



**For Immediate Release**

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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Presents:**

***Newport Data in Your Backyard***

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**Newport, RI, October 2, 2007-** Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Analyst, Kat Keenan presented data from the *2007 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* to an audience of community and policy leaders. As part of the *Data in Your Backyard Series*, the presentation highlighted indicators of child well-being in Newport and included a community discussion about the implications of the data. The presentation was held on **Tuesday, October 2, 2007 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Newport Public Library, 300 Spring Street, Newport, RI.**

**Family and Community**

According to *Census 2000*, there were 5,199 children under the age of 18 residing in Newport, a decrease of 11% from the last decennial census. With 24% of children living below the poverty threshold (\$16,242 for a family of three), Newport has the fifth highest child poverty rate in the state. Of the 1,267 children living below the poverty threshold almost two-thirds (773) lived in extreme poverty, defined as income at or below half of the federal poverty line (or \$8,121 for a family of three). Children in poverty are more likely to have health and behavioral problems, experience difficulty in school, become teen parents, and earn less as adults.

According to new data from the Census Bureau's *2006 American Community Survey*, child poverty in Rhode Island decreased from 19.5% in 2005 to 15.1% in 2006. 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>.

**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**

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“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.” The *2006 American Community Survey* data, released by the U.S. Census Bureau in August 2007, 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. Bryant noted, “We know that children living in families with incomes below the poverty threshold are at much higher risk for poor outcomes. Reducing child poverty rates directly influences a child’s chance for success.”

## **Health**

The data from the *2007 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* reveal that Newport continues to do well on some of the infant health indicators compared to Rhode Island as a whole.

- Newport has a lower rate of preterm births at 10%, compared to 12% for the state.
- Newport also has a lower infant mortality rate, at 5.1 per 1,000 live births, compared to the Rhode Island rate of 6.4 per 1,000 live births.
- Newport had a lower teen birth rate than the state for births to teens ages 18 to 19 (26.8 births per 1,000 teen girls ages 18-19 compared to 44.0 births per 1,000 teen girls ages 18-19 for the state) and for the overall average of births to teens ages 15-19 (28.0 births to teens ages 15-19 compared to 31.0 births to teens ages 15-19 for the state). Nationally and in Rhode Island the teen birth rate has declined since the early 1990s.

It is important to highlight, however, that Newport had a higher teen birth rate than the state for minor teens ages 15-17 (30.2 births per 1,000 teen girls ages 15-17 compared to 19.5 births per 1,000 teen girls ages 15-17 for the state). Kat Keenan, Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT highlighted the connection between teen pregnancy and child outcomes, stating, “Teen pregnancy and parenting threaten the development of teen parents as well as their children. Children of teen parents are more likely to grow up in poverty and to have poorer outcomes in all areas of cognitive and social development.” Between 2001-2005, there were 152 births to teen girls ages 15 to 19 in Newport, with 39% (60) of these births occurring to minor teens (ages 15-17).

## Education

Data from the *2007 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* were presented on several indicators focused on programs that can lead to increased school readiness and school success, including full-day kindergarten and early care and education. Bryant remarked, “There is a critical need to ensure that access to these programs are maintained and that programs are of high quality.

High quality early learning programs provide nurturing care and also provide learning opportunities that develop children’s social, behavioral and cognitive skills. Research shows that enrollment in high quality early learning programs can help to close the gap in school readiness skills between higher income and lower income children.”

Additional education highlights include:

- In Newport, the percentage of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students proficient in reading increased from 46% in October 2005 to 54% in October 2006. This compares to a statewide 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading proficiency level of 63% in 2006. The percentage of Newport 8<sup>th</sup> graders proficient in reading was 46% in October 2006, down from 50% in October 2005. These data are based on the *New England Common Assessment Program* initiated by the Rhode Island Department of Education in 2005.
- In 2006, Newport had two elementary schools that are “making insufficient progress”, two elementary schools that are “moderately performing with caution” and two elementary schools that are “high performing”. The high school and middle school were classified as “moderately performing with caution (1<sup>st</sup> year needs improvement).”
- In 2006, 73% of Newport students graduated from high school, down from 2005 when 79% of students graduated. This is lower than the state high school graduation rate of 85%. Young adults who drop out of high school are almost four times as likely to be unemployed as those with a bachelor’s degree and are more likely to earn lower wages than those with a high school diploma.

Ms. Bryant noted, “The city of Newport has seen progress on child well-being issues and there are encouraging trends, but there is still work to do. We need to continue to improve access to high quality early education and high quality schools if we are to give every child in Newport the opportunity to lead healthy and productive adult lives.”

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the economic well-being, health, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.