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

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***Rhode Island now among the top 10 best states for the teen birth rate, with a decline of 15% between 2000 and 2008.***

***For the first time, Data Book provides information on children in families affected by foreclosure and unemployment.***

Providence, RI (August 17, 2011) – The 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> in the nation for overall child well-being. The ranking is based on an index of 10 key indicators (with 1<sup>st</sup> being the best and 50<sup>th</sup> being the worst). Last year Rhode Island ranked 17<sup>th</sup> as well. The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* provides information and statistical trends on the status of children in the U.S. as a whole and in each of the 50 states, and features data on 10 indicators of child well-being, including measures relating to family economic security, child and teen development, health and education.

This year’s national *Data Book* includes data on two additional issues - unemployment and foreclosure. According to the *Data Book*, almost 8 million children (almost 11%) in the United States had at least one parent who was unemployed in 2010, more than double the number in 2007. In Rhode Island, 30,000 children, or 14%, had at least one parent who was without a job during 2010. Only Nevada (16%) and the District of Columbia (15%) had higher rates.

“Thousands of Rhode Island families are currently dealing with unemployment or foreclosure. Our state’s unemployment rate is currently at 10.8% and the number of foreclosed homes in our state remains high,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “When a family faces serious financial

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challenges, children can experience physical and emotional health problems, increased school mobility and increased school absenteeism – compromising health and educational achievement.”

According to the *Data Book*, almost 5.3 million U.S. children (4%) lived in families who owned their home and experienced foreclosure in 2007, 2008 or 2009. During those same three years, 17,000 Rhode Island children (4%) lived in families who owned a house that entered foreclosure. Stephanie Geller, Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, noted, “Over one-third of Rhode Island’s foreclosures are multi-family homes that house an average of two to three families, so the number of children coping with foreclosure is likely higher than 17,000, since renters are often evicted when a rental property is foreclosed.”

### **Indicators of Child Well-Being in Rhode Island**

*Rhode Island now ranks among the top 10 best states for the teen birth rate, with a 15% reduction in births to teens between 2000 and 2008.*

- From 2000 to 2008, the number of teen births in Rhode Island has improved from 34 teen births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19 to 29 teen births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19. Rhode Island currently ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the country, with the national rate being 41 teen births per 1,000 teenage girls in the same age group.

*Rhode Island ranks best in the country for the child death rate among children ages 1-14 and second best in the nation for the teen death rate.*

- In 2007, Rhode Island had the lowest child death rate in the U.S. at nine deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14, a 47% decline since 2000.
- In 2007, Rhode Island had the second lowest teen death rate in the U.S. (39 deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19), a 25% improvement since 2000, but a slight increase since 2006 (34 deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19).

*Family economic well-being indicators moved in the wrong direction, as evidenced by the child poverty rate and children in families without full-time, year-round employment:*

- The percentage of Rhode Island children living in poverty increased from 15% in 2008 to 17% in 2009, but continued to be lower than the national child poverty rate of 20%.
- In Rhode Island in 2009, 31% of children were living in families in which no parent had full-time, year-round employment, the same as the national rate.

Geller noted, "Parallel to the decline in economic well-being, we are also seeing declines in the health of newborns. Both low birthweight and infant mortality rates are directly related to health and economic factors in the family and community."

- From 2000 to 2008, the percentage of low birthweight infants born in Rhode Island has increased from 7.2% to 7.9%. Nationally, the percentage increased from 7.6% in 2000 to 8.2% in 2008.
- Rhode Island's infant mortality rate increased from 6.1 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2006 to 7.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2007. Overall, Rhode Island saw a 17% increase in the infant mortality rate between 2000 and 2007 and surpassed the U.S. rate of 6.8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. (More recent infant mortality data are not available).

*Other indicators reported in the national KIDS COUNT Data Book include the following:*

- The percentage of Rhode Island teens ages 16 to 19 who are not enrolled in school and do not have a high school diploma rose to 7% in 2009, up from 6% in 2008. In 2009, Rhode Island ranked 29<sup>th</sup> in the country for this measure, a drop from 15<sup>th</sup> in 2008.
- The percentage of Rhode Island teens ages 16 to 19 that are not enrolled in school and are not working rose to 8% in 2009, up from 7% in 2008. In 2009, Rhode Island ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the country for this measure, a drop from 14<sup>th</sup> in 2008.
- Since 2000, the number of Rhode Island children living in single parent families has increased 13% to 36% in 2009. That's above the national average of 34%. Rhode Island ranked 38<sup>th</sup> in the country on this measure.

Bryant added, "The data in this year's national *KIDS COUNT Data Book* highlight the need to make wise investments in our children and families both as a nation and as a state. It is crucial that policymakers and the public focus their attention on ways to continue to improve the well-being of our children now and in the future."

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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.