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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Makes Data Local at 'Providence Data in Your Backyard' Event

High rates of poverty and extreme poverty among Providence children

Child abuse and neglect decreasing in Providence

High chronic absence rates, suspensions decreasing in Providence Public Schools

Providence, RI (July 15, 2016) — Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Senior Policy Analyst Stephanie Geller presented data from the [2016 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook](#) to an audience of community leaders and policy makers. The *Providence Data in Your Backyard* presentation included highlights of improvements and declines in the well-being of children and youth in Providence. The data presentation was brought to the community in partnership with the Providence Children and Youth Cabinet and was held on **Friday, July 15, 2016 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Rochambeau Branch of the Providence Community Library, 708 Hope Street, Providence.**

Geller welcomed participants, saying, "We are excited to partner with the Providence Children and Youth Cabinet to bring local data to Providence City, District, and community leaders. The *Providence Data in Your Backyard* event is a great way to examine trends in child and family outcomes, identify successes and challenges, and discuss how the community can work together to improve outcomes for all Providence children and families."

Providence has high rates of poverty among children

Although childhood poverty exists in every Rhode Island community, it is particularly concentrated in the core cities of Providence, Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket. Children in poverty, especially those who experience poverty in early childhood and for extended periods, are more likely to have physical and behavioral health problems, experience difficulty in school, become teen parents, and earn less or be unemployed as adults. In 2015, the federal poverty threshold was \$19,096 for a family of three with two children and \$24,036 for a family of four with two children. The extreme poverty level in 2015 was \$9,548 for a family of three with two children and \$12,018 for a family of four with two children.

More than **one in three** (39.7% or 15,894) children in Providence lives in poverty, and nearly **one in five** (18.8% or 7,522) children in Providence lives in extreme poverty.

Child abuse and neglect decreasing in Providence

Experiencing child abuse or neglect can have lifelong consequences for health, well-being, and relationships with others. In Rhode Island, the vast majority (80%) of child abuse and neglect victims experienced neglect. The large majority of neglect cases are due to lack of supervision, but may also be connected to poverty (inadequate clothing, food, shelter, or medical care).

In 2015 in Providence, there were 620 victims of child abuse and neglect. Providence's child abuse and neglect rate has decreased each year since 2012 (from 20.1 per 1,000 children to 14.9 per 1,000 children). This rate is higher than the state rate, but the lowest in the core cities.

School climate: chronic absence and suspensions

Children need to be in school to learn, and to remain engaged in school in order to succeed. Students are chronically absent if they miss 10% or more of the school year (18 or more days per school year). Students who are chronically absent have lower levels of achievement and are more likely to drop out of school. Providence's chronic absence rates in grades K-3 (26%), middle school (30%) and high school (45%) are all among the highest in the state and well above the state average.

According to Stephanie Geller, "Both the Providence Public Schools and the Providence Children and Youth Cabinet have made reducing chronic absence a priority, carefully examining the data, creating attendance teams in schools, and developing partnerships between the schools and community agencies to address the problem. And earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Education selected Providence as one of ten cities to participate in the My Brother's Keeper Success Mentor's Initiative, which aims to reduce chronic absence by connecting students with caring mentors. We hope to see declines in chronic absence in the coming years as a result of these efforts."

Similar to students who are chronically absent, students who are suspended from school are more likely to experience disengagement and drop out of school. In Providence Public Schools, there were 25 suspensions per 100 students during the 2014-2015 school year, a decrease from 49 per 100 students during the 2011-2012 school year. Although suspensions are decreasing in Providence, the majority of suspensions in the 2014-15 school year were out-of-school (4,520 out-of-school and 1,410 in-school).

Geller noted that Superintendent Christopher Maher has made reducing suspensions one of the priorities of his administration and also noted that this work will be further supported by new legislation that passed during the 2016 legislative session that restricts the use of out-of-school suspensions and requires that racial, ethnic, and special education disparities be examined and acted on.

Rebecca Boxx, Director of the Children and Youth Cabinet, said, "We are always pleased to partner with Rhode Island KIDS COUNT to present *Providence Data in Your Backyard*. This data informs and guides our coalition's efforts to improve outcomes for all of Providence's children and youth. "