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New Census Data Shows: Rhode Island Ranked 3rd in Children's Health Insurance Coverage; Child Poverty Continues to Decline

***97.9% of Rhode Island children had health insurance coverage in 2017,
Rhode Island ranks 3rd among states***

***16.6% of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty in 2017,
compared to 21.5% in 2013***

Providence, RI (September 13, 2018) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) today. The ACS provides national and state-level data on health insurance coverage, poverty, and income.

In 2017, 16.6% – an estimated 33,858 – of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty. This is an improvement from 2013, when 21.5% of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty. During this same period, from 2013 to 2017, the child poverty rate in the U.S. declined from 22.2% to 18.4%

Health Insurance Data

Children who have health insurance coverage are healthier and have fewer preventable hospitalizations. They are more likely to receive preventive care, be screened for the achievement of developmental milestones, miss fewer days of school and get treatment for illnesses and chronic conditions. Uninsured children are less likely to have medical homes and have fewer visits to doctors or dentists.

According to the ACS, in 2017:

- 97.9% of Rhode Island's children had health insurance coverage, and 2.1% (an estimated 4,633 children) Rhode Island children lacked health insurance coverage.
- 5% of all U.S. children lacked health insurance coverage.
- Rhode Island ranks 3rd best among all states and 3rd in New England for children's health insurance coverage (the same ranking as 2016).

- Of the children who had health insurance in Rhode Island in 2017, 64.4% had private coverage and 38% through Medicaid/Rite Care.

“These data show that Rhode Island’s long-standing commitment to children’s health insurance coverage is paying off,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Rhode Island’s ranking of 3rd best among all states for the percentage of children with health coverage is great news for Rhode Island’s children and families. Children need access to regular, high quality health care so they can have a strong start in life.”

Poverty Data

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.

According to the ACS, in 2017:

- 16.6% – an estimated 33,858 – of Rhode Island’s children lived in poverty in 2017. This is an improvement from 2013, when 21.5% of Rhode Island’s children lived in poverty.
 - The poverty data are based on the federal poverty threshold, which was an annual income of \$19,749 for a family of three with two children and \$24,858 for a family of four with two children in 2017.
- 5.3% – an estimated 10,761 – of Rhode Island’s children lived in extreme poverty in 2017.
 - Extreme poverty is defined as families with incomes below 50% of the federal poverty level, or \$9,875 for a family of three with two children and \$12,429 for a family of four with two children in 2017.
- Rhode Island ranks 24th in the nation — and 6th in New England — for the percentage of children in poverty.

“It’s encouraging that the latest data on Rhode Island’s child poverty rate show a continuing downward trend since 2013,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Gradual improvements in the economy, including the reduction in unemployment and an increase in median family income, have a positive impact on Rhode Island’s child poverty rate. However, the fact that nearly 34,000 children in Rhode Island continue to live in poverty is a stark reminder that there is more work to do.”

“Because living in poverty negatively impacts children now and far into their future, Rhode Island needs to invest in two-generation strategies for entire families to succeed. This

legislative session, Rhode Island took important steps toward this goal by making worthwhile investments in quality early learning opportunities through the Child Care Assistance Program, supporting successful transitions to adulthood for youth in DCYF care by increasing the age for services from 18 to 21, and preserving RIte Care at current levels so that eligible children and parents have access to preventive health care. We also need to focus on improving K-12 education, and increasing the education levels and job skills of today's parents so they can provide for their families and qualify for higher paying jobs.”

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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.