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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Makes Data Local at *Warwick Data in Your Backyard* Event

Reading, math proficiency rates above the state average

Low percentage of students in full-day kindergarten

Nutrition assistance programs reaching many Warwick children

Warwick, RI (October 23, 2014) – At the *Warwick Data in Your Backyard* event, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Analyst John Neubauer presented data on the well-being of Warwick children and youth to an audience of community leaders and policy makers. The presentation's data comes from the *2014 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook*, and includes improvements and declines in the economic well-being, education, health, and safety. The presentation was brought to the community in partnership with the Warwick Coalition to Prevent Child Abuse and was held on **Thursday, October 23, 2014 from 9:30 am – 11:00 am at the Warwick Public Library**, 600 Sandy Lane, Warwick, RI.

“We’re proud to partner with the Warwick Coalition to Prevent Child Abuse on the *Warwick Data in Your Backyard* presentation,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “The event is a great way to examine trends in child outcomes, identify successes and challenges, and develop strategies to support Warwick children and families.”

Economic Snapshot

- *Children in poverty:* In 2013, the federal poverty threshold was \$18,769 for a family of three with two children and \$23,624 for a family of four with two children. Warwick’s child poverty rate of 8.4% is less than half the state rate of 18.4%. However, as one of Rhode Island’s largest communities, Warwick has nearly 1,300 children living in poverty.
- *Cost of housing:* The average monthly cost of rent in Warwick is \$1,272. A family of three living at the poverty level in Warwick would need to spend 78% of their total income to afford the cost of rent.
- *Cash assistance:* In 2013, 2% (324) of children in Warwick were received cash assistance benefits. This rate has held steady for the past five years.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Children need love, affection, and nurturing from their parents or caregivers for healthy physical and emotional development. Experiencing child abuse or neglect can have lifelong consequences for a child’s health, well-being, and relationships with others. In 2013, there were 120 Warwick children who were victims of child abuse and neglect, a rate of 7.6 victims per 1,000 children ages birth to 18. This is lower than the state rate of 14.0 victims per 1,000 children.

“Reducing child abuse and neglect is crucial for healthy development and overall well-being,” said Neubauer. “The Warwick Coalition to Prevent Child Abuse is a great example of Warwick’s commitment to keeping their children healthy and safe from harm.”

Warwick Public Education

- *Full Day Kindergarten:* Children in full-day kindergarten make significant gains in early reading, math, and social skills as compared with children in half-day kindergarten. In 2013, only 11% of Warwick children were enrolled in full-day kindergarten, compared to 70% of children statewide.
- *Reading Skills:* Early reading difficulties have an impact on academic achievement and future employment success. Students who do not read proficiently by fourth grade are much more likely to drop out of school than their peers. In 2013, 78% of fourth-grade students in Warwick were reading proficiently, compared to the state rate of 71%.
- *Math Skills:* The ability to understand math is critical for performing many important daily activities of adulthood. In 2013, 61% of eighth-grade students in Warwick were proficient in math, compared to the state rate of 57%.
- *Graduation Rate:* In 2013, 77% of Warwick high school students graduated from high school, which is lower than the state rate of 80%.

Nutrition Assistance for Improved Outcomes

Research shows that hunger and lack of regular access to sufficient food are linked to serious health, psychological, emotional and academic problems in children and can impede their healthy growth and development. WIC, SNAP and the School Breakfast Program all improve access to nutritious meals and can help support improved health, academic performance, and behavioral and social success.

- *WIC:* 54% of eligible low-income Warwick children participated in WIC in 2013, compared to 62% in 2012.
- *SNAP:* In 2013, 2,742 eligible low-income Warwick children participated in SNAP. This is a 69% increase from 2008, when the recession began.
- *School Breakfast:* During the 2013-2014 school year, 18% of eligible low-income children participated in the School Breakfast Program. This has grown over the past five years. Offering Universal School Breakfast, which provides free breakfast to all students regardless of income, could further increase the participation rate.

Infant Outcomes

Warwick ranks better than the state as a whole in three categories of infant health.

- *Delayed Prenatal Care:* Women receiving late or no prenatal care are at increased risk of poor birth outcomes. In Warwick, 11.5% of pregnant women received delayed prenatal care between 2008-2012, compared to 13.7% of Rhode Island women as a whole.
- *Low Birthweight:* An infant’s birthweight is a key indicator of newborn health, and low birthweight infants are at greater risk for physical and developmental problems than infants of normal weight. At 7.2%, the percentage of infants born low birthweight in Warwick is below Rhode Island’s 7.8%.
- *Preterm Births:* At 9.9%, Warwick’s rate of preterm births is lower than the state rate of 10.9%.