


Methodology



The *2003 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* examines 52 indicators in five areas that affect the lives of children: Family and Community, Economic Well-Being, Health, Safety, and Education. The information on each indicator is organized as follows:

- ◆ **Definition:** A description of the indicator and what it measures.
- ◆ **Significance:** The relationship of the indicator to child and family well-being.
- ◆ **Sidebars:** Current state and national data and information related to the indicator.
- ◆ **State Rank:** For those indicators that are included in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT publications, the Factbook highlights Rhode Island's rank among the 50 states and trends since 1990. These data are from either the *2002 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, *Children At Risk: State Trends 1990 to 2000* or *The Right Start for America's Newborns: A Decade of City and State Trends (1990 - 2000)*. Data from the three publications come from different data sources depending on the indicator.

- ◆ **City/Town Tables:** Data for each indicator presented for each of Rhode Island's cities and towns, the state as a whole, and the core cities.
- ◆ **Core Cities Data:** Six core cities are identified based on high child poverty rates: Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket. These are the only Rhode Island communities in which more than 15% of the children live below the poverty level, according to the 2000 Census.
- ◆ **Most Recent Available Data:** The 2003 Factbook uses the most current, reliable data available for each indicator.
- ◆ **New Indicators:** Three new indicators have been added to the 52 indicators included in the *2003 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*: "Mother's Education Level", "Childhood Immunizations" and "Adoption and Permanency". The *2003 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* presents the data for each indicator using numbers, rates, and/or percentages. The *2003 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* presents the data for each indicator using numbers, rates, and/or percentages.

Numbers

The most direct measure of the scope of a problem is the count of the number of events of concern during a specified time period - e.g., the number of child deaths between 1997 and 2001. Numbers are important in assessing the scope of the problem and in estimating the resources required to address a problem. Numbers are not useful to compare the severity of the problem from one geographic area to another or to compare the extent of the problem in your state with national standards. For example, a state with more children might have more low birthweight infants due to the larger number of total births, not due to an increased likelihood of being born low birthweight.

Rates and Percentages

A rate is a measure of the probability of an event - e.g., out of every 1,000 live births, how many infants will die before their first birthday. A percentage is another measure of the probability of an event - e.g., out of every 100 births, how many will be born low birthweight. Rates and percentages take into account the total population of children eligible for an event. They are useful in comparing the severity of the problem from one geographic area to another, to compare with state or national standards, or to look at trends over time.

Sources of Data and Methodology for Calculating Rates and Percentages

For each indicator, the source of information for the actual number of events of interest (the "numerator") are identified within the Source of Data/Methodology section next to the table for that indicator. For each indicator that uses a rate or a percent, the methodology used to estimate the total number of children eligible for the indicator of interest (i.e., the "denominator") is also noted within the Source of Data/Methodology section. Rates and percentages were not calculated for cities and towns with small denominators (less than 500 for delayed prenatal care, low birthweight infants, and infant mortality rates and less than 100 for births to teens). Rates and percentages for small denominators are statistically unreliable. "NA" is noted in the indicator table when this occurs. In the indicator for child deaths and teen deaths, the indicator events are rare; in these instances, city and town rates are not calculated, as small numbers make these rates statistically unreliable.

Use of Census 2000 Data

Wherever possible data from Census 2000 was included in the 2003 Factbook. When Census 2000 data have been substituted in denominators, this

was noted in the note to the table. Caution should be taken when comparing new rates with past years as the population numbers used in the denominator have changed for all cities and towns. Otherwise, when Census 2000 data were not yet available, three-year averages were used from the Current Population Survey.

Methodology for Children Receiving Child Support Indicator

Estimated Number of Children in the Child Support Enforcement System: Beginning in the *2002 Factbook*, this number is higher than in previous years because it includes Rhode Island children for whom the Child Support Enforcement Office collects and disburses child support payments, regardless of whether or not the Child Support Enforcement Office is providing the family with services related to paternity establishment or child support enforcement.

Methodology for Infant and Pre-school Child Care Indicator

Estimated Number of Children in Need of Regulated Care is computed by: multiplying the Census 2000 number of children under age 6 with both or only parent in the workforce by 58.4% (the percent of U.S. women with children under age 6 who used center based care or other non-relative care as their child care arrangement as reported by the

U.S. Census Bureau Survey of Income and Program Participation data from Spring 1997). The number of regulated child care slots is the number of licensed full-time child care center slots for children under age 6 and the number of certified family child care home slots as of December 2002.

Methodology for Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies

The Number of Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies in a licensed child care center or a certified family child care home is the total number of children for whom the Rhode Island Department of Human Services paid a full or part-time subsidy as of December 2002. All data are based on the location of the child care program where the child receives services, not the residence of the child.

Estimated Number of Children Under age 16 Eligible for Child Care Subsidies. The number of children under age 16 in working families under 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is computed by: multiplying the number of children under age 16 living in households with income below 185% of the federal poverty threshold as reported in Census 2000 by the percent of children under age 18 living in families with only or both parents in the workforce as reported in Census 2000.

Methodology for Fourth Grade Reading Scores

As of 2000, the manner in which reading scores are calculated changed. In the past, a student was counted as a test taker only if they actually took the test and completed enough of it for a score to be calculated. As of 1999-2000, however, all students eligible to take the test are counted, whether or not they take the test or score. All students are eligible unless their IEP specifically exempts them or unless they are Beginning English Language Learners. As a result, overall proficiency rates, as reported here, are lower than they were under the previous system of scoring. For instance, in 1999, under the previous system of scoring, 84% of fourth graders were proficient in basic understanding and 69% in interpretation and analysis.

Methodology for High Performing Schools

A school is “improving” if between 1998-2000 and 2001-2002 there was at least a 3% increase in the percentage of students who demonstrate proficiency (in math and/or English language arts) and at least a 3% decrease in the percentage of students in the two lowest achievement levels plus “no score” category. These improvements must occur on 2 out of 3 math subtests and/or in 3 out of 4 English language arts subtests.

Limitations of the Data

In any data collection process there are always concerns about the accuracy and completeness of the data being collected. All data used in the 51 indicators were collected through the U.S. Bureau of the Census and through routine data collection systems operated by different agencies of the state of Rhode Island. We do not have estimates of the completeness of reporting to these systems. In all cases, we used the most reliable data currently available. For census-based indicators, statewide numbers have been updated to 2001 using the Current Population Survey, 2000 - 2002 average. The Current Population Survey does not provide data at the level of city and town. City/town tables, therefore, use information from the 2000 Census when available.

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Family Income Levels Based on the Federal Poverty Measures

The poverty thresholds are the original version of the federal poverty measure. They are updated each year by the Census Bureau. The thresholds are used mainly for statistical purposes — for instance, estimating the number of children in Rhode Island living in poor families. The poverty threshold is adjusted upward based on family size and whether or not household members are children, adults or 65 years and over. The 2002 federal poverty threshold for a family of three with two children is \$14,494 and \$18,244 for a family of four with two children.

The poverty guidelines are the other version of the federal poverty measure. They are issued each year in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for administrative purposes — for instance, determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. Often, government assistance programs, including many of those administered by the state of Rhode Island use the federal poverty guidelines to determine income eligibility. The figures are adjusted upward for larger family sizes.

Family Income Levels Based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines

2003 Federal Poverty Guidelines	Annual Income Family of Three	Annual Income Family of Four
50%	\$7,630	\$ 9,200
100%	\$15,260	\$18,400
130%	\$19,838	\$23,920
185%	\$28,231	\$34,040
200%	\$30,520	\$36,800
225%	\$34,335	\$41,400
250%	\$38,150	\$46,000

Source: 2002 Federal Poverty Guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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- ²⁵ *Early Childhood Poverty: A Statistical Profile* (March 2002). New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- ²⁹ Rhode Island Department of Human Services, INRHODES Database, December 2002.
- ^{30,31} *The 2001 Rhode Island Standard of Need* (2002). Providence, RI: The Poverty Institute at Rhode Island College.
- ³⁵ Smith, K. (October 2000). *Who's Minding the Kids?* Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- ³⁶ *The Value of Housing Subsidies to Welfare Reform Efforts* (February 2000). Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
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References for Infant and Pre-School Child Care

- ¹⁰ Schumacher, R. et al. (October 1999). *Child Care after Leaving Welfare: Early Evidence from State Studies*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.
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- ¹² Park-Jadotte, J. et al. (2002). *Building a Stronger Child Care Workforce: A Review of Studies of the Effectiveness of Public Compensation Initiatives*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.
- ¹³ Options for Working Parents, Providence, RI (December, 2002)
- ¹⁴ *The National Economic Impacts of the Child Care Sector* (Fall 2002). Prepared by M Cubed and Sponsored by The National Child Care Association.

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References for Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies

- ¹¹ Oliver, H. et al. (June 2002). *Eligibility for CCDF-Funded Child Care Subsidies Under the October 1999 Program Rules*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ^{12,13,15} Rhode Island Department of Human Services, INRHODES Database, December 2002.
- ¹⁴ Giannarelli, L. et al. (February 2003). *Getting Help with Child Care Expenses*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- ¹⁶ *Stepping Up! Out-of-School Time and Youth Development in Providence: A School-Community Analysis* (January 2003). Prepared for the Providence School Department and United Way of Rhode Island, by Community Matters.