

**WORKBOOK B:**

**CONDUCTING  
SECONDARY RESEARCH**

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## OVERVIEW OF SECONDARY RESEARCH

Sometimes secondary research is referred to as community assessment, needs assessment, or situation analysis, but we use the term to mean: (1) collecting hard data that already exists about a community or communities targeted for your study; and (2) taking an initial look at communities' experiences with OST programs. There are two goals:

- ▶ Narrowing the focus of your research.
- ▶ Generating a list of questions you will need to answer in order to move forward with your OST planning.

### What Communities Have Learned

**Secondary research changes the discussion.** “Centralized data collection and analysis eliminated arguments over what the facts were. Once risk factors were identified and all the data were geographically mapped in a clear and readable format, inequities and gaps in service delivery became obvious. Some neighborhoods had high concentrations of City-funded programs, while others actually had nothing. The data mapping helped convince everyone - providers, funders, advocates and elected officials - that resources should be distributed more equitably and more programs should target the high-need communities.”

*-- Ester Fuchs, Ph.D., Office of the Mayor, New York City. Conducted secondary research and utilization research of OST programs operating in New York City. This research project was designed to inventory existing OST programs and enrollment measures in order to direct resources to underserved and high-need areas.*

### Steps Involved in Secondary Research

#### 1. Identifying sources of information

(U.S. Census Dept., area schools, library, Internet, magazines, etc.)



#### 2. Gathering existing data

(Can include public use data; published information; organizational databases.)



#### 3. Normalizing data if needed

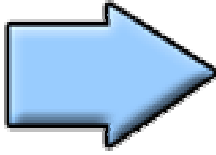
(Making data from different sources comparable if necessary and feasible.)



#### 4. Analyzing data

(Demographic and utilization analyses provided as examples in this manual.)

## POINTER



There are few steps involved in conducting secondary research, as the information already exists—your job is to find it and make sense of it.

Secondary research can be time-consuming, but it will yield accurate information about your community. You may be able to find data on *actual* OST program attendance, for example, as opposed to *self-reported* attendance, which you would get if you were to ask students about their attendance in a survey. This research method is especially effective at **the onset of OST planning**; for example, as a means of gathering factual information about your community to help you narrow the scope of your research. Secondary research can be used alone, or in conjunction with other research methods (such as focus groups or telephone surveys).

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Secondary Research

#### Advantages

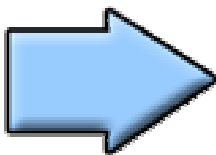
1. **Speed:** Secondary research can often be carried out quickly by accessing statistical information that has already been published online.
2. **Cost:** Most information can be obtained at no or low cost.
3. **Ease:** Data can generally be obtained by persons with a limited research background or technical expertise.
4. **Value:** The information can be used to inform or add value to other research methods, such as telephone surveys or focus groups.

#### Disadvantages

1. **General vs. Customized:** The data that will be obtained through this method will only provide an indirect measure of concerns that may exist in the community, and cannot be customized to a community's unique needs.
2. **Compatibility:** Communities must exercise great caution when accessing information from multiple data sources to ensure that they are measuring the same things.
3. **Availability of Current Data:** How up to date available data is can be a factor if the variables you are looking at are changing rapidly; for example, if there have been recent dramatic changes in a geographic area you are targeting, Census data collected several years ago may not be reliable.

There are no limits to the ways you can use secondary research. If a trustworthy source has collected data that is relevant to your community's research objectives, use it.

## POINTER



Many communities can benefit from a **demographic analysis** of area residents: this will help you understand the characteristics of the parents and students in your community, including such factors as age, racial and ethnic groups, languages spoken at home, income, household size, and more.

## Deciding Whether or Not to Outsource Secondary Research

- ▶ **When to outsource secondary research:** You may want to outsource secondary research if it is one component of a much larger needs assessment study that you are outsourcing. It is useful to have one vendor conduct all components of a multi-phase research project, as each phase will inform the other phases of the project.
- ▶ **When to conduct secondary research using internal resources:** Secondary research is a good research methodology to conduct with internal resources, as the information is often easy to obtain and does not require a tremendous investment of time or money.

In the next sections, we will present more detailed information regarding outsourcing secondary research and conducting secondary research using internal resources. For communities conducting secondary research using internal resources, we will present information about each step in the process.

## OUTSOURCING SECONDARY RESEARCH: A Guide to Hiring Vendors

<b>Who to hire:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Type of vendor used may vary</li> <li>▶ Full-service marketing research firm</li> <li>▶ Freelance research analyst</li> <li>▶ <i>Low- or no-cost alternatives:</i> Area colleges or universities may be able to put you in touch with students looking for internships, or who could conduct secondary research for your organization for course credit</li> </ul>
<b>What to look for:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ No special credentials</li> <li>▶ Beneficial if vendor is conducting other phases of your research in addition to secondary research</li> <li>▶ Experience conducting secondary research a plus</li> <li>▶ Knowledge of the OST industry a plus</li> </ul>
<b>Where to find vendors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Internet searches for <i>market research, secondary research firms, etc.</i></li> <li>▶ <b>Quirk's Marketing Research Review</b> (<a href="http://www.quirks.com">www.quirks.com</a>), <b>Researcher SourceBook™</b> Look for vendors offering the following types of research services: <i>secondary / desktop research, census data, demographic analysis, consultation, exploratory research</i></li> <li>▶ <b>The Blue Book Research Services Directory</b> (<a href="http://www.bluebook.org">www.bluebook.org</a>)</li> <li>▶ Ask trusted associates for recommendations</li> <li>▶ Area colleges and universities</li> </ul>
<b>What they will do:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Discuss your research objectives with you in detail</li> <li>▶ Obtain relevant data from credible sources</li> <li>▶ <i>Upon request:</i> prepare a written report of the findings</li> <li>▶ <i>Upon request:</i> provide you with copies of all data and reports obtained</li> </ul>
<b>What you will do:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide vendor with a clear understanding of your research objectives</li> <li>▶ Provide vendor with any existing data your organization has generated or obtained through other sources</li> </ul>
<b>What you should expect to pay:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Will vary widely, from about \$2,500 to \$10,000, depending on vendor and scope of project</li> <li>▶ Free, if using interns or graduate students</li> </ul>

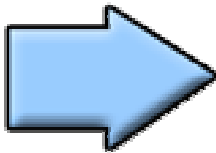
## CONDUCTING SECONDARY RESEARCH USING INTERNAL RESOURCES: 1. Identifying Sources of Information

The following sections will discuss each step involved in conducting secondary research in turn. They are:

- ▶ Identifying sources of information.
- ▶ Gathering existing data.
- ▶ Normalizing data.
- ▶ Analyzing the data.

With secondary research, communities obtain data about the local population that have been published by private organizations, or by local, state or federal government agencies.

### POINTER



Today's technology makes it easier than ever to access information about a community, due to the wide range of information that is available online for free download.

The specific **sources of information** you identify will, of course, vary widely depending on your specific research objectives. The chart on the following page provides some general guidelines to assist you.

## GUIDELINES FOR GATHERING SECONDARY DATA

### SOURCES AND STRATEGIES

Discuss your research with the reference librarian at your local library (preferably a college or university library); he or she will probably know of some good resources and be happy to help you locate what you are looking for.

- ▶ Ask colleagues and trusted associates whether they know of any resources.
- ▶ Brainstorm: what are the five most obvious information sources you haven't thought of?
- ▶ Government (U.S. Population and Economic Censuses, agency data bases).
- ▶ Published data repositories (Mass Kids Count, U.S. Statistical Abstract, local library).
- ▶ Published articles in trade journals, academic research reports, media articles/stories.
- ▶ Trade or industry associations (e.g., Encyclopedia of Associations).
- ▶ Industry experts (academic researchers, associations).
- ▶ If the data isn't in the exact form you want, ask if you can get it differently.

### FOLLOW LEADS, AND LOOK NEAR LEADS

- ▶ If you are in the library, check five books to the left and right of the one you've found.
- ▶ If you are in a data set, look around for other information that might be useful.
- ▶ If you're searching online for articles, use many keyword variations.
- ▶ Check footnotes, references, links to other possible sources.
- ▶ Keep a research notebook to record the places you have already looked for information, and the leads you have left to follow.

### THREE STRIKES AND YOU'RE OUT

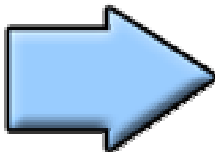
- ▶ If you've spent 15 minutes looking for something online and can't find it, it doesn't exist.
- ▶ Your most productive time in the library is likely to be the first hour you are there.
- ▶ If you begin to feel that you're getting nowhere, stop! Return in a day or two with a specific idea of the information you are looking for, and three places to look for it.
- ▶ The National Enquirer Rule: If you think the information is bogus, it is bogus.



The organizations below are good places to begin looking for **information about demography and children’s health and education issues.**

<b>GOOD SOURCES OF INFORMATION</b>	<b>The U.S. Census Bureau</b> ( <a href="http://www.census.gov">www.census.gov</a> ). The Census Bureau is a major source of information about the nation’s people and economy. Reports include <i>Statistical Abstract of the United States</i> , <i>State and Metropolitan Area Data Book</i> , <i>USA Counties</i> , <i>County and City Data Book</i> , <i>State and County QuickFacts</i> , and <i>MapStats</i> .
	<b>FedStats</b> ( <a href="http://www.fedstats.gov">www.fedstats.gov</a> ) is an online source for statistics for over 100 U.S. Federal agencies.
	<b>FirstGov</b> ( <a href="http://www.firstgov.gov">www.firstgov.gov</a> ) provides numerous links to statistics at the state and local levels.
	<b>CensusScope</b> ( <a href="http://www.censusscope.org">www.censusscope.org</a> ), developed by associates of the Social Science Data Analysis Network (SSDAN) at the University of Michigan, is a tool that displays U.S. Census data in maps and charts, and provides projection data. Users can displays results at the state, county, or metropolitan area level.
	<b>American Fact Finder</b> ( <a href="http://www.factfinder.census.gov">www.factfinder.census.gov</a> ) provides reports on the demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics of residents to the zip code level.
	The <b>National Center for Education Statistics</b> ( <a href="http://www.nces.ed.gov">www.nces.ed.gov</a> ), which collects, analyzes and publishes statistics on education and public school district finance information in the U.S.
	The Department of Health and Human Service’s <b>Administration for Children and Families</b> ( <a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov">www.acf.hhs.gov</a> ), which collects information to evaluate its children and youth programs, such as Head Start, and other child care and support programs.
The <b>Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics</b> ( <a href="http://www.childstats.gov">www.childstats.gov</a> ), which provides reports on such topics as population and family characteristics, economic security, health, behavior and social environment, and education.	

**POINTER**

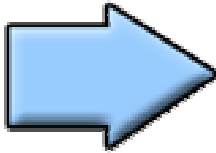


You also have the option of purchasing reports from information resources companies such as Claritas ([www.claritas.com](http://www.claritas.com)) or ESRI ([www.esri.com](http://www.esri.com)). These companies compile census information and employ segmentation systems that organize the population into distinct groups based on consumer patterns, demographic characteristics, population density and other factors; and use post-census small area data to make population projections between decennial census counts. Reports like these can be a valuable tool in helping you learn more about what your neighborhood looks like now, and how it may change in the future.

## 2. Gathering Existing Data

You will probably be gathering data at the same time that you are identifying sources; a new lead will bring you to a publication that will have relevant information. Implement a **system for keeping track of the data** you are collecting—use any system that works for you, whether your data is stored on a computer, or exists in hard copy and is sorted into stacks. Such systems are particularly useful if data are being gathered by multiple researchers. In this case, you may also want a system for communicating with the other researchers on the project about what information has been collected, and what remains to be found.

### POINTER



If you are using the **Internet** as a source of information, make sure to **verify the credibility** of the page (anyone can put up a web site; not all information online is dependable), and print or save a copy of the page (not just the hyperlink) for your reference (sites can change frequently; you may be unable to access the information later).

Use the questions below to guide you through the process of collecting information. It is important to return to these questions periodically, as it is all too easy in secondary research to drift astray from your original objectives.

### Questions to Guide Secondary Research

To prevent yourself from becoming mired in interesting but ultimately irrelevant data, take a few minutes at the end of each research collection session to ask yourself:

- ▶ What are my **research goals**? What questions am I hoping to answer?
- ▶ Which research **questions have I answered** with the data I have collected?
- ▶ Which research **questions are still outstanding**?
- ▶ What **new questions** have been raised by the data I have found?
- ▶ **How will I be using this information** once it is collected? Should I look for data in another form or format for my purposes?
- ▶ **How accurate is the information** I have collected? Can I find an answer to this question from a more credible source?
- ▶ **How up-to-date is the information** I have collected? Can I find more current information from another source?

## What Communities Have Learned

**Are you finding the right data for your community?** “The Bloomberg Administration’s governing philosophy is focused on using research and data to guide our funding and policy decisions. The OST planning process elevated this strategy to a new level of prominence. DYCD used educational and demographic data to ensure that we are supporting programs in communities that demonstrated the highest need. As a City agency, DYCD strikes a balance when allocating limited public resources. While we aim to provide engaging activities for all youth, the data and research tell us that certain communities have greater needs. As a result, we continually seek to reach the City’s most vulnerable youth, where the funding will have the strongest impact.”

*--Jeanne B. Mullgrav, Commissioner, Department of Youth and Community Development, New York City. Conducted secondary research and utilization research of OST programs operating in New York City. This research project was designed to inventory existing OST programs and enrollment measures in order to direct resources to underserved and high-need areas.*

### 3. Normalizing Data

You may need to “normalize” numeric data you’ve collected in the course of your secondary research—that is, **change it to conform or be consistent with other numeric data you have collected.**

**Data before normalizing:** Consider the example provided below. Data have been collected for area household income from three sources: the US Census Bureau, a telephone survey of area residents, and a published article. The US Census Bureau provides a number and percentage for total households, and breaks the data out by ten income categories. The survey data (which is representative of the total population) provides percentages, and breaks the data out by only six income categories. The published article provides projected population numbers, but no percentages, for the same population, using the same ten categories as the US Census Bureau.

	1999 Census data		2000 Survey data	2007 Published article
	Number	Percent	Percent	Number
<b>Total households</b>	11,863	100.0%		13,356
Less than \$10,000	1,246	10.5%	“Under \$25,000” is first category on survey (25.8%)	1,156
\$10,000 to \$14,999	816	6.9%		805
\$15,000 to \$24,999	1,287	10.8%		1,292
\$25,000 to \$34,999	1,526	12.9%	13.2%	1,523
\$35,000 to \$49,999	2,000	16.9%	17.1%	2,123
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2,517	21.2%	21.8%	2,519
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,076	9.1%	10.1%	1,456
\$100,000 to \$149,999	910	7.7%	“100,000 or more” is final category on survey (12.0%)	1,368
\$150,000 to \$199,999	223	1.9%		678
\$200,000 or more	262	2.2%		436

**Data after normalizing:** These data have been normalized so that all the findings are in percentages, using a consistent six-category income scale. To do this, the 2007 projections were first converted from population numbers to percentages (i.e., dividing the number in each category by the total number of households). Next, the first and final three categories of both the census data and the data from the published article were collapsed so that the data would use a consistent scale across years (another option would have been to leave the data broken out, but to highlight the combined groupings in the 2000 survey as above). The final result is a consistent, normalized set of data from three sources.

	1999	2000	2007
Less than \$25,000	28.2%	25.8%	24.4%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	12.9%	13.2%	11.4%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	16.9%	17.1%	15.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	21.2%	21.8%	18.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	9.1%	10.1%	10.9%
\$100,000 or more	11.8%	12.0%	18.6%

## 4. Analyzing Data

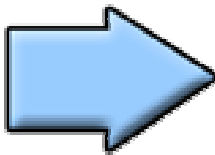
The final step in secondary research is to analyze the information you have obtained. Your analysis need not be complex or complicated; your goal is simply to **use the data you have collected to answer your original research questions**. In some cases, the answers may be obvious to you. In other cases, you may need to spend some time with your data for its meaning to make itself clear to you.

The way you analyze the data will be largely dependent on the nature of the data you have obtained. For example, if you have collected a lot of existing numerical data, you may want to run additional statistical analyses of your own. It is helpful to decide upon an **analysis strategy** to help you make sense of the data.

### Suggested Analysis Strategies

- ▶ Think about how you would present what you have learned to someone else—you may find that the best way to learn what you know is to explain it to others. To this end, you could take detailed notes on all of the data, figure out what “the big picture” is, and then write a summary of the situation, using key findings from your research to back up your major points.
- ▶ You could list each of your research questions and answer it, citing the research you have obtained.
- ▶ You could write a detailed report about what you have learned, and include graphics and tables to illustrate complex or numeric information.

### POINTER



Your analysis strategy should be geared toward producing actionable findings. You want to use the findings to move your project forward, which could include using the findings to inform further research. Ask yourself, where are the information gaps? What new questions have been raised? Where are the gaps in services?

## Demographic Analysis

One strategy for beginning an OST planning process is to conduct a **demographic analysis** with the objective of **understanding the characteristics** of families and children in the community and **identifying target populations** for services.

- ▶ This type of analysis can help communities understand, for example:
  - ▶ The number of children enrolled in local elementary, middle and high schools
  - ▶ The income levels of area families
  - ▶ The ethnic groups that are represented in the community
  - ▶ Other characteristics
  
- ▶ Communities can use demographic information to **identify trends and make projections about future OST needs** as well. Knowing that the community may have a large number of Hispanic children in middle-school in the future, for example, is valuable information that will help communities plan to meet the OST needs of these students.

On the following pages, you will find an excerpt from a **demographic analysis conducted by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT** and included in their publication, the *2005 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*.<sup>1</sup> In the analysis included here, information is provided for the race, ethnicity, family structure, and income of Rhode Island's children.

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<sup>1</sup> *2005 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, Providence, RI. © Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

## DEFINITION

*Child population* is the total number of children under age 18 and the percentage change between 1990 and 2000 in the total number of children under age 18.

## SIGNIFICANCE

In 2000, the number of family households with children under age 18 in Rhode Island was 124,867, representing almost a third (31%) of all Rhode Island households. According to Census 2000, there were 1,048,319 Rhode Island residents. Of these, 24% or 247,822 were children under age 18.<sup>1</sup>

The number of U.S. children recorded by Census 2000 was the largest in history at 72.3 million.<sup>2</sup> This represents a substantial increase in the child population over the decade of the 1990s. By 2002, the number of children in the United States had risen further to 72.9 million, but represented 25% percent of the population, down from a peak of 36% at the end of the baby boom.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, the child population of Rhode Island has fallen slightly in recent years. In 2003, the population of children under 18 years of age was 244,049 and represented 23% of the state's total population.<sup>4,5</sup>

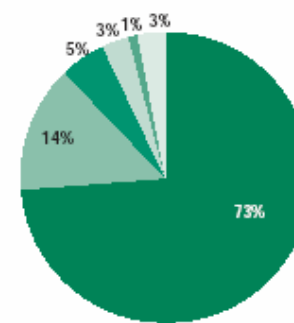
Children in Rhode Island at the start of the 21st century are older and more

ethnically diverse than those children living in the state in the previous decade. The largest increase in any age category between 1990 and 2000 was in the number of children in early adolescence (ages 10 to 14). The number of Rhode Island children between the ages of 10 and 14 increased by 20% during the decade, from 59,406 to 71,370.<sup>6,7</sup> In 2003, the number of adolescents had risen to 73,644, up 3% from the 2000 population.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the number of children under age 5 living in Rhode Island dropped from 66,969 in 1990 to 63,896 in 2000.<sup>9,10</sup> In 2003, 61,511 children under the age of 5 lived in Rhode Island, a 4% decrease from the 2000 population.<sup>11</sup>

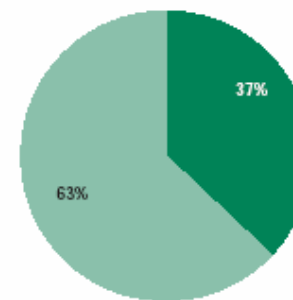
Rhode Island's children are diverse in race, ethnic background, language and country of origin. Children under age 18 are significantly more diverse in racial and ethnic backgrounds than the adult population. Nationally and in Rhode Island, the increase in the child population was led by minority children.<sup>12</sup> In Rhode Island, the number of White, non-Hispanic children declined over the 1990s by nearly 9,000 children. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of minority children increased by 31,000 to nearly 68,000.<sup>13</sup>

## Rhode Island's Children, 2000

### By Race/Ethnicity

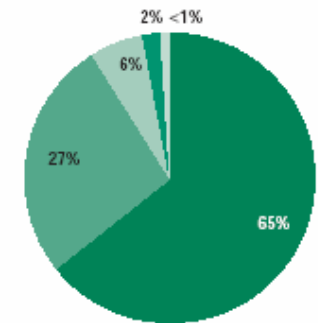
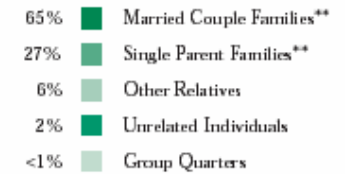


### By Residence



*n* = 247,822

### By Family Structure



*\*Hispanics are not included in any other racial group. Two or more races was not possible as a selection in the 1990 census.*

*\*\*Includes only children who are related to the head of household by birth or adoption.*

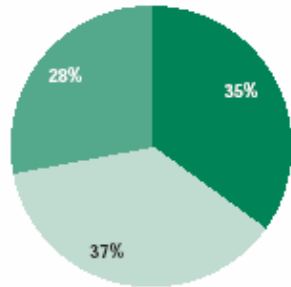
*\*\*\*According to Census 2000, there are now six core cities in Rhode Island, i.e., communities in which 15% or more of the children live in families with income below the federal poverty threshold. There are 91,945 children who live in one of the six core cities: Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 1.

## Rhode Island's Poor Children, 2000

### By Age

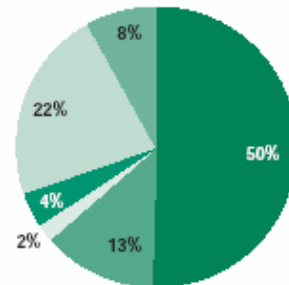
35%	Ages 5 and younger
37%	Ages 6 to 11
28%	Ages 12 to 17



n = 41,162

### By Race\*

50%	White
13%	Black
2%	American Indian
4%	Asian
22%	Some Other Race
8%	Two or More Races

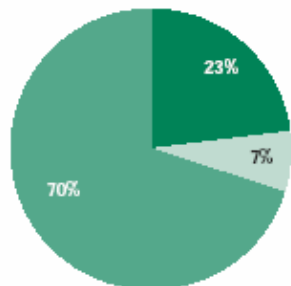


n = 41,162

\*Hispanic children may be included in any race category. Of Rhode Island's 41,162 poor children, 16,013 (39%) are Hispanic.

### By Family Structure\*\*

23%	Married Couple Family
7%	Male Householder Only
70%	Female Householder Only

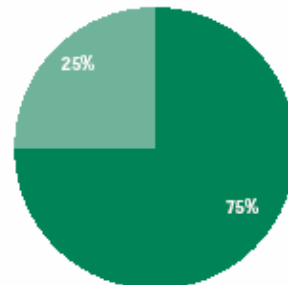


n = 40,117

\*\* Only includes related children living in households.

### By Residence

75%	Core Cities
25%	Remainder of State



n = 41,162

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 3. Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

## Children Living in Extreme Poverty

◆ Families with income below 50% of the federal threshold are considered to be living in extreme poverty.<sup>14</sup> The extreme poverty threshold in 2004 was family income below \$7,610 for a family of three with two children and \$9,579 for a family of four with two children.<sup>15</sup>

◆ In 2000, of the 41,162 children living below the poverty threshold in Rhode Island, nearly half (48%) lived in extreme poverty. In total, 8% (19,773) of all children in Rhode Island lived in extreme poverty.<sup>16</sup>

◆ Children who live in deep, long-term poverty experience poor health outcomes, such as child asthma and malnutrition, as a result of their family's income status.<sup>17</sup>

## Young Children Under Age 6 in Poverty in Rhode Island

◆ Research shows that increased exposure to risk factors associated with poverty obstruct children's emotional and intellectual development. Risk factors associated with poverty include: inadequate nutrition, environmental toxins, maternal depression, trauma and abuse, lower quality child care and parental substance abuse.<sup>18</sup>

◆ In 2000, 19% (14,548) of Rhode Island children under 6 were living below the poverty threshold, compared to 18% nationally.<sup>19</sup> Of these children, 7,230 (10%) were extremely poor.<sup>20</sup>

◆ In Newport (22.6%), Providence (22.5%), Central Falls (20.6%) and Woonsocket (19.9%), one in five children under age 6 lived in extreme poverty.<sup>21</sup>

◆ As of December 1, 2004 there were 5,468 children under age 3 and 4,470 children ages 3 to 5 in families receiving cash assistance from the Family Independence Program. Of all children under 18 in the Family Independence Program, 47% are age 6 or under.<sup>22</sup>