

# Childhood Poverty: Policy Implications

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## **HEALTH CARE**

***Maintain Rhode Island's accomplishment of being a leader in the nation in providing health care coverage to children.***

Retain current Rte Care eligibility standards for children, parents, and pregnant women.

Monitor and reassess premium increases in light of evidence that many families cannot afford the premiums and are losing Rte Care coverage as a result.

Increase access to Dental Care for low income children.

## **CHILD CARE**

***Continue the state's commitment to child care by maintaining the guarantee of child care assistance to all eligible families***

Affordable, quality child care makes work possible for low-income families and provides children with developmental opportunities that enhance school readiness and mitigate the effects of poverty.

## **FAMILY INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM**

***Maintain and increase Rhode Island's commitment to family economic security through education, training, and family supports for FIP recipients.***

Emerging evidence indicates that this approach improves employment rates, job retention, and income and therefore holds out the promise of reduced child poverty rates.

***Develop additional comprehensive supports for families with multiple barriers to self-sufficiency.***

There is evidence in Rhode Island and nationally that families still receiving cash assistance generally have more serious barriers to employment than those who have left assistance.

## **HOUSING AND HEATING ASSISTANCE**

***Maintain and expand on Rhode Island's initial investment for affordable housing.***

Continue funding of the Neighborhood Opportunity Program in order to develop additional affordable housing.

Increase the availability of low-income and affordable housing in every Rhode Island community.

Institute a percentage of income heating assistance plan.

## **JOB AND INCOME**

***Ensure that reducing child poverty, which increasingly occurs despite family work participation, is a public policy priority.***

Invest in economic development efforts that retain middle-income jobs and increase the availability of high-wage jobs.

Increase wages for workers at the low-end of the labor market so that they have earnings that meet family needs (e.g., increased minimum wage).

Ensure that eligible families enroll in income support programs such as Food Stamps, child care subsidies and Rte Care.

## **ADULT EDUCATION, LITERACY AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)**

***Ensure adequate access to high quality adult education, adult literacy, and English as a Second Language programs.***

Increase state investments that improve the capacity and quality of the adult education system.

Integrate literacy and ESL training with job skills training to promote entry into the workforce as well as advancement and wage improvement.

## **EDUCATION**

***Improve educational opportunities for poor children, thereby improving their future job opportunities.***

Implement strategies that increase the number of high performing schools in urban areas, with special attention to the needs of low-income and minority children.

Improve access to full-day kindergarten programs for all children and families.

Invest in comprehensive early education programs for young children and families, including Early Head Start and Comprehensive Child Care Networks.

Invest in schools and after-school youth programming in low-income neighborhoods to ensure rapid improvements in school performance and improved high school graduation rates.