

Rhode Island



America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness

Rhode Island ranks 4th in the nation in child homelessness. This rank is a composite of the number of children currently homeless in the state, an assessment of how children are faring in various domains (i.e., food security, health, education), the risk of children becoming homeless, and the state planning and policy efforts.

* RHODE ISLAND'S RANKS	
	RANK
Extent of child homelessness	1
Child well-being	7
Risk for child homelessness	25
State policy and planning	Moderate
Overall rank	4

*States ranked 1–50 with 1 being best and 50 worst.

Extent of Child Homelessness

More than 797 of Rhode Island's children experience homelessness each year according to the data collected by the McKinney-Vento Educational Programs.¹ Rhode Island ranks 1st in the number of homeless children and 1st in the percentage of children who are homeless.¹ Of the 37,000 children living in poverty in Rhode Island, two out of every one hundred (2%) are homeless.²

Age and Race/Ethnicity

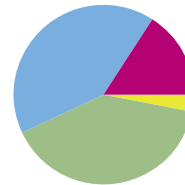
Rhode Island has 37,000 children living in poverty. Forty-one percent of Rhode Island's children living in families with incomes below the poverty level are White, non-Hispanic, 40% are Hispanic, and 16% are Black, non-Hispanic.⁵

Ages of Homeless Children¹

Under 6 years ³	335
Grades K–8 (enrolled)	372
Grades 9–12* (enrolled)	90
Total Homeless Children	797

Race/Ethnicity

*Among children living in poverty. Not available for homeless children.



- White (41%)
- Black (16%)
- Asian (3%)
- Native American (0%)
- Hispanic (40%)

*These totals DO NOT include approximately 85 homeless unaccompanied youth.⁴

Housing and Income

Housing is a basic right and essential for the healthy growth and development of children. However, in every state, housing costs outpace wages and public assistance for low-income citizens.

- A two-bedroom unit priced at the Fair Market Rent (FMR) falls outside of the financial reach of a full-time worker earning minimum wage in Rhode Island.⁶ One wage earner earning the state's minimum wage (\$7.40) would need to work 107 hours per week for 52 weeks per year to afford a two-bedroom apartment at FMR.⁷
- Even with two full-time minimum-wage earners, affordable housing is not attainable in most places in Rhode Island.
- The average-wage earner in Rhode Island fares only slightly better. One wage earner earning the state's average wage for renters (\$11.61/hour) would need to work 68 hours per week for 52 weeks per year to afford a two-bedroom apartment at FMR.⁷

For a typical homeless family, which consists of a single mother with two children, housing is even more difficult to attain:

- The average monthly income for a single mother in Rhode Island who receives public assistance is less than \$757, or roughly 50% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).⁹
- This family can afford to pay \$227 per month in rent, leaving a deficit of \$802 from the amount needed to rent a two-bedroom apartment at the state's average FMR.

For families in this situation, even a seemingly minor event can trigger a catastrophic outcome, pushing a family onto the streets.

Rhode Island's Housing and Income Gap ⁷	
Minimum hourly wage:	\$.74 ⁸
Average hourly wage for renters:	\$11.61 ⁷
Hourly wage needed to afford 2-BR apartment:	\$19.79 ⁷
Fair Market Rent for 2-BR apartment:	\$1,029 ⁷

Tell us about your state: visit www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org to find information, share ideas, and help end child homelessness

Rhode Island



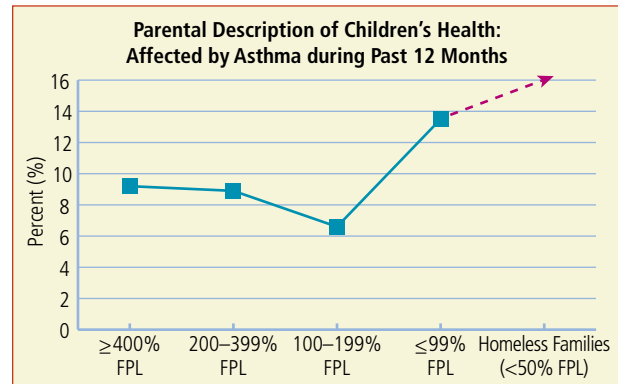
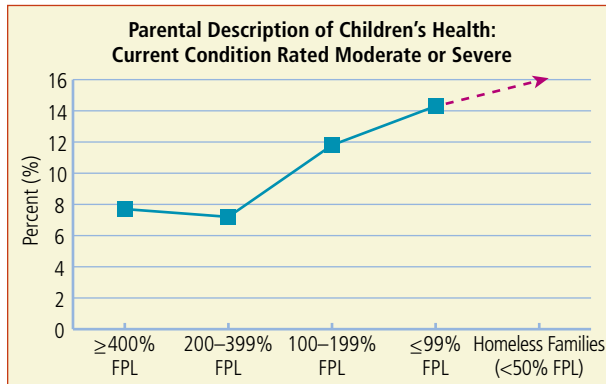
Food Security

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that one in 24 of Rhode Island's households have very low food security, indicating that they have experienced hunger.¹⁰ The prevalence of very low food security in Rhode Island is higher than the national average of one in 26. Households living in poverty and headed by a single woman with children are especially vulnerable to very low food security. When these households become homeless, they represent the extreme end of the food insecurity range in Rhode Island.¹⁰



Health

Compared to middle income families, homeless families in Rhode Island suffer proportionately more moderate to severe health problems, including asthma, traumatic stress, and emotional disturbances:

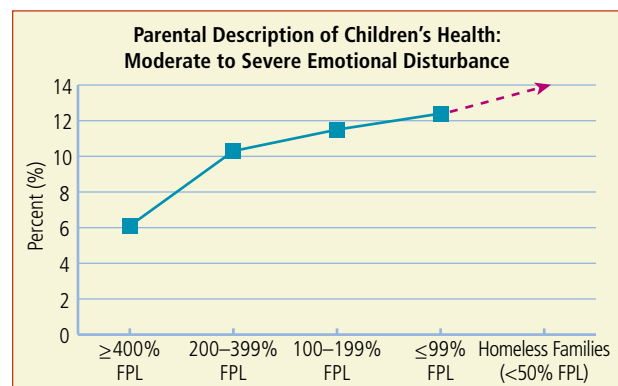
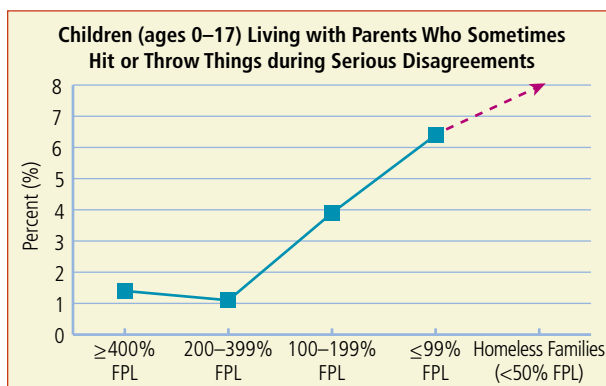


Overall Health Problems

Homeless families are more than three times as likely as middle-income families (16% vs. 7%) to report that their children have moderate or severe health problems such as asthma, dental problems, and emotional difficulties.¹¹

Asthma

Rhode Island's children without homes are more likely to have asthma than those from middle income families. While nine percent of Rhode Island's middle-income families report that their children have been affected by asthma in the past year, 16% or more of homeless families include a child who had asthma during the past 12 months.¹²



Traumatic Stress and Violence

Homeless children are seven times more likely to witness violent behavior by their parents as children in middle-income families (7% vs. 1%).¹³

Emotional Disturbances

Ten percent of children in middle-income families are described by their parents as having moderate to severe emotional disturbances. In contrast, in Rhode Island 14% of homeless children were reported as having moderate or severe difficulties with emotions, concentration, behavior, and getting along with other people as compared to children from middle-income families.¹²



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Education

The reading and math proficiency data are unavailable for homeless students. As a proxy measure, National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) data for students who are eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP, 185% of the Federal Poverty Level) are included. These scores suggest that homeless students in Rhode Island have significant deficiencies as compared to non-homeless students:

- Fourteen percent of students in grades three through eight eligible for Rhode Island’s school lunch program were proficient in reading by NAEP standards.¹⁴
- Similarly, approximately 12% of Rhode Island’s high school students eligible for the school lunch program were judged proficient in reading.¹⁴
- Eighteen percent of students eligible for the school lunch program in grades three through eight were proficient in mathematics.¹⁴
- Just ten percent of high school students eligible for the school lunch program were judged proficient in mathematics.¹⁴

Measured by the federal NAEP standards, children who are eligible for the NSLP score below all children in Rhode Island in reading and mathematics proficiency.¹⁴

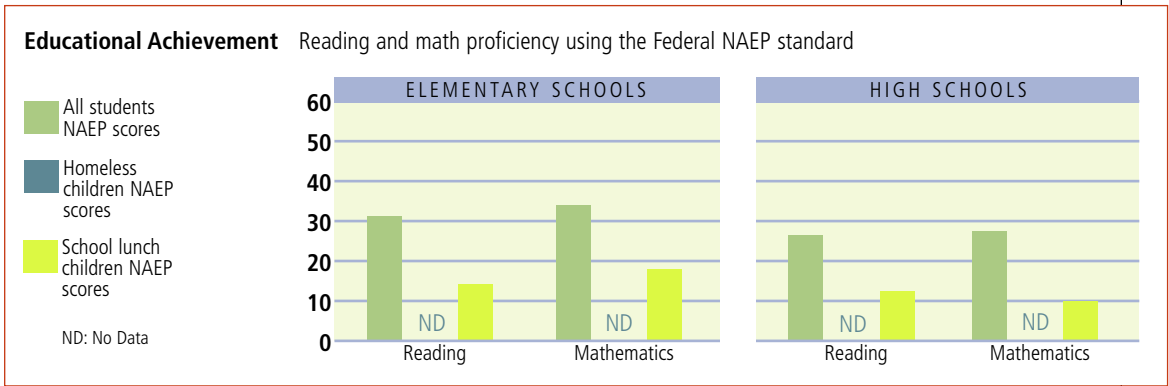
Severe economic consequences accompany the lack

of educational achievement among Rhode Island’s homeless children. Poverty strongly correlates with educational deficiencies. Homeless women with children are often not well-educated themselves and childhood homelessness has profoundly negative effects on educational opportunities. Researchers at Columbia University have found that:

One of the best documented relationships in economics is the link between education and income: more highly educated people have higher incomes. Failure to graduate from high school has both private and public consequences: income is lower, which means lower tax contributions to finance public services.¹⁴

The difference in lifetime earnings between those with a high school degree and those without is, on average, approximately \$200,000. Researchers have calculated the additional costs of education necessary to achieve higher high school graduation rates and the increases in amounts paid back to society in the form of taxes and the like. The results suggest that net lifetime increased contributions to society associated with high school graduation are about \$127,000 per student.¹⁵

If we assume on the basis of their test scores a high school graduation rate of less than 25%, then the 90 homeless high school students in Rhode Island, as a group, will lose \$14 million in lifetime earnings and society will lose \$9 million in potential contributions from them.¹⁵ Other studies have shown that they will have shorter and less healthy lives, and are very likely to pass on to their own children the diminished opportunities that accompany poverty.¹⁵



Difference in lifetime earnings: HS degree vs. without\$200,000
Net lifetime increased contributions to society with HS degree	... (per student) \$127,000
Number of homeless HS students in Rhode Island90
High school graduation rate for homeless children< 25%



RI loss in lifetime earnings **.\$14 million**
RI loss in contributions to society **.\$9 million**

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Risk Factors for Child Homelessness in Rhode Island

To determine the risk of a child becoming homeless in each state, we designed an index that takes into account various state indicators associated with family homelessness. When we consider risk factors for homelessness, we often focus on individual vulnerabilities, such as a recent pregnancy or hospitalization of a parent for a mental health or substance use problem. However, these individual factors only tell us *who* is more likely to be affected by adverse economic and housing factors. *Why* someone becomes homeless is determined by structural factors such as the lack of affordable housing and employment opportunities. As a result, we designed a risk index to focus on the structural determinants of family homelessness. This index is comprised of state-level indicators in three domains: socio-economic descriptors, housing market factors, and generosity of benefits.

To construct the index, nine factors within the three domains were ranked and then states were scored according to their quintile (1 point for the top fifth of the states and up to 5 points for the worst fifth of the states). Domain scores were then combined to create an overall score from 5 to 45 based on the total of the 1–5 rankings for the nine factors. The final step was to rank the states by their overall score. The final ranking provides a picture of which states have structural characteristics that may make them more or less vulnerable to high rates of child homelessness. A lower ranking indicates less vulnerability, while a higher ranking indicates greater vulnerability.

Rhode Island ranks 25 out of the 50 states on their vulnerability to high rates of child homelessness.



Rhode Island's Planning and Policy Efforts

STATE PLANNING

Over the past several years, federal, state and local governments have engaged in planning activities to address and end homelessness. These efforts include development of state interagency councils on homelessness and 10-year plans to end homelessness. Fourteen states have also developed initiatives to address child poverty. These efforts in Rhode Island are summarized below.

What, if any, are the state's interagency efforts on homelessness?

In 2003, Executive Order 03-17 formed the Rhode Island Interagency Council on Homelessness to reduce the number of homeless individuals and families in Rhode Island.¹⁵ In 2007, Executive Order Number 07-07 reactivated the Council to develop and implement a plan to prevent homelessness in this state. The Council consists of twelve members with at least two members from educational and designated children's agencies.¹⁶

What statewide ten-year planning efforts have taken place?

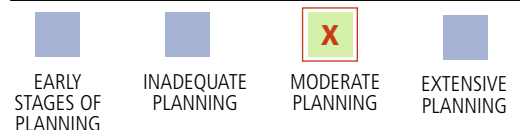
The Council developed *Building Homes, Building Hope: Ending Homelessness in Rhode Island*. Included among its goals are plans to preserve existing affordable housing, increase access to affordable housing, increase access to statewide benefits, increase employment opportunities, coordinate services provided to people experiencing homelessness, increase access to mainstream services, implement a Housing First program, increase access to permanent supportive housing, implement a Homeless Management Information System, and create a rental subsidy program.¹⁷

What efforts, if any, has the state undertaken to address childhood poverty?

In 2007, Rhode Island developed a Commission on Family Income and Asset-Building to reduce poverty in the state. Goals of this Commission include developing programs to increase income for families, promote financial literacy, and protect families from predatory financial services.¹⁸

State Planning Ranking:

We have classified Rhode Island's state planning efforts as "Moderate." For more information on the state classification process, see *America's Youngest Outcasts: A State Report on Child Homelessness* or visit www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org.



Rhode Island

STATE POLICIES



Housing

States can address the housing needs of low-income families through short and long-term strategies. One measure of a state's ability to immediately house families in need is the supply of emergency shelter, transitional and permanent supportive housing slots. Rhode Island currently has 80 units (i.e., housing or shelter for one family) of emergency shelter, 146 units of transitional housing, and 120 units of permanent supportive housing designated for families.

Section 8 vouchers and public housing are two of the primary ways for homeless families to secure affordable housing. An analysis of waiting list data from Public Housing Authority (PHA) annual plans submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development²⁰ reveals that over 80% of families on these lists have extremely low incomes and nearly all have children.²¹

- There were no data available to demonstrate how many of the people on Rhode Island's Section 8 waiting lists and Public Housing waiting lists are families with extremely low incomes.

PHAs may determine which subpopulations, if any, are given priority on their waiting lists. Giving priority to families experiencing homelessness and/or survivors of domestic violence may help to alleviate the negative impacts of homelessness on children and the strain on the shelter system.

- There were no data available to demonstrate if Public Housing Authorities in Rhode Island currently give priority to survivors of domestic violence or people experiencing homelessness on their Section 8 or public housing waiting lists.²²

Over the long-term, local and state housing trust funds are one way that states can develop their affordable housing stock. Rhode Island is one of 38 states that has a state housing trust fund.²³

What would it cost for the state to house all homeless families at Fair Market Rent?

Section 8 housing vouchers could, if generally available, fill the gap between family income and housing costs. Unfortunately, current funding for the voucher program meets the needs of only one-quarter of homeless families. Providing housing at FMR for homeless families in Rhode Island would cost an additional \$9,400 per family, an annual total cost of \$3 million dollars, or less than one tenth of one percent of the state budget.¹⁹



Income

Wages

Rhode Island's minimum wage is \$7.40/hour.⁸ This wage covers only 37% of the hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent in Rhode Island. Families receiving the maximum TANF benefit would need to spend 186% of their income on rent to afford a two-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent. Obviously, this is an impossibility.²⁴

An Earned Income Tax Credit can give families living in poverty an economic "boost" that may help reduce child poverty and increase a family's take-home earnings.²⁵ Rhode Island is one of 21 states that has a refundable State Earned Income Tax Credit.²⁶

Child Care

Child care is essential for families seeking to secure and maintain work, search for housing, attend school and job training opportunities and more. The average annual cost for child care for a four-year old in Rhode Island is \$7,800, which is higher than the national average of \$5,719.²⁷

Every state receives funding through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) to provide child care assistance to low-income families. Rhode Island families report that they used their voucher for the following reasons:²⁸

- Employment (90%)
- Training/education (8%)
- Both employment and training/education (2%)

These numbers demonstrate that child care vouchers help families engage in work and job training/education activities, a key component of a family's ability to exit homelessness.

Through the Child Care and Development Fund, states are given flexibility in determining how to prioritize the distribution of vouchers.²⁹ Rhode Island currently does not prioritize children who are homeless when distributing its child care vouchers.



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Food Security

States can help families by conducting outreach and enrollment efforts that help eligible individuals access food stamps, encourage schools to participate in school breakfast programs, and facilitate family enrollment into WIC. This chart describes how Rhode Island compares to the rest of the country:

Rhode Island lags below the national average in terms of the proportion of eligible children enrolled in food stamps, and is above the national average among schools participating in the school breakfast program.

Rhode Island Child Enrollment in Federal Nutrition Programs³⁰

	Rhode Island	National Average
Food Stamp Enrollment (among eligible children)	52%	61.9%
School Breakfast Participation (among schools providing lunch)	97.9%	84.2%

Health

Children who are uninsured are more likely than their insured peers to lack a regular source of care, to delay care, or to have an unmet medical need.³¹ Their families are more likely to incur medical debts that lead to difficulty paying other monthly expenses such as rent, food, and utilities.³² Providing children with access to health insurance is essential to helping them grow up safe, healthy, and housed.

Approximately 6.6% of children in Rhode Island are uninsured, compared to about 10% nationally. Rhode Island spends 18.1% of its total Medicaid budget on children, compared to the national average of 19.3%.³¹

Medicaid Eligibility by % of FPL:

Infants:	250%
Children ages 1–5	250%
Children ages 6–19	250%

Education

Under the educational provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act, states are required to remove barriers to the school enrollment and academic success of children experiencing homelessness.³³ The U.S. Department of Education has identified seven barriers that state McKinney-Vento subgrantees³⁴ must report on annually. This table illustrates which barriers Rhode Island subgrantees encounter.

Rhode Island receives an average of \$304 per child from the federal government to address the education needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness.³⁶ There is currently no state-level funding dedicated to the education of homeless children.

Reported Barriers to Enrollment³⁵

Type of Barrier	% of Subgrantees Rhode Island	% of Subgrantees National Average
1. Eligibility for Homeless Services	16.7	27.4
2. Immunizations	0	28.4
3. Other Medical Records	0	18.7
4. Other Barriers	50	26.7
5. School Selection	0	23.3
6. School Records	0	28.2
7. Transportation	66.7	42.3

Who is considered to be homeless in Rhode Island?

At the time of this publication, Rhode Island did not have a statewide definition of homelessness.

Rhode Island

¹ Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as Amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, *Analysis of 2005–2006 Federal Data Collection and Three-Year Comparison*, National Center for Homeless Education, June 2007. Number of children includes the estimated number of children ages 0–5 who are not yet enrolled in school.

² American Community Survey. (2006).

³ Estimate based on research that 42% of homeless children are ages 0–5. For more information, see Burt, M. et al. (1999). *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Retrieved from www.urbaninstitute.org.

⁴ This number was calculated by taking the total number of children enrolled in school and dividing that by 8.5 (given that kindergarten enrollments are typically half that of the other primary grades). Multiplying this number by 4 gives us the potential high school enrollment. Subtracting the McKinney Vento figure for homeless children enrolled in high school yields the approximate number of homeless, unaccompanied youth not enrolled in high school.

⁵ United States Census Bureau. (2007).

⁶ Fair Market Rent is defined as “the maximum chargeable gross rent in an area for projects participating in the HUD Section 8 program,” and is set at the 40th percentile of market rents for units at each bedroom size as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. American Community Survey. (2006).

⁷ National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2008). *Out of Reach 2007–2008*. Washington, D.C.: National Low Income Housing Coalition. Retrieved from www.nlihc.org/oor/oor2008/index.cfm.

⁸ Minimum wages in effect as of July 24, 2008. When federal and state law have different wage rates, the higher standard applies. United States Department of Labor. (2008). Wage and Hour Division. Retrieved from www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/america.htm

⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. (2007). Policies as of July 2005: Benefits. Retrieved from www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/welfare_employ/state_tanf/reports/wel_rules05/wel05_benefits.html [M] Calculated by multiplying 757 by 3

¹⁰ Nord, M., Andrews, M., & Carlson, S. (2006). *Household Food Security in the United States, 2005: Economic Research Report No. ERR-29*. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture.

¹¹ Estimate based on research that 42% of homeless children are ages 0–5. For more information, see Burt, M. et al. (1999). *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Retrieved from www.urbaninstitute.org; National Center for Health Statistics. (2003). National Survey of Children’s Health. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/slaits/nsch.htm

¹² National Center for Health Statistics. (2003). National Survey of Children’s Health. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/slaits/nsch.htm

¹³ Sample size too small for statistical reliability. National Center for Health Statistics. (2003). National Survey of Children’s Health. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/slaits/nsch.htm

¹⁴ Levin, H., Belfield, C., Muennig, P. and Rouse, C. (2007). *The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America’s Children*. New York, NY: Columbia University. p. 6. Retrieved from www.cbce.org/media/download_gallery/Leeds_Report_Final_Jan2007.pdf

¹⁵ Rhode Island Executive Order Number 03-17. (April 3, 2003). Establishing the Governor’s Interagency Council on Homelessness. Retrieved from www.governor.ri.gov/executiveorders/2003/EO_03-17_East_Providence_shelter.pdf

¹⁶ Rhode Island Executive Order Number 07-07. (August 15, 2007). The Governor’s Interagency Council on Homelessness. Retrieved from www.ich.gov/slocal/exec-orders/eo_rhodeisland.pdf

¹⁷ Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless. (2006). *Building Homes, Building Hope: Ending Homelessness in Rhode Island*. (2006). Retrieved from www.rihomeless.com/BUILDING%20Homes,%20BUILDING%20Hope%20%20ENDING%20Homelessness%20in%20Rhode.pdf

¹⁸ Levin-Epstein, J. & Gorzelany, K.M. (2008). *Seizing the Moment: State Governments and the New Commitment to Reduce Poverty in America*. Retrieved from www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Topics/Economic%20Security/Family%20Economic%20Supports/SeizingtheMomentStateGovernmentsandtheNewComm/Seizing%20the%20Moment.pdf

¹⁹ Personal Communication to Michael Holzman by Barbara Sard, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 27, 2008.; National Governors Association, National Association of State Budget Officers. (June 2008). The Fiscal Survey of States. Table A-2, expenditures column.

²⁰ Coddington, B. and Pelletiere, D. (2004) A Look at Waiting Lists: What Can We Learn from the HUD Approved Annual Plans? Research Note #04-03 and accompanying data. Washington, D.C.: National Low Income Housing Coalition. Retrieved from www.nlihc.org/doc/Presentation-Sheets10-1-04.xls.

²¹ Extremely Low Income refers to families who earn less than 30% of the area median.

²² Coddington, B. & Pelletiere, D. (2004). A Look at Waiting Lists: What Can We Learn from the HUD Approved Annual Plans? Research Note #04-03 and accompanying data. Washington, D.C.: National Low Income Housing Coalition. Retrieved from www.nlihc.org/doc/Presentation-Sheets10-1-04.xls.

²³ Brooks, M. (2007). *Housing Trust Fund Progress Report 2007*. Frazier Park, CA: Center for Community Change.

²⁴ Calculation based on Fair Market Rent for this state and TANF benefit for a family of three. See Methodology section for more detail.

²⁵ Nagle, A. & Johnson, N. (2006). *A Hand Up: How State Earned Income Tax Credits Help Working Families Escape Poverty in 2006*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from www.cbpp.org/3-8-06sfp.htm.

²⁶ State EITC Online Resource Center. Retrieved from www.stateeitc.org.

²⁷ Children’s Defense Fund. (2006). Children in the States 2007. Retrieved from www.childrensdefense.org.

²⁸ US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau. (2006). Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF): Report to Congress for FY 2004 and FY 2005. Retrieved from www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/ccdf/rtr/rtr2004/rtr_2004_2005.pdf.

²⁹ Child Care Bureau (2006). *Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Report to Congress for FY 2004 and FY 2005*. p. 7. Washington, D.C.: Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Housing and Human Services.

³⁰ Cooper, J. and Weill, R. (2007). *State of the States 2007: A Profile of Food and Nutrition Programs across the Nation*. Washington, D.C.: Food Research and Action Center.

³¹ Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. (2008). *State Medicaid Fact Sheets*. Kaiser Family Fund. Retrieved from www.kff.org.

³² Kaiser Family Foundation. (2008). *The Uninsured: A Primer—Key Facts about Americans without Health Insurance*. Washington, D.C.: Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. Retrieved from www.kff.org.

³³ 42USCS 11431-34

³⁴ States may distribute their McKinney-Vento funds to school districts in particular need of financial assistance to serve children who are homeless. These subgrantees are required to report additional information (beyond what non-subgrantee school districts report) about the children they serve.

³⁵ Data computed from individual state reports submitted to US Department of Education in the Consolidated State Performance Report: Parts I and II for State Formula Grant Programs. School Year 2006–2007. Washington, DC: US Department of Education. Retrieved from www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/index.html

³⁶ US Department of Education. *FY 2001–2009 State Tables for the US Department of Education. State Tables By Program*. p. 29. Retrieved from www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/index.html.

