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## Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Makes Data Local at *'Newport Data in Your Backyard' Event*

*Percent of infants born at highest risk continues to decline*

*Newport has the third highest rate of child abuse and neglect in the state*

*Data Show Improvements in Newport Public Schools – chronic absenteeism has declined,  
improved high school graduation rate*

**Newport, RI (October 6, 2015)** – At the *Newport Data in Your Backyard* presentation, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Analyst Stephanie Geller led a data-driven community discussion on the well-being of Newport children and families. The presentation's data comes from the *2015 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook*, and includes improvements and declines in economic well-being, education, health, child welfare, and safety.

The *Newport Data in Your Backyard* event was brought to the community in collaboration with Newport Partnership for Families and was held on Tuesday, October 6, 2015, from 10:00 am to 11:30 am at Newport Public Library, 300 Spring Street, Newport, RI.

Improvements and declines discussed at the *Data in Your Backyard* presentation include:

### **Newport has a high percentage of low-income children**

Although the most recent data from the U.S. Census show that Newport has a child poverty rate of 14.5%, data from schools indicate that a large proportion of Newport's children are from low-income families (i.e., eligible for free and reduced-price meals at school). As of October 2014, 62% of students were low-income. Only Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket have higher percentages of low-income children.

### **Opportunity to connect low-income children with School Breakfast Program**

Students who eat breakfast have higher math and reading scores, fewer absences, improved attentiveness, and lower incidences of social and emotional problems. In Newport, only 26% of low-income students participated in the School Breakfast Program in October 2014. Newport does not offer Universal School Breakfast (free breakfast to all students regardless of income) or breakfast in the classroom, two proven strategies for increasing participation.

"Starting the day with a healthy meal helps ensure that children are well cared for and ready to learn," said Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Executive Director Elizabeth Burke Bryant. "Some school districts in Rhode Island have been able to encourage participation by offering Universal School Breakfast, and in some cases, breakfast right in the classroom at the start of the school day. Newport may be able to increase its participation rate by implementing these practices."

### **Improvements in several infant outcomes**

- Babies born to unmarried, teen mothers without a high school diploma are called infants born at highest risk, due to the multiple challenges they face. These babies are more likely to grow up in poverty, are less likely to perform well in school, and are less likely to complete high school than their peers. In 2014, only 1% of Newport births were in this high-risk category, compared to 4% in 2011.

- The teen birth rate is on the decline across the nation, in Rhode Island, and Newport. The teen birth rate is measured as the number of births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19. The most recent teen birth rate in Newport was 20.8 births per 1,000 girls, compared to 25.1 per 1,000 girls five years before.
- Newport has also seen a decline in women receiving delayed prenatal care, with 8.3% of women experiencing delayed prenatal care from 2009-2013, down from 11.5% five years before.

### **High rates of child abuse and neglect**

Children need love, affection, and nurturing from their parents or caregivers for healthy physical and emotional development. Experiencing child abuse or neglect can have lifelong consequences for a child's health, well-being, and relationships with others.

- In 2014, there were 124 Newport children who were victims of child abuse and neglect, an increase from 116 Newport victims of child abuse and neglect in 2013.
- Newport has the third highest child abuse and neglect rate in the state with 30.4 victims of child abuse per 1,000 children in 2014.

### **Improvements for Newport Public Schools**

*Decline in chronic absence:* Regular attendance at school is an essential step for children to succeed academically and do well in life. Students who are frequently absent from school miss critical academic and social learning opportunities and are at risk of disengagement from school, academic failure, and dropping out. Newport has really focused on reducing chronic absenteeism over the past few years and we are seeing declines as a result of this strong effort:

- During the 2013-2014 school year, 12% of Newport students in grades K-3 were chronically absent, an improvement from 19% in 2010.
- Similar trends occurred at the middle school and high school levels. During the 2013-2014 school year, 34% of students at Rogers High School were chronically absent, down from 42% in 2010.

*Improvement in high school graduation rate:* High school graduation is the minimum requisite for college and most employment. In Rhode Island, adults without high school diplomas are over four times as likely to be unemployed as those with bachelor's degrees or more.

- Newport's high school graduation rate has improved, with 70% of students graduating in four years in 2014, compared to 67% in 2013.
- However, Newport continues to have one of the lowest high school graduation rates in the state. Only Woonsocket has a lower four-year high school graduation rate (58%).

"The entire Newport community has come together to reduce chronic absenteeism and increase student engagement," said Geller. "As a result of these strategic practices, Newport has seen more children in their seats ready to learn, and more students graduating from high school on time. Newport's graduation rate still lags behind other communities, but addressing chronic absence is a key strategy for improving the graduation rate."

**For trend data and comparisons to Rhode Island statewide rates, please see [Newport's Community Snapshot](#). All data and information presented at *Newport Data in Your Backyard* is available on Rhode Island KIDS COUNT's website: [www.rikidscount.org](http://www.rikidscount.org).**

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