



EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01 A.M. ON JULY 25, 2012

Contact: Amy Lanctot

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



National *KIDS COUNT Data Book* on the status of American children released

Rhode Island sees gains in reading and math proficiency among students

Families still struggle with high housing costs and unemployment in the wake of the recession

RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

ONE UNION STATION
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

Providence, RI (July 25, 2012) – The 23rd annual national *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, a state-by-state report on children’s well-being issued by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, finds that Rhode Island ranks 25th in the nation for overall child well-being. The ranking is based on an index of 16 key indicators (with 1st being the best and 50th being the worst). Rhode Island ranked last in New England, following New Hampshire (1), Massachusetts (2), Vermont (3), Connecticut (7) and Maine (13).

The *2012 KIDS COUNT Data Book* has been updated with a new index that provides an even more comprehensive portrait of how American children are fairing. It includes information and statistical trends on the status of children in the U.S. as a whole and in each of the 50 states. This year’s report features data on 16 indicators of child well-being, a change from previous annual rankings based on 10 indicators, divided equally under four key domains—Economic Well-Being, Education, Health, and Family and Community. New indicators include percentage of children in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, percentage of children ages 3 and 4 not attending preschool, percentage of children without health insurance and percentage of children living in high-poverty areas.

According to the *2012 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, children and families across the nation continue to struggle in the wake of the recession, experiencing setbacks in several measures of economic well-being.

(more)

rikids@rikidscount.org
www.rikidscount.org

On a positive note, children's health and education have improved. Those trends are mirrored here in Rhode Island.

"Many Rhode Island families continue to live in poverty, and struggle with high housing costs and a lack of jobs, a trend being seen nationwide as well," stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "While the economic well-being of Rhode Island families continues to turn around slowly, Rhode Island is making gains in health and education areas. Our teen birth rate is among the lowest in the nation and we are seeing improvements in reading and math proficiency."

Indicators of child well-being in Rhode Island

Rhode Island ranks among the top 10 best states for teen birth rate.

- From 2005 to 2009, the number of births to teens ages 15 to 19 in Rhode Island fell from 31 births per 1,000 teens to 27 births per 1,000 teens. Rhode Island currently ranks 9th nationwide. The national teen birth rate is 39 births per 1,000 teens ages 15 to 19.

Rhode Island ranks 10th in the country for child and teen death rate.

- Rhode Island's child and teen death rate improved from 25 deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19 in 2005 to 23 deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19 in 2009. In 2009, the national child and teen death rate was 27 deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19.

Rhode Island ranks 17th best nationwide for the percentage of children without health insurance.

- In 2010, 6 percent of Rhode Island children did not have health insurance, the same percentage as in 2008.

"The fact that the number of children without health insurance in Rhode Island remained stable, despite high unemployment in our state, shows the success of RItE Care and Medicaid in protecting children's health," added Bryant. "For many families, the loss of a job means the loss of employer-sponsored health insurance coverage. We are fortunate that RItE Care is available to help ensure that children have the health coverage they need to keep them healthy."

The percentage of teens ages 12 to 17 who abused alcohol or drugs within the past year improved slightly.

- During 2008-2009, 8 percent (7,000) of teens ages 12 to 17 in Rhode Island said they abused alcohol or drugs in the past year, down from 9 percent (8,000)

during 2005-2006. The national rate was 7 percent in 2008-2009. Rhode Island ranks 25th nationwide on this measure.

The economic well-being of Rhode Island's children and families declined, as evidenced by the percentage of children that had no parent with full-time, year-round employment and the percentage of children living in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

- In 2010, 34 percent of Rhode Island children lived in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment, up from 30 percent in 2008. Rhode Island ranks 30th nationwide.
- In 2010, 45 percent of Rhode Island children under age 18 lived in households with high housing cost burdens, or households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. That's up from 42 percent in 2005, and higher than the national rate of 41 percent. Rhode Island ranks 43rd on this measure.

Rhode Island saw improvements in several education measures, including both reading and math.

- In 2011, 65 percent of Rhode Island fourth graders scored below proficiency in reading, down from 70 percent in 2005. Nationally, 68 percent of fourth graders scored below proficiency in reading in 2011. Rhode Island ranks 15th nationwide.
- In 2011, 66 percent of Rhode Island eighth graders scored below proficiency in math, down from 76 percent in 2005. Nationally, 66 percent of eighth graders scored below proficiency in math in 2011, the same as Rhode Island. Rhode Island ranks 25th nationwide.
- The percentage of Rhode Island children who were not attending preschool also has decreased in recent years. From 2008-2010, 51 percent of Rhode Island children ages 3 to 4 did not attend preschool, down from 58 percent from 2005-2007. Rhode Island is doing better than the nation on this measure, with the national rate at 53 percent. Rhode Island ranks 12th nationwide.

“Rhode Island is leading the way when it comes to developing strong early learning programs,” stated Bryant. “Thanks to the inclusion of pre-kindergarten in the state’s funding formula and Rhode Island’s receipt of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant, our state is poised to continue working to expand access to high-quality early learning programs, setting our children on a path to succeed in school for years to come.”

An education measure on which Rhode Island students did not improve is graduating high school on time.

- During the 2008-2009 school year, 25 percent of Rhode Island high school students did not graduate on time, up from 22 percent during the 2005-2006 school year. The national rate during the 2008-2009 school year was 24 percent. Rhode Island ranks 28th nationwide in this measure.

“High school graduation is the minimum requirement for college and most employment,” noted Stephanie Geller, Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “It is vital that our state continue working to improve high school graduation rates. Rhode Island is making strides in this area by working toward developing an early warning system to identify students at-risk of dropping out so schools can provide the individualized supports that students need to stay on the path to graduation.”

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state-by-state rankings and supplemental data will be available at 12:01 a.m. EDT, July 25, 2012 at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>.

Follow the Annie E. Casey Foundation on this issue on Twitter @aecfkidscount and on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/KIDSCOUNT>.

###

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, education, safety, and development of Rhode Island’s children and youth. It is one of fifty state-level organizations that work in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the social condition of children at the state and local level across the country.