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**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**

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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Presents:  
*West Warwick Data in Your Backyard***

***West Warwick's child population declined 13%  
between 2000 and 2010***

***West Warwick sees improvement in the four year graduation rate;  
75% of students in West Warwick's class of 2011 graduated in four  
years, up from 65% of students in the class of 2010.***

***Child abuse and neglect rate high in West Warwick;  
29.8 victims of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children in West  
Warwick, compared to 14.0 per 1,000 children statewide.***

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**West Warwick, RI (December 10, 2012)** – Community leaders and policy makers learned about the well-being of children and families in West Warwick today. John Neubauer, Policy Analyst for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, presented data from the *2012 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook*. The *Data in Your Backyard* presentation, which was brought to the community in partnership with Thundermist Health Center and took place their West Warwick facility, included highlights of improvements and declines in the well-being of children and youth in the city. After the presentation, community members discussed opportunities to improve outcomes for the city's children.

**Fewer children living in West Warwick, population more diverse**

According to the 2010 decennial Census, there are fewer children living in West Warwick now than there were a decade ago. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of children living in the city decreased by 13%, from 6,632 to 5,746. West Warwick's child population also has become more racially and ethnically diverse, with increasing percentages of Hispanic and Black children. In 2000, 87% of West Warwick's children were White, non-Hispanic and by 2010, this percentage was 79%. Hispanic children made up 6% of West Warwick's child population in 2000 and 10% in 2010. In 2000, 1% of West Warwick's children were Black and in 2010, this percentage was 2.5%.

## **Children living in poverty in West Warwick**

The U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 decennial Census did not collect data on income as it has in previous years, so the most recent and reliable childhood poverty data available for cities and towns in Rhode Island is from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is an annual survey of a sample of the population (not a true count as in the decennial Census), which provides an estimate of the percentage of children in poverty. According to the ACS, between 2006 and 2010, an estimated 16.5% of children in West Warwick lived in poverty. West Warwick's child poverty rate is higher than neighboring East Greenwich (4.5%), Cranston (8.5%), Coventry (9.4%), and Warwick (8.1%), but is below the statewide childhood poverty rate (16.7%) and the aggregate rate for the core cities (33.7%). The four core cities (Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket) have the highest child poverty rates, all of which are above 25%.

## **Improved high School graduation rate**

West Warwick has seen an increase in the percentage of students who graduate from high school in four years. Seventy-five percent of students in West Warwick's class of 2011 graduated in four years, up from 65% of students in the class of 2010. West Warwick's dropout rate decreased from 18% to 12% during the same period. In 2011, the state as a whole had a four-year graduation rate of 77% and a dropout rate of 12%.

High school graduation is the minimum requisite for college and most employment. In Rhode Island, adults without high school diplomas are more than three times as likely to be unemployed as those who have bachelor's degrees.

"West Warwick has made progress in improving graduation rates. It can continue to improve its graduation rate by identifying students at-risk for dropping out and providing individualized supports to keep them on the path to graduation, creating eighth to ninth grade transition programs, and supporting personalized learning," said John Neubauer, Policy Analyst for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

## **Child abuse and neglect on the rise**

An area of concern facing the community of West Warwick is the increasing rate of child abuse and neglect. The number of victims of child abuse and neglect in 2011 (171) is 68% higher than the number of victims in 2008 (102). West Warwick's rate of child abuse and neglect is the second highest in the state. The immediate effects of child abuse and neglect can include isolation, fear, inability to trust, injury, and even death. Long-term effects include juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, mental health problems, teen pregnancy, and low academic achievement.

“It is important that we continue to focus on preventing child abuse and neglect in all of our state’s cities and towns,” noted Burke Bryant. “Increasing access to income supports, health care for parents and children, and enrollment in high-quality early learning programs and out-of-school time programs can help stabilize at-risk families and keep children safe.”

Research also shows that child abuse and neglect can be prevented when vulnerable families with infants and toddlers participate in evidence-based home visiting programs. Added Bryant, “Effective home visiting programs help parents develop the skills to nurture and support their children’s development and improve the health of both the parent and the child.”

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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.*