

Data are embargoed until Friday, March 29, 2019.

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT to release new *Policy Brief: Childhood Overweight and Obesity: New Data for Rhode Island*

This is the first clinical/claims-based statewide data set of childhood overweight and obesity in Rhode Island

Providence, RI (March 28, 2019): Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will release its newest publication, *Childhood Overweight and Obesity: New Data for Rhode Island*, at a policy roundtable on Friday, March 29, 2019 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; Kim Keck, President and CEO of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island; Ellen Amore, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Rhode Island Department of Health; Patrick Vivier, Hassenfeld Child Health Innovation Institute; and Karin Wetherill, Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Analyst Devan Quinn will share findings from the *Policy Brief*.

Childhood Obesity: A serious health issue: A need for better data

The prevalence of obesity is rising in the U.S. and in Rhode Island with one in five children considered obese. Childhood overweight and obesity is a serious problem that puts children at risk for poor health. Children and adolescents who are overweight or obese are at immediate and/or long-term risk of many health problems, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, joint problems, sleep apnea, and other acute and chronic health problems.

Despite the persistence and severity of childhood overweight and obesity, accurate data is difficult to obtain. Most data on childhood obesity come from self-reported survey data, which can differ from clinical data. Although height, weight, and BMI are often collected by pediatricians, there are very few national or state-level clinical data sets.

Between 2016 and 2018, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, the Rhode Island Department of Health's Center for Health Data and Analysis, the Hassenfeld Child Health Innovation Institute, the State Innovation Model, and three health insurance plans – Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, UnitedHealthcare, and Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island collaborated on a project to collect the most accurate childhood overweight and obesity data at the state and city/town level that could also be analyzed by race/ethnicity, age, gender, and insurance status.



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The result of this unique collaboration is the first clinical/claims-based statewide data set of childhood overweight and obesity.

“Childhood obesity and overweight is a serious health issue both nationally and in Rhode Island. We are very excited that through this important work with our partners, Rhode Island now has its first clinical/claims-based statewide data set that will help to inform policy, practice and prevention efforts,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

Rates analyzed by gender, age, insurance status, and race/ethnicity

The data show that in Rhode Island:

- Rhode Island boys have higher rates of obesity than girls in every age group.
- Overweight and obesity start as early as age two. Twenty-five percent of Rhode Island children ages two to four are overweight or obese. Thirty-eight percent of children between ages five and 17 are either overweight or obese.
- Twenty-six percent of Rhode Island children covered by public insurance are obese compared to 14% of children with private health insurance.
- In Rhode Island, Hispanic children have the highest rates of overweight and obesity at 17% overweight and 28% obese. Thirty percent of Hispanic boys are obese.

Rates by Rhode Island city and town

	OVERWEIGHT	OBESE		OVERWEIGHT	OBESE		OVERWEIGHT	OBESE
Barrington	13%	7%	Hopkinton	14%	14%	Portsmouth	10%^	23%
Bristol	18%	15%	Jamestown	*	17%^	Providence	17%	26%
Burrillville	16%	16%	Johnston	16%	19%	Richmond	13%	16%
Central Falls	19%	29%	Lincoln	16%	17%	Scituate	14%	12%
Charlestown	17%	19%	Little Compton	24%^	32%^	Smithfield	12%	12%
Coventry	12%	15%	Middletown	12%	25%	South Kingstown	18%	16%
Cranston	14%	19%	Narragansett	16%	19%	Tiverton	13%	20%
Cumberland	15%	16%	New Shoreham	*	*	Warren	18%	17%
East Greenwich	13%	9%	Newport	15%	21%	Warwick	15%	15%
East Providence	15%	21%	North Kingstown	9%	12%	West Greenwich	12%	16%
Exeter	10%	12%	North Providence	17%	18%	West Warwick	14%	20%
Foster	15%	13%	North Smithfield	16%	13%	Westerly	12%	16%
Glocester	14%	11%	Pawtucket	17%	26%	Woonsocket	14%	25%

Recommendations

The *Policy Brief* provides key recommendations to support collection and analysis of children’s BMI data:

- The BMI data collection project should continue on an annual basis to collect, analyze, and distribute the data from KIDSNET, Current Care, and contributing health plans in place of a more permanent solution to track BMI data by state, city, town, race, ethnicity, age, gender, and insurance status.

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- The General Assembly should consider legislative options that would provide an opt-out rather than an opt-in consent model for collecting children's health data to be used on a de-identified, population-based scale in CurrentCare.
- Health care providers and insurers should continue to regularly collect children's height, weight, and BMI data and provide guidance and referrals at annual well-child visits.
- The State should provide the authority and capacity for the Department of Health to work with providers, insurers, and electronic health record vendors on a solution to systematically report BMI data to KIDSNET and/or CurrentCare.
- The Rhode Island Department of Health and the Rhode Island Department of Education should continue to ask questions about nutrition and physical activity in youth surveys, including the *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, and *SurveyWorks!*
- State agencies, health care providers, hospitals, insurers, schools, and community agencies should monitor trends in clinical, claims, and self-reported data on overweight and obesity among children to identify opportunities for intervention, programs, and policies to support children's' healthy weight.

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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.