



Information is embargoed until Monday, October 2, 2017 at 12:01 a.m.

Contact: Katherine Linwood Chu, Communications Manager  
401.351.9400, Ext. 22 / [kchu@rikidscount.org](mailto:kchu@rikidscount.org)

## **Rhode Island KIDS COUNT to release new *Issue Brief*: *Preventing Youth Tobacco Use in Rhode Island***

*While Rhode Island has made dramatic progress in reducing cigarette use among youth, continued tobacco control efforts are needed due to new products*

**Providence, RI (September 28, 2017):** Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will release its newest publication, *Preventing Youth Tobacco Use in Rhode Island*, at a policy roundtable on **Monday, October 2, 2017, from 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.** at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, One Union Station, Providence, RI.

Featured speakers will include Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT; Eileen Howard Boone, Senior Vice President, CSR & Philanthropy at CVS Health; Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Health; and Daniel Fitzgerald, Network Coordinator of Tobacco Free Rhode Island at the American Lung Association. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Analyst Jim Beasley will share the *Issue Brief* findings.

The *Issue Brief* presents detailed rates of youth cigarette, tobacco product, and e-cigarette use in Rhode Island, risk factors for youth tobacco and e-cigarette use, an overview of tobacco control programs and policies, as well as recommendations for eliminating youth tobacco use and their use of new products such as e-cigarettes.

### Diverging Trends: Stamping Out Cigarettes, E-Cigarettes on the Rise

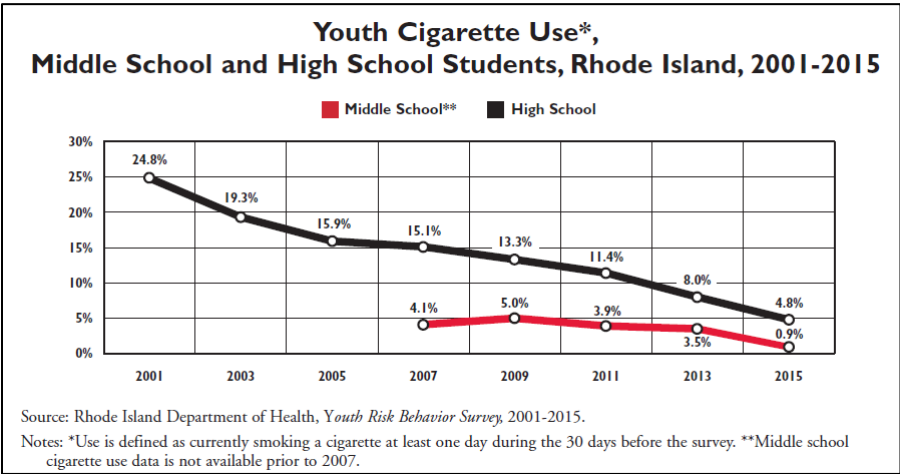
Rhode Island has made considerable progress in reducing youth smoking. There have been significant declines in youth cigarette use, and in 2015 Rhode Island had the lowest self-reported rate of current cigarette use in the nation (among ranked states) for both middle (0.9%) and high school (4.8%) students. However, that same year, 8.8% of Rhode Island middle school students and 25.1% of Rhode Island high school students reported using any tobacco product, (including cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, or cigars), or e-cigarettes in the previous 30 days.

**Tobacco Product Use\* by Grade Level, Rhode Island, 2015**

Type	Cigarette	Smokeless Tobacco	Cigars, Cigarillos, or Little Cigars	Hookah	E-Cigarette
2015 Rhode Island Middle School Current Usage Rates	0.9%**	1.0%	1.1%**	N/A	7.6%
2015 Rhode Island High School Current Usage Rates	4.8%**	5.3%	8.4%**	11.8%	19.3%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* 2015.  
 Notes: \*Use is defined as current consumption of a given tobacco product at least one day during the 30 days before the survey. \*\*Significant declines in current cigarette use (down from 4.1% in 2007 for middle school students and down from 35.4% in 1997 for high school students) and cigar use (down from 5.4% in 2007 for middle school students and down from 14.0% in 2001 for high school students) have been seen. †Trend data for other products is either not significant or not available.

“While we celebrate the steep decline in cigarette use among Rhode Island youth, the sharp increase in e-cigarette use is deeply concerning,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “But the good news is that we can build on our progress with reducing youth cigarette smoking as we turn our attention to reducing youth use of other tobacco products and new products such as e-cigarettes. We need to replicate effective legislative and regulatory strategies, as well as community education and outreach – we did this once and we can do it again.”



The *Issue Brief* was developed with support from CVS Health, which was the first national retail pharmacy to remove tobacco products from its stores. Eileen Howard Boone, Senior Vice President, CSR & Philanthropy at CVS Health said, “We are very

pleased that through this new *Issue Brief*, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT assembled an unprecedented amount of data and information on youth tobacco use in Rhode Island, all in one place. As we move ahead as state and community partners, this information will inform our next steps on delivering the first tobacco-free generation.”

Tobacco use is a major public health problem that affects many children, youth, and families. Smoking can reduce life expectancy by at least a decade and remains a leading cause of chronic disease, preventable death, and disability. In Rhode Island, 1,800 adults die each year from adverse health effects from smoking and an estimated \$640 million dollars is spent annually on smoking related medical expenditures. Tobacco products of any kind and e-cigarettes are unsafe because they contain numerous harmful chemicals that when absorbed can negatively impact nearly every organ of the body.

#### **Tobacco and New Products: Different Forms, Lifelong Consequences for Kids**

Tobacco prevention and cessation efforts should target adolescents and young adults, since the majority of use begins before age 18. Nationally, 88% of adult cigarette users who smoke daily report starting by the age of 18, and 99% of all tobacco initiation occurs by age 26. Adolescents are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine and may initiate smoking due to influences within their social and community environment.

Increased risk for tobacco use is found among youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender; youth with physical, emotional, and/or learning disabilities; youth who are Native American; and youth who reside in rural communities and/or have a low socioeconomic status. Additional factors related to youth tobacco use include ease of access through retailers, parental tobacco use, and industry marketing.

#### **Recommendations to Eradicate Youth Tobacco Use and Use of New Products Such as E-Cigarettes**

Preventing, identifying, and treating youth and adult tobacco use requires the complementary and sustained efforts of health care providers, public health officials, parents, policymakers, educators, school administrators, and others. Please see page 15 for the full set of recommendations.

###

*Follow the release event conversation on Twitter:  
@RIKidsCount — #NoYouthTobaccoRI*

*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.*