problems faced by adolescents can be prevented by providing children with a better start in life. Access to health insurance, quality health care, home visiting for high risk families and high-quality child care, Head Start and pre-Kindergarten programs are critical public policy investments that have proven impacts on the long-term educational achievement and healthy development of children and youth.



Educational Attainment for All Children

Improving student achievement and high school graduation rates in Rhode Island will require focused leadership to increase school readiness, to maintain high academic standards across the curriculum at all grades, and to ensure that all children graduate from high school with the skills they need to succeed in college and the workforce. Research shows that disparities in student achievement can be closed when all children – regardless of race, ethnicity, family or community income level – attend high-performing schools with rigorous academic standards and high expectations for all students.



Family Economic Security

Children most at risk of not achieving their full potential are children in poverty. While Rhode Island's child poverty rate decreased from 21.0% in 2004 to 15.1% in 2006, there were still 35,456 Rhode Island children who lived in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold of \$16,705 for a family of three. Many families with incomes above the poverty level also have a difficult time meeting the high costs of housing, utilities, food, child care and health care. Child care subsidies, health insurance, affordable housing and tax policies that support working families are important tools to ensure the economic well-being of Rhode Island families and to improve child outcomes.