

# Children in the Family Independence Program

## DEFINITION

*Children enrolled in the Family Independence Program* is the percentage of children less than age 18 who were living in families receiving cash assistance through the Family Independence Program (FIP) on December 1, 2002. These data measure the number of children and families enrolled in FIP at one point in time. They do not count the additional children and families who qualified for the program at other points in the year but were not enrolled on December 1, 2002.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Rhode Island's Family Independence Program (FIP) seeks to help families make successful transitions to work by providing the cash assistance and work supports, including health insurance and subsidized child care, that families need to obtain and keep a job. In addition, the program provides a safety net for children living in families with adults who are unable to work.<sup>1</sup> There are currently 893 families enrolled in FIP who are unable to work due to illness or advanced age and 2,237 who are exempt from work because they are in their third trimester of pregnancy or have children under age one.<sup>2</sup> If a family has no earned income, the maximum monthly FIP benefit for a Rhode Island family of three is \$554 per month.<sup>3</sup> The FIP monthly payment has not increased in 13 years.<sup>4</sup>

With an additional \$350 per month in Food Stamps, this income is 75% of the federal poverty threshold and well below the amount of income families need to pay basic living expenses.<sup>5</sup>

More than two-thirds (69%) of all FIP beneficiaries are children under the age of 18.<sup>6</sup> Four of every five children receiving cash assistance through FIP are ages 12 and under.<sup>7</sup> As of December 2002, there were 3,081 FIP child-only cases.<sup>8</sup> Child-only cases are those that receive cash assistance only for the children in the family because the child is living with a grandparent or other non-parent relative, the parent has reached their five-year time limit, the parent is disabled and receiving Supplemental Security Income or the parent is not a U.S. citizen.<sup>9</sup> Child-only cases have increased from 12% of all cases in May 1996 to 21% of all cases in December 2002.<sup>10,11</sup> The percentage of all cases that are child-only cases will continue to increase as adults in the family reach five-year time limits. As of January 2003, 293 adults have reached their time limits.<sup>12</sup>

Since the start of the latest economic recession in March 2001, Rhode Island is one of the few states that continues to see welfare caseloads decline.<sup>13</sup> As of December 1, 2002, there were 40,068 adults and children in Rhode Island enrolled in the Family Independence program.<sup>14</sup>



## Work Supports

- ◆ As of December 1, 2002 in Rhode Island, 2,625 (23%) of the adults receiving FIP cash assistance were employed at an average wage of \$7.89 per hour.<sup>16</sup> The program provides work incentives by allowing working recipients to keep more of their earnings before cash assistance is decreased or terminated.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ Income supports including RItE Care, child care subsidies, cash assistance, Food Stamps and the Earned Income Tax Credit are critical to the well-being of low-income working families with insufficient income to meet all their needs.
- ◆ The Rhode Island Standard of Need, developed by the Poverty Institute at Rhode Island College, approximates the income a family needs to pay for basic living expenses. With the benefit of state and federal work supports, the Rhode Island Standard of Need for a single parent with two children is \$10.55 compared to \$19.51 without these programs.<sup>17</sup>



## Education and Training

- ◆ 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.<sup>18,19</sup> Adults remaining on FIP are more likely to face barriers to employment because they have low literacy levels, do not have at least a high school diploma, and do not speak English as a first language.<sup>20</sup>
- ◆ The Family Independence Program (FIP) permits adults receiving cash assistance to get necessary education or basic skills training for up to 24 months before beginning work. Evaluations of FIP have found that adults who opted for training or education before they looked for jobs were far more likely to be employed and had family earnings higher than before the training.<sup>21,22</sup>

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Table 8.

Children Enrolled in the Family Independence Program (FIP),  
Rhode Island, December 1, 2002

| CITY/TOWN                 | ALL CHILDREN UNDER 18 | NUMBER RECEIVING FIP CASH ASSISTANCE |               | FIP CHILDREN AS % OF ALL CHILDREN UNDER 18 |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|--|
|                           |                       | FAMILIES                             | CHILDREN      |  |
| Barrington                | 4,745                 | 15                                   | 23            | <1%  |
| Bristol                   | 4,399                 | 92                                   | 152           | 3%   |
| Burrillville              | 4,043                 | 77                                   | 117           | 3%   |
| Central Falls             | 5,531                 | 778                                  | 1570          | 28%  |
| Charlestown               | 1,712                 | 34                                   | 57            | 3%   |
| Coventry                  | 8,389                 | 174                                  | 253           | 3%   |
| Cranston                  | 17,098                | 587                                  | 970           | 6%   |
| Cumberland                | 7,690                 | 101                                  | 161           | 2%   |
| East Greenwich            | 3,564                 | 46                                   | 68            | 2%   |
| East Providence           | 10,546                | 395                                  | 638           | 6%   |
| Exeter                    | 1,589                 | 25                                   | 43            | 3%   |
| Foster                    | 1,105                 | 14                                   | 20            | 2%   |
| Glocester                 | 2,664                 | 26                                   | 44            | 2%   |
| Hopkinton                 | 2,011                 | 20                                   | 33            | 2%   |
| Jamestown                 | 1,238                 | 13                                   | 23            | 2%   |
| Johnston                  | 5,906                 | 204                                  | 328           | 6%   |
| Lincoln                   | 5,157                 | 75                                   | 138           | 3%   |
| Little Compton            | 780                   | 9                                    | 14            | 2%   |
| Middletown                | 4,328                 | 64                                   | 100           | 2%   |
| Narragansett              | 2,833                 | 51                                   | 81            | 3%   |
| New Shoreham              | 185                   | 0                                    | 0             | 0%   |
| Newport                   | 5,199                 | 459                                  | 937           | 18%  |
| North Kingstown           | 6,848                 | 151                                  | 241           | 4%   |
| North Providence          | 5,936                 | 237                                  | 382           | 6%   |
| North Smithfield          | 2,379                 | 25                                   | 39            | 2%   |
| Pawtucket                 | 18,151                | 1681                                 | 3014          | 17%  |
| Portsmouth                | 4,329                 | 32                                   | 50            | 1%   |
| Providence                | 45,277                | 6851                                 | 13753         | 30%  |
| Richmond                  | 2,014                 | 21                                   | 36            | 2%   |
| Scituate                  | 2,635                 | 31                                   | 42            | 2%   |
| Smithfield                | 4,019                 | 33                                   | 54            | 1%   |
| South Kingstown           | 6,284                 | 114                                  | 217           | 3%   |
| Tiverton                  | 3,367                 | 75                                   | 110           | 3%   |
| Warren                    | 2,454                 | 74                                   | 138           | 6%   |
| Warwick                   | 18,780                | 460                                  | 755           | 4%   |
| West Greenwich            | 1,444                 | 19                                   | 24            | 2%   |
| West Warwick              | 6,632                 | 325                                  | 550           | 8%   |
| Westerly                  | 5,406                 | 142                                  | 256           | 5%   |
| Woonsocket                | 11,155                | 1098                                 | 2091          | 19%  |
| <b>Core Cities</b>        | <b>91,945</b>         | <b>11,192</b>                        | <b>21,915</b> | <b>24%</b>                                 |
| <b>Remainder of State</b> | <b>155,877</b>        | <b>3,436</b>                         | <b>5,607</b>  | <b>4%</b>                                  |
| <b>Rhode Island</b>       | <b>247,822</b>        | <b>14,628</b>                        | <b>27,522</b> | <b>11%</b>                                 |

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Human Services, INRHODES Database, December 2002. The denominator is the total number of children under age 18 from Census 2000.

Core Cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

## References for Indicator

<sup>1,16</sup> *Rhode Island's Family Independence Program, Annual Report*. (2001). Cranston, RI: Rhode Island Department of Human Services.

<sup>2,3,4,6,7,8,9,11,12,14,15</sup> Rhode Island Department of Human Services, INRHODES Database, December 1, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Rhode Island Department of Human Services, INRHODES Database. Calculations by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

<sup>10</sup> Rhode Island Department of Human Services, INRHODES Database, May 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Richer, E. et. al. (December 30, 2002) *Welfare Case-loads Increase in Most States in Third Quarter, National Caseload Also Up*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

<sup>17</sup> *The 2001 Rhode Island Standard of Need* (May 2002). Providence, RI: The Poverty Institute at Rhode Island College School of Social Work.

<sup>18,11</sup> "Comments to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Regarding the Reauthorization of the TANF Block Grant" (November 2001). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

<sup>19,20</sup> Witte, A.D. and Queralto, M. (August 2001). *Study of The Cash Assistance Program May 1996 - April 2000*. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College.

<sup>21</sup> A & M Consulting (February 2002). *Rhode Island's Family Independence Act: Research Demonstrates Wisdom of Putting Families First*. Cranston: RI Department of Human Services.

<sup>22</sup> Bromley, M.A. (October 2002). *Rhode Island College Welfare Reform Evaluation Project: Rhode Island Family Independence Program Longitudinal Study*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island College School of Social Work.