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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Releases National Report

**Highlights Key Indicators to Track Progress in
Preparing Our Nation's Children for School Success**

Washington, DC, February 16, 2005 – A new national report being released today by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT shows that policymakers and child advocates can use measures of child well-being to better prepare young children for later school success. *Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative*, shows how tracking progress on key indicators of school readiness can lead to more effective policies and investments in early childhood. The report is being released today at the U.S. Capitol to an audience of policymakers, researchers, and child advocates.

The report is based on research that shows that too many young children enter kindergarten unprepared for school success. These children often suffer from physical, social, emotional and cognitive deficits that could have been addressed earlier in their lives. The report is based on a set of core indicators of school readiness that emerged from the work of 17 states involved in the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative.

The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative was implemented over the past three years in 17 states. Rhode Island was one of the states chosen to participate in this national project. In addition, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT was national coordinator of the 17 state partnership. This multi-state initiative developed sets of indicators at the state level to track results for children from birth through age eight. The goal is for states to use the school readiness indicators to inform public policy decisions and track progress in meeting key goals for young children.

“While policy makers may recognize the importance of early learning and school readiness, they also need measurable indicators that enable them to track progress,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “We are releasing

this report in Washington, DC because the work of the 17 states has the power to influence the national debate on policies and investments that promote the healthy development of infants, toddlers, and young children.”

The indicators selected by each of the 17 states point to a core set of common school readiness indicators. The core indicators that emerged from the work in the 17 states are based on the child development research and address the areas of ready children, ready families, ready communities, ready services (including health care and early education), and ready schools. Policy makers and community leaders can use the core set of indicators to measure progress toward improved outcomes for young children and their families.

The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative included a focus on improving community services and family supports that enable infants, toddlers and young children to progress across the five critical areas of child development: physical health, cognitive development, social-emotional development, language and literacy, and approaches to learning.

On May 21, 2004, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released Rhode Island’s state report on school readiness, *Ready or Not: Preparing Rhode Island’s Children to Succeed in School*, which congratulates Rhode Island policy makers for the steps Rhode Island has taken to improve school readiness and provides a plan of action for continued progress. Each of the 17 states produced a similar report tailored to the social, economic and political context in their state.

“The regular tracking of school readiness indicators enables policy makers and community leaders to identify areas most in need of intervention, track the results of investments, and monitor trends over time,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant. “The goal of the 17 State School Readiness Indicators Initiative was to develop indicators not just for data’s sake, but to inform and influence policy decisions to improve school readiness.”

The reports can be obtained at www.GettingReady.org and at www.rikidscount.org.

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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.

The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative was coordinated by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and sponsored by the Ford Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.