



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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U.S. Census Bureau Releases New Data on Childhood Poverty in Rhode Island

**One in five (19%) Rhode Island children lived
in poverty in 2010**

Rhode Island had the highest child poverty rate in New England

Providence, RI (September 22, 2011) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) detailing the extent of poverty among children in Rhode Island, New England and each of the 50 states.

According to the new Census data, almost one in five (19%) of Rhode Island’s children was living in poverty in 2010. Rhode Island’s childhood poverty rate increased from 15.5% in 2008 to 16.9% in 2009 to 19% in 2010. The number of Rhode Island children in poverty increased from 37,731 in 2009 to more than 42,221 in 2010. The child poverty rate for the United States was 21.6% in 2010, up from 20% in 2009 and 18.2% in 2008.

“Children who live in poverty are more likely to have health and behavioral problems, have trouble in school, become teen parents, and earn less or be unemployed as adults,” stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

Rhode Island ranked 6th of the six New England states and 22nd in the country for child poverty (where 1st is best). In 2009, Rhode Island’s poverty rate of 16.9% was ranked 5th in New England and 19th nationally. The poverty data are based on the federal poverty threshold which is defined for 2010 as an income of \$17,568 a year for a family of three with two children and \$22,113 for a family of four with two children.

“The financial crisis, job loss and underemployment have taken a toll on families across the nation and in Rhode Island,” noted Bryant. “In times of recession, it is especially important to make the well-being of children and families a high priority for public investments. Health

care, food assistance, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and high-quality schools and early learning programs are vital to the health of Rhode Island's families and communities."

Rhode Island families have been hit particularly hard by the economic crisis. According to the *2011 National KIDS COUNT Data Book*, 30,000 children in Rhode Island, 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.

"It is critical that we do everything we can to maintain state and federal programs that support the well-being of children and families in Rhode Island," remarked Bryant. "Our Congressional leaders can help by opposing debt reduction strategies that hurt programs like Medicaid, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and the EITC."

According to the Census data released today, of all Rhode Island children living in poverty in 2010, 8.3% (18,339) were living in extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is defined as one-half of the federal poverty level, or \$8,784 a year for a family of three with two children and \$11,057 for a family of four with two children in 2010.

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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.