



Information is embargoed until 12:01 a.m. on Monday, April 8, 2019

Contact: Katherine Linwood Chu, Communications Manager

401-351-9400, Ext. 22 / kchu@rikidscount.org

Please join the conversation on social media: #RIFactbook

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Holds 25th Annual Factbook Breakfast Focusing on the Status of Rhode Island's Children

Providence, RI (April 7, 2019) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will release its twenty-fifth annual report on the well-being of Rhode Island's children at a **policy breakfast on Monday, April 8, 2019 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.** Over 560 people are registered to attend the event, including Governor Gina Raimondo, Senator Jack Reed, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Congressman James Langevin, Congressman David Cicilline, Representative Marvin Abney, Senator Josh Miller, General Assembly members, policymakers, and community leaders from education, health, and human services. The event will take place at the Crowne Plaza, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick, RI.

Mark Shriver, Senior Vice President of U.S. Programs & Advocacy at Save the Children, will give keynote remarks. Pedro Moya of Young Voices Rhode Island – and a Rhode Island high school student – will address the crowd about how to support young people to reach their full potential. A Pre-K class from Heritage Park YMCA Early Learning Center/Ready to Learn Providence in Pawtucket will kick off the event by singing.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, said, "Today, as we have done for the last 25 years, we take stock of where Rhode Island effectively supports our children's development, and where we need to focus increased attention and efforts. By implementing well-informed, data-driven policies, we can improve the health, development and education outcomes for Rhode Island's children that will pave the way for the strong workforce and engaged citizens Rhode Island needs to thrive."

"We know what works to ensure that all children have the chance to reach their full potential and it is imperative that we work to close unacceptable gaps for children of color and low-income children so that every child has an equal opportunity to succeed," said Mark Shriver.

The 2019 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook

The *2019 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* charts improvements and declines in the well-being of Rhode Island's 206,972 children. Data are presented for the state and for each of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns. The *Factbook* indicators are grouped into five interrelated categories: family and community, economic well-being, health, safety, and education. There are a total of 71 indicators of child well-being in the 2019 *Factbook*.

"This year, we are seeing many positive trends for our state's children. We are pleased to see a continuing decline in child poverty and a continuing increase in the percentage of children with health insurance. We also are seeing increases in enrollment in our Early Intervention program and in evidence-based family home visiting programs, two programs that support the development of our youngest children. At the other end of the age spectrum, we are also seeing increases in college enrollment right after graduation. Unfortunately, we are also seeing some troubling trends, including an increase in school suspensions and high rates of e-cigarette use among our youth," said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

She continued, "We are also closely watching the trends of children involved in the child welfare system. Overall increases in the caseload of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, increases in maltreatment reports, and increases in cases of child abuse and neglect are cause for concern, and we need to be sure there are resources in place to provide the full range of responses and services needed. A positive finding is an increase in the number of children being cared for in foster families rather than in congregate care."

Presentation of the Factbook to State Leaders

Bryant will present Vision Awards to Factbook Partners including The Rhode Island Foundation, United Way of Rhode Island, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

"When Rhode Island KIDS COUNT started, there was no central source of reliable data and best practice information to advance sound policies that benefit children and youth," said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "As we look back over the last 25 years, we can celebrate some very important legislative wins, programs and policies that prioritize Rhode Island children and

families. In the past 25 years, we have seen a declining trend in lead poisoning and increasing rates of children's health insurance coverage. We have also seen the establishment of important programs that support children's development and success, including our high-quality State Pre-K program, the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, and the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) as well as policy changes that support our youth, including voluntary extension of care to age 21 for youth in the care of DCYF and the reversal of a law that tried 17-year-olds as adults. Much of these successes have had to do with best practice research, strong advocacy with many partners, and responsive policy makers. We are proud to work alongside fellow advocates to improve the health, safety, education, economic security, and development of Rhode Island's children."

"Despite these successes, we have much more work to do. Wide gaps continue to exist between children of color and white children in nearly every Factbook indicator, and these gaps will hold Rhode Island back in terms of our educational and workforce goals and future prosperity," concluded Bryant.

Bryant will present the *2019 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* to Governor Gina Raimondo, Senator Jack Reed, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Congressman James Langevin, Congressman David Cicilline, Representative Marvin Abney, and Senator Josh Miller. Ramona Santos, cofounder of Parents Leading for Educational Equity, will also receive a *Factbook* in recognition of her work to improve parent voice in education-decision making, and equitable educational opportunities for children of color.

###

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.