



Rhode Island KIDS COUNT  
One Union Station  
Providence, RI 02903  
401/351-9400  
401/351/1758

### For Immediate Release

**Contact:**

Raymonde Charles  
Day: (401) 351-9400, Ext. 22  
Evening: (401) 954-3892

**According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data released today, 15.5% of Rhode Island children under age 18 lived in poverty in 2008, down from 17.5% in 2007.**

**Rhode Island ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> in the nation, an improvement from 2007 when Rhode Island ranked 31<sup>st</sup> (with 1<sup>st</sup> being best and 50th being worst).**

---

**Providence, RI, September 29, 2009** – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the U.S. Census Bureau's *2008 American Community Survey (ACS)* showing the extent of child poverty in Rhode Island and the nation.

### **Children Living in Poverty**

The new Census data show that the child poverty rate in Rhode Island was 15.5% in 2008, a decrease from 17.5% in 2007. Rhode Island now ranks 22nd in the country for child poverty (where 1<sup>st</sup> is best), an improvement from last year when Rhode Island ranked 31<sup>st</sup>. The poverty data for 2008 are based on the federal poverty threshold, \$17,346 a year for a family of three with two children and \$21,837 for a family of four with two children. Nationally, the 2008 child poverty rate for U.S. children under age 18 was 18.2%, compared to 18.0% in 2007.

"The drop in Rhode Island's child poverty rate is good news for Rhode Island," said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "Census data indicate that the total number of Rhode Island children living in poverty decreased from 40,468 children under age 18 in 2007 to 34,816 children in 2008."

Bryant went on to say, "Given the current economy, it is important to note that the number of families living on the borderline of poverty has increased. These are families with incomes between 100-200% of the federal poverty threshold who struggle to make ends meet. It is critical that as a state and as a nation we ensure that all families get the help they need to meet their children's basic needs during these difficult financial times."

The percentage of children living in families between 100-200% of the federal poverty threshold in Rhode Island was 18.8% in 2008, an increase from 16.4% in 2007.

Supports for working families ameliorate the worst effects of poverty and improve outcomes for children. Rhode Island's investments in child care subsidies help low-income working families to afford the cost of child care. Child care subsidies broaden a family's employment options and child care options, including improving access to higher quality care. A study released today by the National Women's Law Center, *State Child Care Assistance Policies 2009: Most States Hold the Line, But Some Lose Ground in Hard Times*, reveals that between February of 2008 and February of 2009 more states made cuts than made improvements in desperately needed child care assistance, worsening an already bleak landscape for parents trying to afford reliable child care.

In Rhode Island since 2003, the number of children receiving child care subsidies has decreased by half, from 14,333 in 2003 to 7,700 in 2008. The Child Care Assistance Program was cut by \$17 million in the 2007 legislative session, including a roll-back in eligibility for the program from 225% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 180% of FPL.

### **Children Living In Extreme Poverty**

Another category of the child poverty rate that is important to monitor is the rate of children living in extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is defined as one-half of the federal poverty level or \$8,673 a year for a family of three with two children and \$10,917 for a family of four with two children. According to Census data released today, of all Rhode Island children living in poverty in 2008, almost one in two (47.2%) were living in extreme poverty (16,430 children), an increase from 43.7% in 2007. "Children in these families are vulnerable to deep poverty, hardship and homelessness. We are very concerned that the high unemployment rate in Rhode Island and shorter time limits for cash assistance under RI Works are leaving families without either employment or a cash assistance safety net. In response to the economic downturn, the Rhode Island General Assembly delayed for one year the imposition of the new 24-month time limit for some families receiving cash assistance. This change prevented 2,146 individuals from losing cash assistance on July 1, 2009. The circumstances facing children and families in extreme poverty require continued monitoring," said Bryant.

Bryant noted, "Research clearly documents that families with access to child care and health care are more likely to enter the workforce and maintain stable employment. We must continue to invest in quality child care, early education and affordable health care for low-income families. 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."

More detailed data on child poverty in Rhode Island will be available on October 27, 2009 when the U.S. Census Bureau releases three-year estimates for 2006-2008 that will allow us to report child poverty rates for some of the larger cities in the state. We will also report child poverty rates by race and ethnicity and by family structure.

~\*~

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.