



For Immediate Release

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According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data released today, 15.1% of Rhode Island children under age 18 live in poverty, down from 19.5% last year.

Rhode Island now ranks 17th in the country for child poverty, an improvement from last year when Rhode Island ranked 35th (with 1st being best and 50th being worst).

The percentage of Rhode Island children without health insurance coverage remained stable at 6.4% in 2006 (compared with 6.5% in 2005).

The U.S. rate of uninsured children is 11.0%.

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**Providence, RI, August 28, 2007** – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the Census Bureau’s 2006 American Community Survey (ACS) showing the extent of child poverty in Rhode Island and the nation. The new Census data show that the child poverty rate in Rhode Island is 15.1% in 2006, down from 19.5% in 2005. Rhode Island now ranks 17<sup>th</sup> in the country for child poverty, an improvement from last year when Rhode Island ranked 35<sup>th</sup>. The poverty data for 2006 are based on the federal poverty threshold of \$16,242 a year for a family of three. Nationally, the 2006 U.S. child poverty rate for children under age 18 was 18.3% compared to 18.5% in 2005.

“This significant drop in Rhode Island’s child poverty rate is good news for Rhode Island families,” stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “We are seeing the results of our state’s investments in children.” Census data indicate that the total number of Rhode Island children living in poverty decreased from 46,894 children under age 18 in 2005 to 35,456 children in 2006.

**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**

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“We know that children living in families with incomes below the poverty level are at much higher risk for poor outcomes. Reducing child poverty rates directly influences a child’s chance for success.”

The Census data released today also show a significant decrease in the percentage of Rhode Island children living in extreme poverty, defined as one-half of the federal poverty level or \$8,121 a year for a family of three. In 2005, 10% of Rhode Island children lived in extreme poverty. In 2006, this percentage dropped to 6.5% (15,160 children).

Rhode Island’s child poverty rate dropped among children of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, with particularly large decreases among Hispanic and Black children. In 2005, 47% of Hispanic children lived in families with income below the poverty level. This decreased to 36% of all Hispanic children in 2006. In 2005, 53% of all Rhode Island’s Black children lived in poverty; in 2006 this decreased to 36% of Black children. The poverty rate among Rhode Island’s White children decreased from 12% in 2005 to 9% in 2006.

Last year Rhode Island had the highest child poverty rate in New England. This year Maine has the highest rate at 17.6% followed by Rhode Island at 15.1%, with the other New England states having rates between 9.6% and 13.2%. Bryant noted, “Rhode Island is clearly making progress. We must continue to invest in quality child care, early education and affordable health care for low-income families. Research clearly documents that low-income families with access to child care and health care are more likely to enter the workforce and maintain stable employment. Children with access to high quality early learning opportunities do better in school. High quality education from pre-school through college is the route out of poverty for future generations.”

The percentage of Rhode Island children without health insurance coverage remained stable at 6.4% in 2006 (compared with 6.5% in 2005). The U.S. rate of uninsured children in 2006 is 11.0%. Further analysis of the health insurance data will be available at a later date.

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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.