

Why Is This Important?

The environment in which children live impacts their well-being. Children who face multiple stressors, such as financial insecurity, transiency, or inadequate parental engagement are significantly less likely to thrive than their peers to suffer poor outcomes. Poverty is a leading cause of instability, which ripples through the lives of everyone involved, including community members and taxpayers.

Indicators

Headline

Students Chronically Absent

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Data Source: Connecticut State Department of Education Data on the Percentage of Students Who Missed At Least 10 Percent of Days Enrolled for Any Reason

Year	Percentage
2009	15.30%
2010	15.70%
2011	14.80%
2012	11.00%
2013	11.50%
2014	10.70%
2017	11.50%

Time Period	Actual Value	Current Trend	Baseline	%Change
2014	10.70%	↘ 1	-30%	↓
2013	11.50%	↗ 1	-25%	↓
2012	11.00%	↘ 2	-28%	↓
2011	14.80%	↘ 1	-3%	↓
2010	15.70%	↗ 1	3%	↑
2009	15.30%	→ 0	0%	→

Story Behind the Curve

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing ten percent or more of the total number of days enrolled in the school year for any reason including excused and unexcused absences and days absent due to out of school suspension.Chronic absenteeism data provided by the State Department of Education since 2009 has shown a decrease of 5 percentage points to 10.70%.

All demographics have seen a decline since 2009, however substantial gaps remain. Students who are either eligible for free meals, have learning disabilities, or are English language learners were twice as likely to be chronically absent than those who are not. Black and Hispanic students are also roughly twice as likely to be chronically absent from school compared to white, Non-Hispanic students. Children who are chronically absent fall within three key areas. These areas, outlined in a report by John Hopkins University, are children who attend school (due to illness, family, housing, or juvenile justice involvement and school suspensions or expulsions), children who attend school (because they do not feel safe enough to go), and children who attend school (a desire to do other things, no barriers preventing them from skipping school, or due to a lack of value placed on schooling by them or their parents).

Chronic absenteeism has a significant impact on the stability of a child’s overall wellbeing, as well as their future success. Absenteeism in pre-school or kindergarten haven been shown to delay reading mastery, while in upper grades, lower graduation rates and increased achievement gaps are notable results. SDE cites findings that show a correlation between chronic absenteeism, academic achievement and high school graduation. There has also been an established connection between chronic absenteeism and criminal behavior. Students that were chronically absent had an elevated risk of being involved in the juvenile justice system and subsequent recidivism rates.

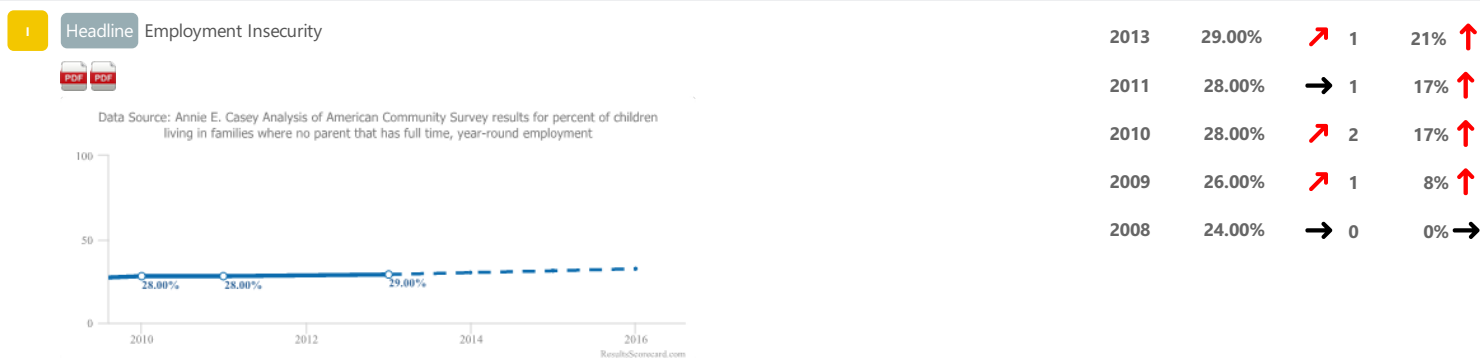
Efforts to take on chronic absenteeism in Connecticut have occurred at both the municipal level, and through statewide initiatives. In New Britain, community partnerships, specialized school teams to monitor students at risk, and greater focus on kindergarten absenteeism have provided substantial reductions. The CT Association of School Based Health Centers has indicated that the implementation of the School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) has been beneficial as well. The SBDI, which is focused on middle schools and high schools with higher levels of juvenile justice involvement, has drastically decreased school-based court referrals and instead greatly increased the rate of referrals to behavioral health services. The strategic action group has been instrumental in promoting communication and collaboration among critical state agency and community-based partners, as well as centralizing existing initiatives and promising new practices. The 2015 Legislative session produced legislation that establishes attendance review teams similar to those in New Britain on a statewide level, improves local data for state analysis, and allows truancy clinics to be implemented statewide.

Partners

- Department of Education
- Inter-agency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap
- Office of Early Childhood
- Department of Children and Families
- Achievement Gap Task Force
- CT Association of School-Based Health Centers
- Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
- Stamford Youth Services
- Connecticut Association for Community Action

- Clarify the reporting of out-of-school suspension and expulsion data and analyze to identify district trends. **(SDE)**
- Research absenteeism data for preschool students. **(SDE)**
- Use Data Mapping to display rates of demographics, chronic absenteeism and available resources in pilot communities. **(SDE)**
- Communicate and promote best practices. **(SDE)**
- Expand and strengthen school-based mentoring opportunities. **(SDE)**
- Explore best practices for addressing absenteeism for children that attend Pre-K. **(SDE)**
- Ensure that members and partners of the Chronic Absenteeism SAG are identified and represents all strategic partners with a role to play in improving results/"turning the curve." **(SDE)**
- Ensure the CT Kid's Report Card is revised, posted and used as a SAG communication tool to track progress. **(SDE)**
- Ally with organizations already in a consortium with each other and SDE to educate them and ask them to educate their members. **(David Nee)**
- Consider steps to include information about absenteeism disaggregated by race and economic status in regular reports. **(David Nee)**
- Alert educators to the need for community partnerships to incorporate actions on the community side. **(David Nee)**
- Utilize 'Restorative Practices' in schools **(SYS)**
- Implementation of 'Safe Streets' Programs **(SYS)**

Strategies provided by the State Department of Education **(SDE)**, CT Kid's Report Card Leadership Committee Co-Chair David Nee, and Stamford Youth Services **(SYS)**



#### Story Behind the Curve

The purpose of this indicator is to identify the percentage of children who are experiencing household instability due to parental employment insecurity. This data has been designated on a national level as one of several key indicators of well-being by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. The data is collected through the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and counts those children that live in either a single-parent or a married-couple household, whose parent(s) have not worked at least 35 hours per week each or at least 50 weeks out of the 12 months prior to being surveyed.

The data has been increasing steadily one or two percent per year since 2008. To understand why these numbers look the way they do racial/ethnic disaggregations must be considered. The Non-Hispanic White population has fared best for employment status when compared to other ethnic/racial disaggregations. Their employment insecurity has never exceeded 20% over the six data points available, while total population trend line has never dipped below 24%. Meanwhile, the percentages of black and Hispanic children living in employment insecure households have never dropped below 41% and 45% respectively. This gap in sustainable family employment creates a cascading effect on a variety of other achievement gaps, inherently stunting the stability and success Connecticut children.

A 2012 UMass Boston report by the Center for Social Policy noted a national trend in the available labor force and its impact on families. The decline in sustainable manufacturing careers, which are being replaced with a rising number of low-wage service jobs (fast food, retail, home healthcare aids, etc.) impedes the ability of parents to provide healthier food options, encourage their children to be engaged in after school activities, provide social interactions due to toxic scheduling, and to save for secondary education. For families with multiple children, it is often necessary for either a relative or the oldest child to take on a parenting role. Placing such stress on the eldest child hinders their likelihood of success in school, increases the likelihood they will engage in risky behaviors like smoking, drinking and sexual activity, and can drive them to drop out of school early. Multiple indicators across the four domains of the CT Kid's Report Card are inherently impacted by the security of stable parental employment. With private industry trends making it more competitive to achieve the full-time employment and the wages needed to sustain a family, governmental initiatives at the state and federal level have sought to cover the remainder.

State-level welfare for families at risk experienced one of its most recent reforms through the establishment of an Earned Income Tax Credit in 2011, aiding low to moderate income working families. Another legislative action signed into law encourages young individuals with families to return to or advance their education by qualifying such activities into categories that provide both federal and state assistance. Continued efforts from a variety of legislative committees in consultation with state agencies and

policy advocates can ensure families and those who want to have families can do so without fear of economic hardship.

#### Partners

- Commission on Children
- Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund
- Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
- Annie E. Casey Foundation.

#### Strategy

- Advocate for a two-generation strategies regarding children's education. **(COC & Annie E. Casey Foundation)**
- Create policies that equip parents and children with the income, tools and skills they need to succeed. **(Annie E. Casey Foundation)**
  - Structure public systems to respond to the realities facing today's families.
  - Promote collaboration and align policies and programs through interagency commissions and innovation funds.
  - Use existing child, adult and neighborhood programs and platforms to build evidence for practical pathways out of poverty for entire families.
  - Incentivize community colleges and employment and job-training agencies to partner with organizations focused on benefit access and child care to help parents who are trying to further their education.
- Sustain economic supports like the Earned Income Tax Credit. **(COC)**
- Utilize of the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) to more accurately depict how families are really faring and what programs are working. **(Annie E. Casey Foundation)**
- Support access to high-quality early education programs to ensure that low income children are on the path to success.
- Invest in effective job training and postsecondary education so more parents can access better-paying jobs. **(Annie E. Casey Foundation)**
- Expand and simplify enrollment processes for programs that help families make ends meet such as SNAP and subsidies for child care and housing. **(Annie E. Casey Foundation).**
- Build on programs that work such as Head Start and education and job training programs for parents. **(Annie E. Casey Foundation)**

Strategies provided by the Commission on Children (COC) and the **Annie E. Casey Foundation**.



#### Story Behind the Curve

This data was compiled by the Food Resource and Action Center from Gallup Healthways Well-being Index data. The Gallup Healthways survey asks the following question: "Have there been times in the past twelve months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?" The percentage of affirmative responses has seen an overall decline since 2008.

The leading factor effecting whether or not a family has enough money to buy food is employment. The Central CT Coast YMCA (CCCYMCA) has noted many parents of its youth participants struggle to find jobs that allow them to afford basic food products for their family.

The state of Connecticut has undertaken multiple efforts to assist lower income families that are not earning enough to buy food. One of these policies includes a state-level Earned Income Tax Credit. Connecticut also participates in federal free and reduced lunch programs and SNAP programs that reduce the daily cost of meals for families with financial constraints. Parents enrolled in SNAP also gain access to training and tools to become financially independent through employment.

The CCCYMCA has indicated local programs like food pantries, as well as the acceptance of state WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) checks by city farmers markets at a 2:1 ratio have made food more readily available to families at risk. In addition, End Hunger CT! has identified a newer school meal program, called "Community Eligibility", as an effective program to fight food insecurity. Community Eligibility allows schools with 40% or more of their students on SNAP (or other social service programs such as TANF) to be federally reimbursed for free meals to all students in the school, addressing the needs of families who may be on the verge of being eligible for SNAP benefits. Schools using community eligibility are able to feed all children in the school

without the requirement that all families fall within a certain level of income.

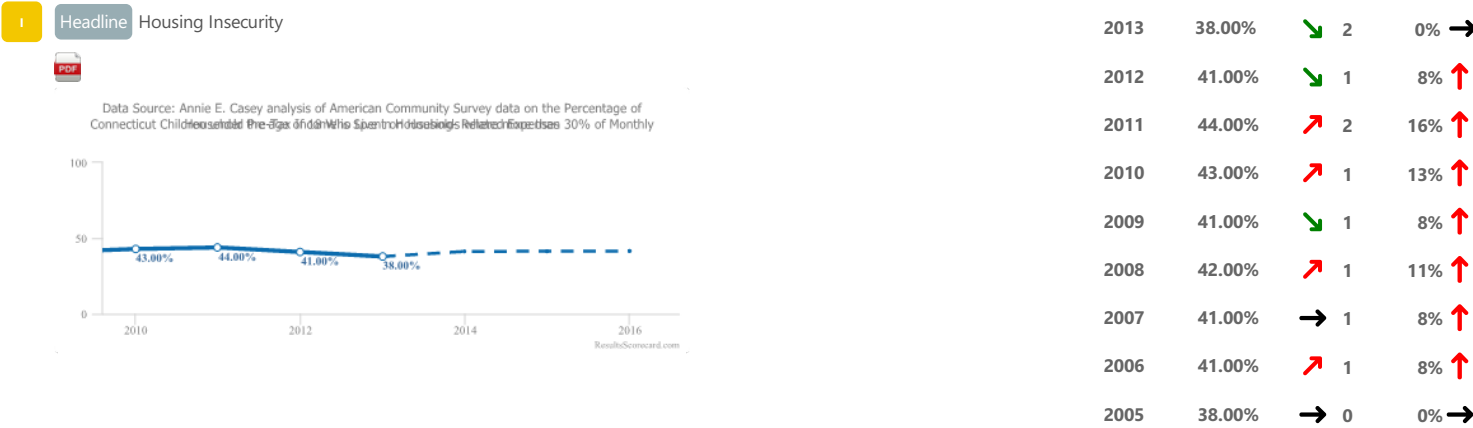
Partners

- Department of Education
- Department of Agriculture
- End Hunger CT!
- UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity
- CT Food Bank
- Food Research and Action Center
- Central Connecticut Coast YMCA

Strategy

- Heighten awareness of and participation in SNAP, as well as summer, breakfast, and supper programs.
- Embed federal nutrition programs in the infrastructure of communities.
- Increase awareness and connect more families to SNAP benefits and school meals by collaborating with schools.
- Increase alternative models of meal delivery, such as in-classroom breakfast, at risk after school meals and summer programs.
- Work with school districts to participate in Community Eligibility Programs so all children receive nutritious foods at school.

Strategies provided by End Hunger CT!



Story Behind the Curve

Collected from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, this indicator is the percentage of children who live in households that are housing insecure. A household is considered housing insecure when their housing costs, including utilities, rent, insurance, etc. total 30% or more of their income. The data, which initially saw an increase between 2009 and 2011, has seen two consecutive years of decline.

When disaggregated by race, around 50% of black/Hispanic children are lived in housing insecure households in 2015 as opposed to approximately 30% of white, non-Hispanic children. According to PCSW, in order for a family to afford a two-bedroom apartment and utilize less than 30% of their income on housing they would require an hourly wage of \$24.29, or 2.7 full time jobs, at minimum wage. For a female-headed household or any single-parent household, both parent and child would struggle substantially to maintain a quality standard of living.

Through the state’s Department of Housing, a variety of rental assistance vouchers are available to residents under the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, including the Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program, Family Unification Program, etc. State law also requires municipalities to provide property tax relief for certain homeowners (elderly, disabled, veterans, etc.), and the state provides a variety of abatements, homestead programs, and deferrals. For new/existing homeowners, the Connecticut Housing Finance authority advertises a variety of programs that provide low mortgage interest rates for people within certain income limits or specific populations (police, teachers, etc.). These programs, as well as other policies undertaken by the Connecticut General Assembly’s Housing Committee help reduce the percent of a household’s income that is needed to pay for housing costs. In addition to making housing more affordable, the state and various partners provide programs to assist in the reduction of energy costs.

The State Department of Social Services oversees programs related to heating assistance during Winter (November 15<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup>), including the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program, Contingency Heating Assistance Program, Crisis Assistance Program, and Safety Net Services. Other energy related programs provide weatherization and other measures for energy efficiency, which are coordinated with the federal government and state businesses. These programs provide incentives for homeowners to gradually reduce their reliance on more expensive forms of energy, retain energy being used within their homes, and invest in long-term energy reducing home improvements. Reducing both the cost of housing and the cost of core utilities

helps lower-income families utilize more of their incomes in ways that positively affect their child's health, safety, and overall wellbeing.

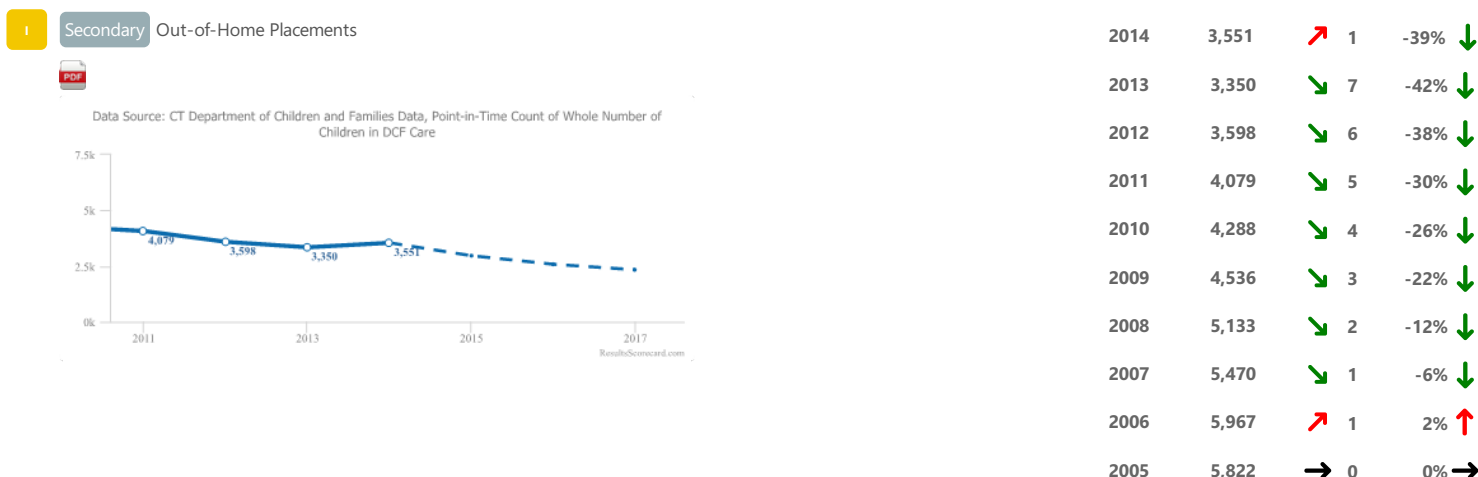
#### Partners

- Department of Housing
- Department of Social Services
- United Way of Connecticut
- Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness
- Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
- Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund
- Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission
- Connecticut Housing Coalition
- Connecticut Housing and Finance Authority

#### Strategy

- Increase the availability of low-income housing in high-performing school districts outside of urban areas. **(LPRAC)**
- Eliminate exclusionary zoning laws that have the net effect of limiting housing options for Hispanics to only urban areas. **(LPRAC)**
- Tie affordability requirements to increased density. **(HAND)**
- Increase the safety, success and longevity of first-time homeownership. **(Harvard University)**
- Monitor inclusionary zoning effectiveness, productivity and longevity. **(Harvard University)**
- Study wealth-building, shared equity, and upward mobility. **(Harvard University)**

Strategies collected from the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission **(LPRAC)**, Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers **(HAND)**, Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University **(Harvard University)**



#### Story Behind the Curve

A child may be placed out-of-home when the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and/or the judicial system determine that removal would be in keeping with the best interest of the child. The data displayed is collected by DCF and reflects the total number of children in an out-of-home placement at a specific point-in-time annually. Out-of-home placements cover three key types of placement: children may be placed due to child welfare reasons, juvenile justice involvement, and DCF Voluntary Services. Current data trends have shown an overall decrease of 39% in out-of-home placements since 2005. The decline in out-of-home placements can be partially attributed to two other CT Kids Report Card indicators: Rates of neglect and abuse, as well as referrals to juvenile court for delinquency both saw declines in the overall baseline during the same period of time.

The most current research indicates a need to limit out-of-home placements. DCF has adopted a trauma-informed focus and recognition of the impact these placements may have on a child. In particular, the effects of out-of-home placements play a role in a child's overall development and future outcomes. Frequently changing caregivers has been noted as causing negative social, emotional, and psychological complications, especially during the earliest years of development. CT Voices for Children adds that the continued decrease in out-of-home placements increases the likelihood that children will experience healthy development and lasting, meaningful relationships with their families.

In Connecticut, several reforms have been made related to the out-of-home placement process. Reducing in congregate care placements in favor of family placements better supports sibling visitation and may aid with long-term permanency results. In 2013, DCF implemented Considered Removal Child and Family Teaming (CR-CFTM). The purpose of CR-CFTM is to prevent removal from the home by identifying and utilizing family supports to mitigate safety factors. The team meeting engages parents/family in live decisions about safety and removal, as well as placement recommendations.

During the 2015 session of the General Assembly, legislation was passed and signed into law by the governor to improve outcomes for children who are in out-of-home placements. Improvements include the expansion of subsidized guardianship to fictive kin caregivers, allowing older children a voice regarding their permanency options, as well as supporting visitation and relational continuity when siblings are unable to be placed together. In addition to the actions taken by the state legislature, CT Voices for Children noted DCF's use of FAR (Family Assessment Response) as an alternative approach for families in need of services when there is minimal or no immediate risk to the child.

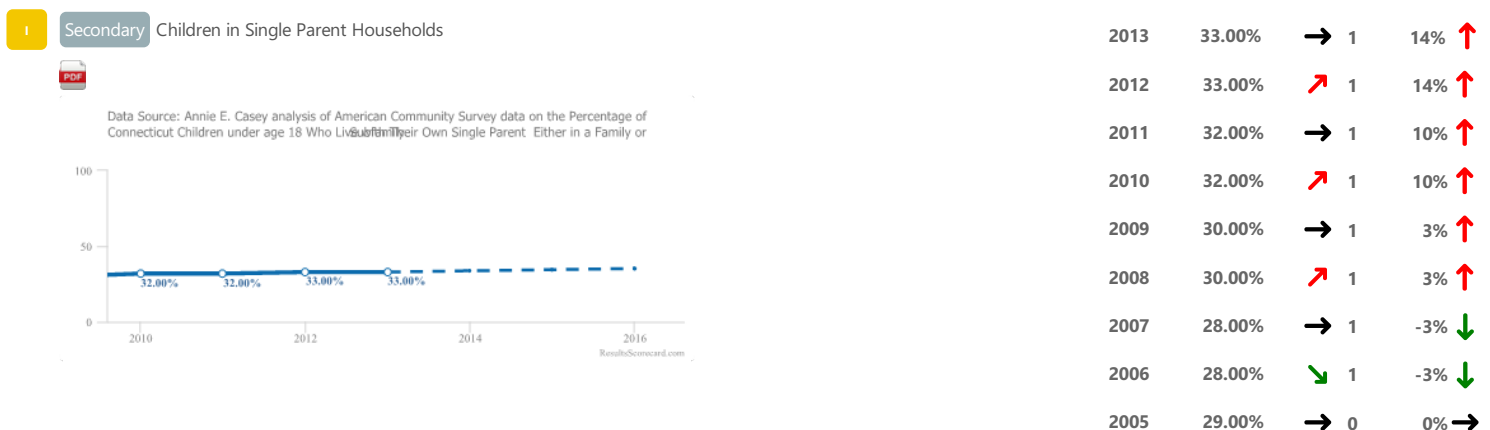
#### Partners

- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Department of Children and Families
- CT Voices for Children
- Connecticut Community Providers Association
- Office of the Child Advocate
- Connecticut Children's Alliance
- The Village for Families and Children
- The Commission on Non-Profit Health and Human Services
- Connecticut Association for Human Services
- Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut

#### Strategy

- Expand and fully support the cost of evidence-based treatments for behavioral health conditions.
- Promote policies and practices that reduce unnecessary contact with law enforcement and the juvenile justice system.
- Divert youth to services and supports that address underlying needs and risk factors.

Strategies provided by the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut (**CHDI**).



#### Story Behind the Curve

This data, which is collected from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) measures the percentage of children under the age of 18 who live with their own single parent in either a family or subfamily. From 2005 to 2013, there has been a gradual increase in the percent of children in single parent households in Connecticut. Single parent households are most prevalent in Connecticut's cities. Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury, Bridgeport, and New Britain have been ranked amongst the top 101 cities in the U.S. with the highest percentage of single-parent households. These rankings align with data that shows Hispanic and African American children are more likely to live in single-parent households (and more likely to live in larger cities) than their White No-Hispanic counterparts.

According to Kids Count Data Center, "Children growing up in single-parent families typically do not have the same economic or human resources available as those growing up in two-parent families." These economic hardships and a lack of comparable resources subsequently have a significant impact on the quality of parenting and exposure to certain stressors. These impacts have been linked in regularly published studies to single-parent children engaging in more risky behavior, including sexual intercourse, drug/alcohol use, fights or carrying a weapon to school, and feelings of depression or hopelessness

In order to positively alter those outcomes for children, policymakers have actively sought to improve the financial positions of both low-income and single parents. One recently considered proposal is the expansion of the Care 4 Kids program, which assists families in paying for child care costs while enrolled in high school or attending an institution of higher education. Other short-term governmental assistance programs for single parents, notably mothers, include Women in Transition (WIT), Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

#### Partners



- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Department of Children and Families
- CT Voices for Children
- Commission on Children
- The MOMs Partnership

### Strategy

- Reducing the occurrence of both teen births and out-of-wedlock births by mothers. (**The Heritage Foundation**)
- Improving the educational outcomes of spouses prior to marriage or childbearing. (**The Heritage Foundation**)
- Increase the value of EITC (Earned Income Tax Credits) for married couples with children. (**The Heritage Foundation**)
- Involve fathers in parental training.(**HHS**)
- Provide emotional education skills.(**HHS**)
- Establish multi-generational households as an alternative to single-parents households. (**Vanderbilt University**)

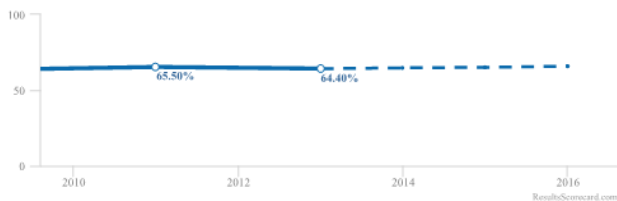
Strategies collected from **The Heritage Foundation**, the U.S. Department of Human Services Administration for Children and Families (**HHS**), and **Vanderbilt University**



### Secondary Family Meal Occurrence



Data Source: Results from the Connecticut High School, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Percentage of High School Students who Ate At Least One Meal with Their Family on Three or More of the Last



2013	64.40%		1	2%	
2011	65.50%		2	4%	
2009	63.70%		1	1%	
2007	62.90%		0	0%	

### Story Behind the Curve

The Connecticut School Health Survey (CSHS) Is conducted biennially and subsequently published by the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH). The Youth Behavior Component (YBC) survey, which gathers information from students grades 9-12 in randomly chosen classrooms, is the source. The question asked of these students since the first survey results were published in 2005 is as follows: “During the past seven days, on how many days did you eat at least one meal with your family?” Results in 2005 were reported as a percent of students who ate at least one meal with their families on **five** or more of the past seven days. In 2007 and for all subsequent years, reporting was changed to percent of students who ate at least one meal with their families on **three** of the last seven days.

Since the first conducted survey, the trend line has stayed relatively flat. The Commission on Children (COC) attributes the lack of continued growth to various family lifestyles and socioeconomic factors. For parents facing economic hardships, the likelihood of work schedules that conflict with common meal times increases. Also, during high school students become increasingly engaged in after school commitments and part-time jobs, which interfere with a common mealtime. In addition to multiple jobs and other commitments, blended families (families that include children from one or both spouse’s previous relationships) and single-family households may have relational stressors that impact the family’s ability to gather together for meals.

The Department of Public Health’s survey reports have indicated that the frequency of family meals is correlated with a lower prevalence of student drug use, depression, suicidal thoughts, and sexual activity. The COC identifies family meals as an indicator of “connectedness” between children and their parents. Regular family meals have also been positively attributed with healthier eating habits, increased academic performance, and positive relations between siblings and parents. Preventing students from engaging in risky behaviors and encouraging healthy attitudes provides children in Connecticut with a level of stability that ensures continued positive outcomes after graduation and well into adulthood.

There is a greater likelihood for a student to regularly eat at least one meal a day with their family when it is affordable for them to prepare and eat meals at home together. Connecticut is currently providing federal free and reduced lunch programs and SNAP programs that reduce the daily cost of meals for families with financial constraints. The General Assembly has taken action to further ensure families can afford the opportunity to eat a meal together by assisting families with significant economic needs through the 2011 establishment of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EIT). The COC also highlighted a program being undertaken in some schools called “Friday Backpacks”, which sends backpacks containing basic food supplies home with children to supplement family meals over the weekend.

### Partners

- Department of Public Health
- Commission on Children
- End Hunger CT!

- CT Food Bank
- CT Parent Power

Strategy

- Ensure schools provide more “Friday Backpacks”, basic food supplies meant to supplement family meals over the weekend. **(COC)**
- Encourage families to set a goal to have regular family meals at least three times per week. **(Cornell University)**
- Promote flexible work hours and shifts that accommodate working parents' schedules.**(Cornell University)**
- Promote regular, consistent work schedules. **(Cornell University)**
- Ensure that overtime is optional.**(Cornell University)**
- Encourage families to share household food roles, such as shopping and cooking. **(Cornell University)**
- Provide education on how to plan and cook quick, healthy meals.
- Encourage families to:
  - Engage children in meal preparation as part of family time **(Cornell University)**
  - Plan/cook meals ahead. **(Cornell University)**
  - Pack lunches from home. **(Cornell University)**

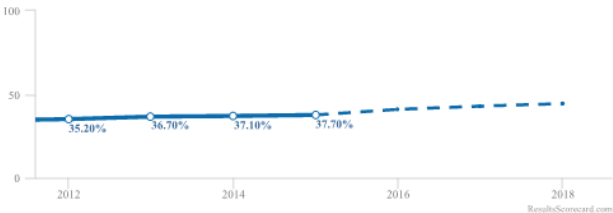
Strategy provided by the Commission on Children **(COC)**, Cornell University College of Human Ecology Division of Nutritional Sciences **(Cornell University)**

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Secondary Free or Reduced Lunch Eligibility



Data Source: Connecticut State Department of Education Data on the Percentage of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch



2015	37.70%	↗	10	43%	↑
2014	37.10%	↗	9	41%	↑
2013	36.70%	↗	8	39%	↑
2012	35.20%	↗	7	33%	↑
2011	34.40%	↗	6	30%	↑
2010	32.90%	↗	5	25%	↑
2009	30.30%	↗	4	15%	↑
2008	28.50%	↗	3	8%	↑
2007	27.10%	↗	2	3%	↑
2006	26.70%	↗	1	1%	↑

Story Behind the Curve

The state of Connecticut, with assistance from the federal government’s National School Lunch Program, provides free and reduced cost lunches to children in public and private non-profit schools. A child’s eligibility for free or reduced lunches varies based on the total income of the household the child lives in. If their family’s income is below 130 percent of the poverty level, they qualify for free meals. For families whose income falls between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level, their child qualifies for the reduced price lunch program. Despite maintaining one of the lowest rates in the United States, CT data has shown a gradual increase in the percentage of children who are utilizing this program between 2005 and 2014.

The increase in eligible children is partially due to shifting demographics. Based upon data from 2014, cities, which are an increasing segment of the state population, have some of the highest eligibility rates, whereas smaller towns have some of the lowest rates. These trends correlate with higher rates of SNAP recipients, summer meal program participation, and unemployment.

Children who are eligible for free or reduced lunches come from families with significant economic hardships, who often find it difficult to afford not just food, but also basic schools supplies. Additionally, parents in these families may be unavailable to provide help with school work. As a result, while the trend for on time graduation of students with free or reduced lunches has been favorable, they still lag behind their non-eligible peers. Despite the incentive of free or reduced price meals for eligible students, they lag behind in attendance as well. Students who are eligible have been noted as being three times more likely to be chronically absent than those who are not eligible. And multiple sources have stated that, there has been a constant stigma placed on students who receive free/reduced lunches that affects their personal environment and social interactions while in school. A positive impact of the implementation of free and reduced lunch programs with strong nutritional standards is a reduction in childhood obesity rates.

Connecticut’s efforts to promote healthy meals as a part of free and reduced lunch programs was revamped in the 2005 legislative session with improved nutritional standards for school meals and snacks. The State Department of Education also regularly updates these nutritional standards which include: moderating calories, limiting fat, saturated fat, sodium and sugars, eliminating trans-fat, and promoting more nutrient-dense foods.

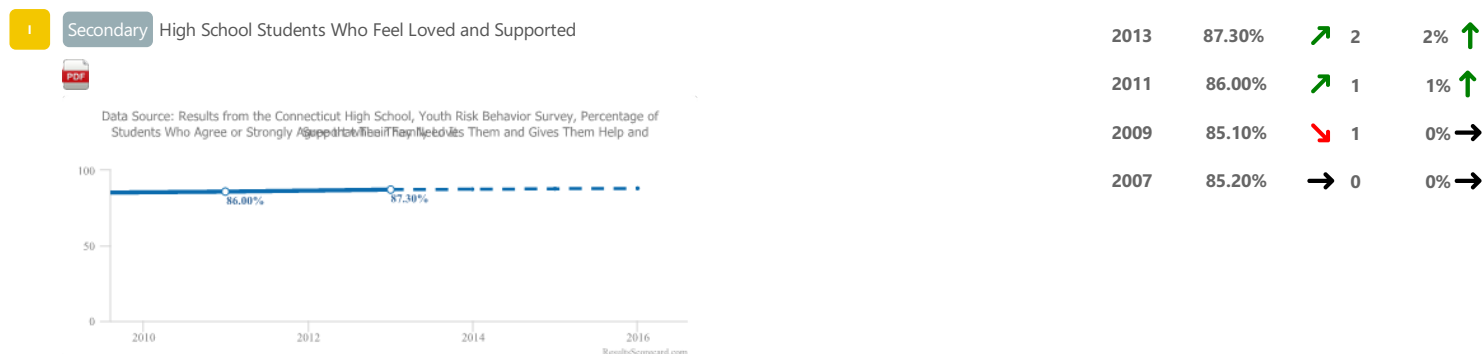


- Food Research and Action Center
- Department of Education
- End Hunger CT!
- UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity
- CT Food Bank
- United Way of Connecticut

#### Strategy

- Explore Direct Certification and Categorical Eligibility – free meals without paper applications.
- Conduct an application campaign at the start of the school year to ensure that all eligible children are enrolled.
- Provide frequent outreach throughout the year to encourage families to apply for free or reduced-price meals.
- Providing universal, free meals to all children in schools with high percentages of free and reduced-price students.
- Maximize participation in school breakfast by eligible children.

#### Strategies collected from the Food and Resource Action Center (**FRAC**)



#### Story Behind the Curve

For the purposes of this indicator, data is collected through the Department of Public Health's biannual Connecticut School Health Survey (CSHS), Youth Behavior Component. While the survey has been consistently conducted since 2005, this particular survey question was inserted in 2007. The survey asks students in grades 9-12 the following: "The survey then allows one of five options (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, strongly disagree), from which two are combined for this indicator: strongly agree and agree. The data has shown a positive increase since 2007, from 85.2% to 87.3%, with the greatest increasing seen in Hispanic or Latino students (76.8% to 86.0%).

The importance of love and support in early childhood is critical to solidifying a parent's relationship with their child through high school. Providing love and support allows for the promotion of self-esteem and confidence and teaches children how to express love and affection. The resulting self-esteem, confidence, and other social skills increase positive outcomes as the child grows. They are more likely to become healthy adults, have increased communication skills, are less likely to engage in risky behavior, and have higher rates of academic success.

Because the survey is a limited sample, anonymous, and random in the school selection, and conducted on a biannual basis, it is difficult to accurately pin down specific policies related to the individual student and their parent. There are, however, legislative acts that have sought to improve the overall emotional wellbeing of high school students in Connecticut and improve relationships between parents and their children. Recent policies undertaken in the 2015 legislative session were Senate Bill 841 and House Bill 6899. Senate Bill 841 implements a comprehensive children's mental, emotional, and behavioral health plan, which was developed in response to the issues surrounding childhood mental health after the Sandyhook shooting in 2012. House Bill 6899 establishes the term fictive kin (a person "who is unrelated to a child ...but who has an emotionally significant relationship with such child amounting to a familial relationship...") and removes barriers for foster parents to allow their children to engage in developmentally appropriate activities. The intent of the language within this bill is to ensure children that are in the care of DCF have every opportunity to be placed with an individual that will provide them love and support and can strengthen the child-guardian bond. The Connecticut Commission on Children, a non-partisan agency within the Connecticut General Assembly, also regularly engages and collaborates with legislative leaders and advocacy groups to improve the wellbeing of children and strengthen parental/family engagement with children.

#### Partners

- Department of Public Health
- Connecticut Commission on Children
- Keep the Promise
- Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- CT Voices for Children
- Office of the Child Advocate

- Connecticut Association for Human Services
- Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children (CASA)
- Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut
- Connecticut Behavioral Health Partnership


Strategy

- Work with DPH contractors to integrate the practice of conducting a mental health assessment during a physical. **(DPH)**
- Encourage parents to read to their children, use television wisely, and establish a family routine with scheduled homework time (Partnership for Family Involvement in Education)
- Promote attachment-parenting skills for parents with young children. (Ask Dr. Sears)
- Provide information on teaching children self-esteem (Love Our Children USA)

Strategies collected from the Department of Public Health **(DPH)**, the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, Ask Dr. Sears, and Love Our Children USA.

	Development	Out Of Home Placements (Rate)	2014	0.05	 2	-99% 
	Development	Rate of Family Homelessness	—	—	—	—
	Development	Rate of School Transiency	—	—	—	—
	Development	Rate of Domestic Violence	—	—	—	—
	Development	Rate of Incarcerated Parents	—	—	—	—
	Development	Percentage of children living in household with a Teen Parent	—	—	—	—

Actions				
Name	Assigned To	Status	Due Date	Progress

File Attachments	
File Name	
 HealthyKids_Fotolia_9062692_XS_edited.jpg	