

**Methodology**

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# Methodology

The *2011 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* examines 67 indicators in five areas that affect the lives of children: Family and Community, Economic Well-Being, Health, Safety and Education. The information on each indicator is organized as follows:

- ◆ **Definition:** A description of the indicator and what it measures.
- ◆ **Significance:** The relationship of the indicator to child and family well-being.
- ◆ **National Rank and New England Rank:** For those indicators that are included in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT publications, the Factbook highlights Rhode Island's rank among the 50 states, as well as trends since 2000. The New England Rank highlights Rhode Island's rank among the six New England states – Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.
- ◆ **Sidebars:** Current state and national data and information related to the indicator.
- ◆ **City/Town Tables:** Data presented for each of Rhode Island's cities and towns, the state as a whole and the core cities.
- ◆ **Core Cities Data:** The core cities are the six Rhode Island communities in which more than 15% of the children live below the poverty threshold according to the 2000 Census. They include Central Falls,

Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

◆ **Most Recent Available Data:** The 2011 Factbook uses the most current, reliable data available for each indicator.

## Numbers

The most direct measure of the scope of a problem is the count of the number of events of concern during a specified time period - e.g., the number of child deaths between 2005 and 2009. Numbers are important in assessing the scope of the problem and in estimating the resources required to address a problem. Numbers are not useful to compare the severity of the problem from one geographic area to another or to compare the extent of the problem in Rhode Island with national standards. For example, a state with more children might have more low birthweight infants due to the larger number of total births, not due to an increased likelihood of being born with low birthweight.

## Rates and Percentages

A rate is a measure of the frequency of an event - e.g., out of every 1,000 live births, how many infants will be breastfed. A percentage is another measure of frequency - e.g., out of every 100 births, how many will be born low birthweight. Rates and percentages take into account the total population of children eligible for an event. They are useful in comparing the severity of the problem from one

geographic area to another, to compare with state or national standards or to look at trends over time.

## Sources of Data and Methodology for Calculating Rates and Percentages

For each indicator, the source of information for the actual number of events of interest (the numerator) are identified within the Source of Data/Methodology section next to the table for that indicator. For each indicator that uses a rate or a percent, the source of data for the total number of children eligible for the indicator of interest (the denominator) is also noted within the Source of Data/Methodology section. Rates and percentages are not calculated for cities and towns with small denominators (less than 500 for delayed prenatal care, low birthweight infants, and infant mortality rates and less than 100 for births to teens). Rates and percentages for small denominators are statistically unreliable. "NA" is used in the indicator table when this occurs. In the indicator for child deaths and teen deaths, and other indicators in which the indicator events are rare, city and town rates are not calculated, as small numbers make these rates statistically unreliable.

## Census Data

There are four sources of U.S. Census Bureau data used in the Factbook: Census 2000, the Current Population Survey,

Population Estimates and the American Community Survey. In all city/town tables that require population statistics, data is from Census 2000 as is stated in Source sections. Throughout the text portions of each indicator, all four sources are used and the relevant citations provide clarification on which source data come from. In instances where Census 2000 data is used in the denominator, caution should be taken when comparing new rates with those for past years, as actual population numbers may have changed. Whenever possible, Census data are updated using the most recent data from the American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

## Methodology for Homeless Children

The number of homeless children identified by public schools is based on the federal *McKinney-Vento* definition of homelessness and includes children living in emergency and transitional shelters as well as children doubling up in homes with relatives and friends and living in hotels and motels, cars, campsites, parks and other public places. Schools report the number of children by grade and the child's primary nighttime residence (i.e., sheltered, doubled-up, unsheltered or in a hotel/motel).

## Methodology for Children with Lead Poisoning

The number of children confirmed positive for lead levels  $\geq 10$  mcg/dL are based on venous tests and confirmed

capillary tests only. The highest result (venous or capillary) is used. The number of children confirmed positive may be underestimated because the policies recommending a venous follow-up for a capillary screening test  $\geq 10$  mcg/dL were not in place until July 1, 2004. Starting July 1, 2004 if a child under age six has a capillary blood lead level of  $\geq 10$  mcg/dL the Rhode Island Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program contacts the physician to encourage a confirmatory venous test on the child.

Rhode Island law requires that all children under age six must be screened annually for lead. In October 2007, the Rhode Island Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program made its screening guidelines consistent with the American Academy of Pediatrics, which recommends a blood lead screening test for every child at one and two years of age. The Guidelines indicate that if either of the blood lead tests done at one and two years of age is  $\geq 10$  mcg/dL, annual screening should continue until the age of six. If both of the blood lead tests are  $< 10$  mcg/dL, the pediatrician can use the Risk Assessment Questionnaire instead of a blood lead test until the age of six, which means that not all children receive an annual blood test after age two.

### **Methodology for Alcohol, Drug and Cigarette Use by Teens**

*SurveyWorks!* is an on-line survey that is legislatively mandated and sponsored by the Rhode Island Department of

Elementary and Secondary Education. *SurveyWorks!* replaces the School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) student survey, although some questions were retained in order to provide trend data over time.

The *SurveyWorks!* pilot was administered to students in grades 4-11, with the exception of students who were excused by their parents, students who opted not to take the survey and students who were not able to take the survey due to the nature of their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Districts include different grades in middle school. For the Rhode Island percentage, middle school includes grades 5-8 and represents a 69% response rate among districts for the middle school tool.

The high school percentage is not reported due to a 48% response rate among districts for the high school survey tool. Data for core cities and the remainder of the state were not available for the pilot tool.

“Current” data are the most desirable reporting measure, but “ever” use data are reported in this Factbook because “current use” questions were not available in the pilot *SurveyWorks!* tool.

### **Methodology for Youth Violence**

All law enforcement agencies in Rhode Island are required to maintain a record of the nature of detentions and characteristics of juveniles they arrest.

They submit this information to the Rhode Island Public Safety Grant Administration Office on a monthly basis, and the information is aggregated into a summary report submitted annually to the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. More information can be found at [www.rijustice.ri.gov](http://www.rijustice.ri.gov)

Assault offenses in this indicator include simple assault, robbery, assault, felony assault, assault with a dangerous weapon, domestic assault, assault on a police officer, threats, assault on a school teacher, strong-arm robbery, kidnapping, attempted murder, extortion, fighting, intimidating witness, stalking, attempted robbery, cyber-stalking, carjacking, harassment, and murder.

Weapons offenses in this indicator include: possession of an unspecified weapon, possession of a knife, possession of a firearm, possession of a weapon at school, possession of a bb gun, discharging a firearm, possession of ammunition, possession of a dangerous weapon, carrying a concealed weapon, and discharging a bb gun.

### **State-Operated and Charter Schools**

The state-operated schools and charter schools included in each table are listed in the Source/Methodology Section next to the table. Charter schools include only independently-run charter schools and not those affiliated with a district. Textron/Chamber of Commerce

Academy, Times<sup>2</sup> Academy and the New England Laborers'/Cranston Public Schools Construction Career Academy are all district-affiliated charter schools, and consequently their data are reported within district categories instead of the charter school category.

The Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP) is listed separately when data are available.

Charter schools, state-operated schools and UCAP are not included in core city and remainder of state calculations.

### **New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)**

In October 2005, Rhode Island began using a new statewide assessment system for elementary and middle school students, and Rhode Island implemented a new high school assessment beginning in October 2007. The tests were developed and administered in collaboration with New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine through the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), the first multi-state testing collaboration in the nation. The NECAP tests students in reading, writing and mathematics, and all test questions are directly related to specific state educational standards. Test results are available for the state, district and school levels on the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website. Results from the NECAP are not comparable with statewide assessment tests from

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years prior to 2005 for elementary and middle schools and 2007 for high schools.

## Methodology for Children Attending Schools Making Insufficient Progress

Rhode Island's public school accountability plan specifies a timeline for bringing all students to proficiency by the year 2014. Students are tested in *English Language Arts* and *Mathematics* in grades 3 through 8 plus 11th grade. Schools and districts are classified based on student scores on these tests and test participation rates. The state has set five equal intermediate goals from the baseline year (2002) to the year 2014 when all schools are expected to meet the goal of 100% proficiency.

Schools are measured by the performance of all students on the *English Language Arts* and *Mathematics* tests in the aggregate and by specific disaggregated groups: race/ethnicity (Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native

American, White), economic disadvantage (school-lunch status), special needs (IEP), and Limited English Proficiency. There must be at least 45 students within each disaggregated group across a three-year span in order to use the data for school classification. Other factors which influence school classification include test participation rate (target: 95%) and meeting target attendance (for elementary and middle schools) or graduation (for high schools) rates.

School classifications are based on 37 targets that include school-wide English and mathematics targets, English and mathematics targets for student groups, school-wide and student group test participation targets, and attendance or graduation rate targets (depending on whether the school is an elementary/middle school or a high school). English and mathematics targets are evaluated using New England Common Assessment Program

(NECAP) test and other state test results.

Schools that do not miss any current targets are classified as "Met AYP." Schools that achieve exceptionally high performance in English or mathematics for two years, make significant progress for two years or significantly closed achievement gaps between student groups are designated as Regents Commended Schools ("Met AYP and Commended"). Schools that miss up to three targets for the first time (other than school-wide ELA and mathematics targets) may be classified as "Caution" for one year only. Schools that miss a school-wide ELA or math target, more than three targets, or schools that miss any target for multiple years are classified as making "Insufficient Progress."

### Limitations of the Data

In any data collection process there are always concerns about the accuracy and completeness of the data that are collected. All data used in the 67 indicators were collected through routine data collection systems operated by different federal and state agencies. We do not have estimates of the completeness of reporting for these systems.

### Family Income Levels Based on the Federal Poverty Measures

The poverty thresholds are the original version of the federal poverty

measure. They are updated each year by the Census Bureau. The thresholds are used mainly for statistical purposes — for instance, estimating the number of children in Rhode Island living in poor families. The poverty threshold is adjusted upward based on family size and whether or not household members are children, adults or 65 years and over. The 2010 federal poverty threshold for a family of three with two children is \$17,607 and \$22,162 for a family of four with two children.

The poverty guidelines are the other version of the federal poverty measure. They are issued each year in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for administrative purposes such as determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. Often, government assistance programs, including many of those administered by Rhode Island use the federal poverty guidelines to determine income eligibility. The figures are adjusted upward for larger family sizes.

The phrases "Federal Poverty Level" and "Federal Poverty Line" (often abbreviated FPL) are used interchangeably and can refer to either the poverty thresholds or the poverty guidelines.

**Family Income Levels Based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines**

2010 Federal Poverty Guidelines	Annual Income Family of Three	Annual Income Family of Four
50%	\$9,155	\$11,025
100%	\$18,310	\$22,050
130%	\$23,803	\$28,665
185%	\$33,874	\$40,793
200%	\$36,620	\$44,100
225%	\$41,198	\$49,613
250%	\$45,775	\$55,125

**Source of Data for Table/Methodology**

The Rhode Island Department of Health, KIDSNET Database, 2010. This table shows the number and percentage of all births with three risk factors that place a child at very high risk for poor developmental outcomes.

Note: The Rhode Island Department of Health screens all infants born in the state to identify risks for poor developmental outcomes, including: developmental disabilities, low birth weight, medical fragility, inadequate prenatal care, low Apgar scores at birth, low maternal education, young maternal age, advanced maternal age, single mother, first time mother, mother who has given birth more than five times, parental characteristics indicating vulnerability (e.g., chronic illness), and low income (indicated by enrollment in Medicaid/Rite Care health insurance). Data on all births with any of these risk factors are presented in the chart on the previous page.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

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children are homeless, live in unstable living situations, are transitioning from an out-of-home placement (juvenile justice, foster care, residential or hospital placement), or miss school due to extended travel out of state or out of the country.

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The *2011 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* was made possible by the efforts of many dedicated individuals. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT gratefully acknowledges their assistance. Special thanks to:

Don Crary, Laura Beavers Speer, Jann Jackson and Flo Gutierrez of The Annie E. Casey Foundation for their support and technical assistance.

The Rhode Island state agency directors for their ongoing support of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and for the work of their data and policy staff as we produce the Factbook each year.

Members of the Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook Advisory Committee and the State Agency Data Liaisons for their assistance in shaping the format and content of the Factbook.

Elaine Budish, Raymonde Charles, Julie DiBari and Betsy Shimberg for research, writing, editing and fact checking.

Samara Viner-Brown, Chief, Center for Health Data and Analysis, for coordination and analyses of data from the RI Department of Health; Randy Rosati, formerly with the RI Department of Human Services; Kenneth Gu, Senior Data Systems Administrator, for coordination and analysis of data from the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; and, David Allenson, Systems Administrator, for coordination and analysis of data from the RI Department of Children, Youth and Families.

Greenwood Associates for the design and layout of the Factbook, Gail Greenwood for the illustrations, and DES Printing Co. for the printing of the Factbook.

Members of the Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Board of Directors for their support.

---

## For their technical assistance with the following sections of the Factbook:

---

### Family and Community

#### Child Population, Children in Single-Parent Families, Racial and Ethnic Diversity, Racial and Ethnic Disparities:

Linda Katz, The Poverty Institute; Ana Novais, Donald Perry, Samara Viner-Brown, RI Department of Health; David Allenson, Brian Renzi, RI Department of Children, Youth and Families; Kenneth Gu, Emily Klein, RI Department of Elementary & Secondary Education; Pablo Rodriguez, Women and Infants Hospital; Dennis Langley, Urban League; Mark Mather, Jean D'Amico, Population Reference Bureau.

#### Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren:

David Allenson, Brian Renzi, Kevin Savage, RI Department of Children, Youth and Families; Darlene Allen, Adoption Rhode Island; Lisa Guillette, Kat Keenan, Rhode Island Foster Parents Association; James Gannaway, Casey Family Services; Jennifer Miller, Child Focus; Jaia Peterson, Generations United.

#### Infants Born at Highest Risk:

Ellen Amore, Blythe Berger, Kristine Campagna, A. J. Lizarda, RI Department of Health; Patricia Flanagan, Hasbro Children's Hospital; Susan Dickstein, Ronald Seifer, Bradley/Hasbro Children's Research Center.

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### Children Receiving SNAP Benefits:

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### Children Participating in School Breakfast:

Kathleen Gorman, University of Rhode Island Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America; Becky Besette, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Henry Shelton, George Wiley Center.

---

### Health

**Children's Health Insurance:** John A.Y. Andrews, Diane Bynum, Alison Croke, Lissa DiMauro, Deborah Florio, Sharon Kernan, Amy Lapiere, Randy Rosati, RI

# Acknowledgements

Department of Human Services; Laura Beavers Speer, The Annie E. Casey Foundation; Linda Katz, The Poverty Institute; Jean D'Amico, Population Reference Bureau.

**Childhood Immunizations:** Rachel Cain, Hanna Kim, Kathy Marceau, Patricia Raymond, Susan Shepardson, Samara Viner-Brown, RI Department of Health.

**Access to Dental Care:** John A.Y. Andrews, Diane Bynum, Martha Dellapenna, Lissa DiMauro, Deborah Florio, RI Department of Human Services; Rachel Cain, Deb Fuller, Laurie Leonard, Junhie Oh, Kathy Taylor, Samara Viner-Brown, RI Department of Health; Jane Griffin, MCH Evaluation, Janice Kupiec, American Dental Association.

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Florio, Sharon Kernan, Christine Robin, RI Department of Human Services; Deborah Garneau, Cynthia Holmes, Peter Simon, RI Department of Health.

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**Children with Asthma:** Rachel Cain, Deborah Pearlman, Nancy Sutton, Kathy Taylor, Samara Viner-Brown, RI Department of Health; Chris Camillo, Providence Community Health Centers; Robert Klein, Rhode Island Hospital; Myra Edens, Hasbro Children's Hospital.

**Housing and Health:** Sherry Dixon, Rebecca Morley, National Center for Healthy Housing; Laura Beavers Speer, The Annie E. Casey Foundation; Jean D'Amico, Population Reference Bureau; Magaly Angeloni, Peter Simon, Nancy Sutton, Kathy Taylor, Rachel Cain, Samara Viner-Brown, RI Department of Health; James Celenza, RI Committee on Occupational Safety & Health; Brenda Clement, Housing Action Coalition-RI; Amy Rainone, Rhode Island Housing; Nellie Gorbea, HousingWorks RI; Doris De Los Santos, Simon Kue, RI Housing Resources Commission; June Tourangeau, St. Joseph Hospital Lead Center; Julie A. Capobianco, RI Office of Energy Resources.

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**Births to Teens:** Rachel Cain, Ana Novais, Kristine Campagna, Samara Viner-Brown, RI Department of Health; Patricia Flanagan, Hasbro Children's Hospital.

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Amy Rainone, Rhode Island Housing; Michael Tondra, RI Department of Administration.

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**Juveniles at the Training School:** Sheila DiRaimo, Sara Little, Charles Golembeske, David Allenson, Susan Bowler, Colleen Caron, William Cauley, Jorge Garcia, Barbara Kelleher, Brian Renzi, RI Department of Children, Youth and Families; Brother Michael Reis, Tides Family Services; Susan Brazil, Feidlim Gill, RI Office of the Attorney General; Lauren D'Ambra, RI Family Court; Elizabeth Gilheeny, Rhode Island Department of Public Safety; A.T. Wall, RI Department of Corrections.

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## **Education**

### **Public School Enrollment and**

**Demographics:** Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

### **Children Enrolled in Early Intervention:**

Brenda Duhamel, Deborah Florio, Christine Robin Payne, RI Department of Human Services; John Kelly, Meeting Street; Dawn Wardyga, Family Voices/RIPIN; David Allenson, Lee Baker, RI Department of Children, Youth and Families; Pamela High, M.D., Hasbro Children's Hospital.

**Children Enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start:** Larry Pucciarelli, RI Department of Human Services; Toni Enright, Cranston Child Development Center; Lynda Dickinson, CHILD, Inc.; Aimee Mitchell, Children's Friend;; Barbara Schermack, East Bay Community Action Program; Lisa LaDew, Meeting Street; LoriAnn Hiener, South County Community Action; Rhonda Farrell, Tri-Town Community Action Agency; Dee Henry, Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association; Susan Dickstein, Bradley/Hasbro Children's Research Center; Karen Pucciarelli, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Sue Washburn, Rhode Island Training & Technical Assistance Center.

### **Infant and Preschool Child Care, Quality Early Care and Education, Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies:**

Gabriella Barros, Karen Beese, Diane Cook, Larry Pucciarelli, Randy Rosati, RI Department of Human Services; Brenda Almeida, Pam Hall, RI Department of Children, Youth and Families; Stephanie Enos, Michele Palermo, Karen Pucciarelli, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Blythe Berger, RI Department of Health; Leslie Gell, Christine Chiacu-Forsythe, Ready to Learn Providence; Maryann Finamore-Allmark, Westbay Children's Center; Kim Maine, Sunshine Child Development Center; Khadija Lewis Khan, Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center; Tammy Camillo, RIAEYC/BrightStars.

**Out-of-School Time:** Elizabeth Devaney, Hillary Salmons, Providence After School Alliance; Adam Greenman, Joseph Morra, RI After School Plus Alliance; Jackie Ascrizzi, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Charlotte Boudreau,

Erica Saccoccio, Mary Ann Shallcross, RI School Age Child Care Association.

**Full-Day Kindergarten:** Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**English Language Learners:** Kenneth Gu, Robert Measel, Susan Rotblat-Walker, Elliot Krieger, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Cynthia Garcia-Coll, Brown University; Julie Nora, International Charter School.

**Children Enrolled in Special Education:** Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, Elizabeth Landry, Emily Klein, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Rachel Cain, Peter Simon, Samara Viner-Brown, RI Department of Health; John A.Y. Andrews, RI Department of Human Services; Dawn Wardyga, Family Voices.

**Student Mobility:** Rebecca Lee, The Providence Plan; Terese Curtin, Connecting for Children and Families, Inc.; Christine Arouth, Newport School Department; Samara Viner-Brown, RI Department of Health; Susanne Greschner, RI Public Expenditure Council; Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Fourth- and Eighth-Grade Reading Skills:** Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Julia Steiny; Steven Nardelli, RI League of Charter Schools.

**Math Skills:** Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Marika Ripke, KIDS COUNT Hawaii, Center on the Family; Darcy Sawatzki, Hager Sharp; Julia Steiny; Linda Tilly, Voices for Alabama's Children.

# Acknowledgements

## **Schools Making Insufficient Progress:**

David Abbott, Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Steven Nardelli, RI League of Charter Schools.

**Chronic Early Absence:** Maryclaire Knight, Making Connections Providence; Christine Chiacu-Forsythe, Ready to Learn Providence; Kim Chouinard, Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Christine Arouth, Samantha Brinz, Newport Family and Child Opportunity Zone; Laura Beavers Speer, Ralph Smith, The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

**School Attendance:** Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Patrick McGuigan, The Providence Plan; Steven Nardelli, Rhode Island League of Charter Schools.

**Suspensions:** Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, Elizabeth Landry, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**High School Graduation Rate:** Cynthia Garcia-Coll, Brown University; Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, Elizabeth Landry, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**College Preparation and Access:** Deborah Grossman-Garber, Steven Maurano, Hope Schachter, RI Office of Higher Education; Michael Joyce, Gail Mance-Rios, Kathy Sisson, RI Higher Education Assistance Authority; Maria Carvalho, Robert Oberg, The College Crusade of RI; Ralph Johnson, Brown University; Simon Moore, College Visions; Eric Klein, William LeBlanc, Community College of RI; Belinda Wilkerson, Providence College; Ronald

DiOrio, Michael Lauro, Central Falls School Department; Kenneth Gu, Elliot Krieger, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Delia Rodriguez-Masjoan, Latino College Access Coalition; Tom Mortensen, Postsecondary Opportunity; Paul Harrington, Drexel University.

**Teens Not in School and Not Working:** Linda Soderberg, RI Department of Labor and Training; Laura Beavers Speer, The Annie E. Casey Foundation; Paul Harrington, Drexel University

## **Poetry Credits**

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Heard, G. (2002). *This place I know poems of comfort*. "To You" by Karla Kuskin. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Heard, G. (2002). *This place I know poems of comfort*. "Ring Around the World" by Annette Wynne. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Andrews, J. (2009). *Julie Andrews' collection of poems, songs, and lullabies*. "Home! You're Where It's Warm Inside" by Jack Prelutsky. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.

Hughes, L. (1996). *The dream keeper and other poems*. "In Time of Silver Rain" by Langston Hughes. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

Heard, G. (2002). *This place I know poems of comfort*. "This Place" by Eloise Greenfield. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Paschen, E. (2005). *Poetry speaks to children*. "The First Book" by Rita Dove. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc.





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