



**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**  
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**For Immediate Release**

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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Presents:**

***Providence Data in Your Backyard***

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**Providence, RI, November 5, 2007** - Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Analyst, Kathleen Keenan presented data from the *2007 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* to an audience of community leaders that work with children, youth and families in the city. As part of the *Data in Your Backyard Series* that is offered in communities throughout the state, the presentation highlighted indicators of child well-being in Providence and included a community discussion about the implications of the data. The presentation was held on **November 5, 2007 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Casey Family Services, 1268 Eddy Street.**

**Family and Community**

According to *Census 2000*, there were 45,277 children under the age of 18 residing in Providence, a 19% increase from the 1990 decennial census. Providence is a city that is growing younger, with children representing 26% of the city's population in 2000 compared to 24% in 1990. The child population is racially diverse and ethnically diverse. Based on the categories defined in *Census 2000*, 44% of children are Hispanic or Latino, 24% of children are White, 17% are Black, 7% are Asian, and 8% are of another race.

In 2000, 49% of Providence children lived in two-parent families and 51% lived in single-parent households. In Rhode Island, 30% of children live in single parent households. Children living in single-parent families are at increased risk of living in poverty, low academic achievement, low levels of

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social and emotional well-being and increased levels of depression and stress.

In Providence in 2000, there were 3,322 grandparents living in households with their grandchildren and of these, almost 2 in 5 were financially responsible for the grandchildren. Grandparents can provide continuity and family support for children in vulnerable families. Grandparents living on a fixed income may be at risk of poverty after they become financially responsible for their grandchildren. Grandparent caregivers may not receive the support or services that they need and for which they are eligible.

### **Economic Well-Being**

According to new data from the Census Bureau's *2006 American Community Survey*, 35.7% (14,367) of all children in Providence under age 18 live below 100% of the federal poverty threshold (\$20,444 for a family of four). Children in poverty are more likely to have health and behavioral problems, experience difficulty in school, become teen parents, and earn less as adults. Of all children living in poverty in Providence in 2006, 80% were living in single parent households. Lack of education and job skills are key risk factors for family poverty. From 2001-2005 in Providence, 27% of births were to mothers with less than a high school education compared with 15% of births in Rhode Island. Only one in three (35%) Providence births during this time period were to mothers with some college or a bachelor's degree, compared with more than half (54%) of births in Rhode Island. Research shows strong links between parental education levels and a child's school readiness, health and the level of education the child will ultimately achieve.

"The children most at risk of not achieving their full potential are children who live in poverty. Access to quality education – from early childhood through college – is one clear pathway out of poverty. Adult education services and English as a Second language programs as well as training to improve job skills are critical resources for young families," stated Kathleen Keenan, Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

The Census Bureau's *2006 American Community Survey* shows that 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>. "This significant drop in Rhode Island's child poverty rate is good news for Rhode Island families," noted 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**

Data from the *2007 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* reveal that over the past decade Providence has made progress in several areas of child health. Between the time periods of 1991-1995 and 2001-2005, Providence has seen a 17% decrease in the percentage of women receiving delayed prenatal care. While the percentage of Providence women receiving delayed prenatal care in Providence (12.0%) is higher than the state rate of 9.4%, it is lower than four of the five other core cities with high child poverty rates. Women in the core cities are more than twice as likely to receive delayed prenatal care as women in the remainder of the state (6.7%). Women receiving late or no prenatal care are at increased risk of poor birth outcomes, such as preterm births, low birthweight and infant mortality.

- Between 2001 and 2005 in Providence, there were 14,862 births. Of these 2,072 birth, 14% were preterm, compared to a statewide preterm birth rate of 12%.
- Although the infant mortality rate for Providence infants has decreased 29% from 10.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1989-1993, it remains the highest rate in the state. Between 2001 and 2005, the infant mortality rate in Providence was 8.9 infant deaths per 1,000 live births compared to a Rhode Island rate of 6.4 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- Between 1996-2000 and 2001-2005, the percentage of infants born low birthweight in Providence increased by 5% (from 8.9% to 9.4%) lower than the statewide increase of 10% (from 7.3% to 8.0%). Yet, despite this smaller increase over the past decade, Providence's rate for low birthweight infants remains the highest in the state.

Between 2001 and 2005, Providence had a teen birth rate of 48.4 births per every 1,000 girls ages 15-19, compared to the state rate of 31.0 births per 1,000 girls ages 15-19. While the teen birth rate for younger teens ages 15-17 has dropped significantly over the past decade, the current rate of 48.1 births per 1,000 to teens ages 15-17 continues to be more than double the state rate of 19.5 births per 1,000 teens ages 15-17. Kathleen Keenan, Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT noted, "The high rate of teen pregnancy among younger teens in Providence is a cause for concern. Teen pregnancy and parenting threaten the development of teen parents as well as their children. Teen pregnancy prevention is best addressed by using

multiple approaches that meet the developmental needs of teens, provide opportunities to build career and leadership skills and offer accurate information about and increased access to reproductive health care services.”

## **Education**

Data from the *2007 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* were presented on several indicators that focused on programs which can lead to increased school readiness and school success, including full-day kindergarten and early care and education. Access to full-day kindergarten programs in Providence has improved from 68% of kindergarten children attending a full-day program in the 1999-2000 school year to 100% of kindergarten children enrolled in a full-day program in the 2006-2007 school year. The percentage of kindergarten children attending full-day programs statewide is 50%. Research shows that children in full-day kindergarten benefit academically and are more likely to be ready for first grade than children in half-day kindergarten.

Other education highlights include:

- During the 2005-2006 school year, 21% of Providence’s children ages 3-21 were enrolled in special education, equal to the state as a whole.
- The mobility rate in Providence (29%) is similar to the core cities of Central Falls (31%), Newport (30%) and Pawtucket (29%) but higher than the core city aggregate (28%) and much higher than the state rate (17%).
- The reading proficiency level for fourth-graders in Providence has improved from 31% in 2005 to 39% in 2006 but continues to be the lowest in the state.
- In 2006, only 4 (8%) of Providence’s 50 schools were classified as high performing. In Rhode Island as a whole, 57% of schools are classified as high performing. Almost two-thirds (64%) of Providence schools were classified as “in need of improvement” higher than the core city average (50%) and the state as a whole (19%). Providence has the lowest percentage of high performing schools in the state and the highest percentage of schools “in need of improvement” in the state.
- In 2006, the Providence high school graduation rate was 71%, a decrease from 75% in 2005. Providence’s graduation rate is the lowest in the state, with the state average being 85%. Young adults who drop out of high school are three times more likely to be unemployed or earn lower wages than those with a high school degree.

Kathleen Keenan closed the meeting stating, "Providence can be proud of gains made in access to health care and reductions in teen pregnancy over the past decade and some beginning improvements in education outcomes. However, the data presented today indicate the need for continued emphasis on improving outcomes for children who live in poverty. We know what works and we must renew our collective efforts to ensure that all children have what they need to thrive."

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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.