



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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21st annual National KIDS COUNT Data Book on the status of children in the United States released.

Rhode Island ranks among the top 10 best in the country for 3 of the 10 indicators tracked in the Data Book: child death rate, teen death rate and teen birth rate.

Rhode Island ranks 17th best among the states for overall child well-being.

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PROVIDENCE, RI, July 27, 2010 – The 21<sup>st</sup> annual *National KIDS COUNT Data Book*, a state-by-state report on children’s well-being issued by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, shows that Rhode Island ranks 17<sup>th</sup> in the nation 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 15<sup>th</sup> overall. 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 related to family economic security, child and teen development, health and education.

### **Progress on Child Well-Being Presents a Mixed Picture**

“The data in this year’s *KIDS COUNT Data Book* show improvements in child well-being in several areas,” stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “As a state and as a nation we are making important progress as evidenced by declines in the rates of child deaths and teen deaths, lower rates of births to teens, and fewer teens ages 16 to 19 who are not in school and not high school graduates.” The 21<sup>st</sup> annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* indicators show five areas of improvement as a nation: infant mortality, child deaths, teen deaths, teen births, and teens not in school who are high school dropouts. Bryant continued, “In other areas, the national data present a less optimistic picture. Nationally, we are seeing increases in the percentage of babies born low birthweight, children living in poverty and children living in single-parent families.”

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

Rhode Island ranks 17<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states for overall child well-being based on an index compiled from the most recent data on 10 KIDS COUNT indicators. In Rhode Island, 5 of the 10 indicators of child well-being tracked in the *National KIDS COUNT Data Book* have improved between 2000 and 2008, 3 have worsened and 2 areas could not be compared with previous years due to methodology changes.

Bryant remarked, "Rhode Island should be proud of our top 10 ranking (where first is best) for several key indicators of child well-being, including child deaths, teen deaths and births to teens. Yet, there is work to do if we want all Rhode Island children to have the opportunities they need to be healthy and ready for success in school, life and careers. We are seeing increasing rates of infants born with low birthweight and infant deaths in the first year of life. Both of these indicators are associated with maternal health, quality of and access to health care, and the socio-economic conditions in a community."

### **Key Findings for Rhode Island Include:**

*Rhode Island ranks among the top 10 best on 3 indicators of child well-being:*

- Rhode Island had the lowest child death rate in the U.S. at nine deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 14, a 47% decline since 2000.
- Rhode Island had the second lowest teen death rate in the U.S. (39 deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15 to 19), a 25% improvement since 2000, but a slight increase since 2006 (34 deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15 to 19).
- The rate of births to teens ages 15 to 19 has improved by 12% since 2000. Rhode Island ranks 10<sup>th</sup> best in the country at 30 births per 1,000 teen girls ages 15 to 19, compared to a national rate of 43 births per 1,000 teen girls in that age group.

*Other improvements in the well-being of Rhode Island's infants and children:*

- The percentage of teens not in school and without a high school diploma fell by 40% between 2000 and 2008. In 2008, Rhode Island ranked 15<sup>th</sup> nationally for this measure, with 6% of teens not in school and not high school graduates.
- Since 2000, Rhode Island has seen a 6% decrease in the percentage of children living in poverty. At 15% in 2008, child poverty in Rhode Island was below the national rate of 18%. The poverty threshold for a family of two adults and two children was \$21,834 in 2008.

*Worsening of Rhode Island child well-being in three areas since 2000:*

- Since 2000, there has been an 11% increase in the percentage of infants born low birthweight in Rhode Island. In 2007, 8% of babies in Rhode Island were born low birthweight. This compares to a U.S. rate of 8.2%.
- 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 6.7 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.
- Since 2000, the percentage of children living in single-parent families in Rhode Island has risen by 6% to 34% in 2008. Rhode Island ranked 36<sup>th</sup> on this measure in 2008. This compares to a U.S. rate of 32%.

*Comparisons cannot be made for 2 of the 10 indicators of child well-being due to changes in methodology used by the U.S. Census Bureau:*

- In Rhode Island, 30% of children were living in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment, higher than the U.S. rate of 27%.
- Of all teens ages 16 to 19 in Rhode Island, 7% were not in school and not working, lower than the U.S. rate of 8%.

Bryant stated, "The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation is a reminder to policymakers and the public that 'what gets measured gets done.' While results always matter, making wise investments in children is even more important during times of economic crisis when families and communities are struggling and when the consequences for children can be dire."

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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 children and youth. The organization 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.