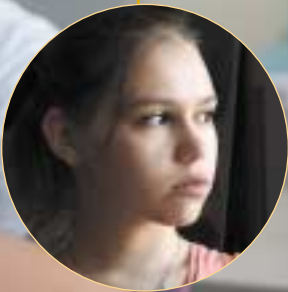


# REPORT OF THE



Youth Policy Council/  
Youth Committee of the  
Connecticut Employment and  
Training Commission

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## Table of Contents

2	Introduction
2	Organization of the Report
2	Criteria for Data Used in the Report
3	Basic Needs
9	Physical and Mental Health
15	Job Readiness
19	Formal Education
25	Policy Recommendations
26	Future Funding Needs
27	Agency Budget Data (State Fiscal Year 2008-09)
29	End Notes



**Special Act 08-3**, which created Connecticut's Youth Policy Council (YPC), articulated various requirements for that entity. One requirement was to submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 2010 on "(1) the progress made in achieving positive outcomes for youth and the total state expenditures dedicated to achieving such positive outcomes, and (2) policy recommendations and future funding needs." This report is submitted in fulfillment of that requirement. It represents an initial effort, and is submitted in the hope that it can be the foundation for continued reports about the status of Connecticut's youth (age 12-21), and the investments being made in support of their growth, education, health, and well-being. To achieve that goal, future reports will continue to track progress on the indicators included in this report, adding or changing indicators as appropriate.

Drawing from a result statement developed by The Youth Futures Committee, whose work preceded that of the Youth Policy Council and this report, the Youth Policy Council adopted its own result statement as a basis for its work: *All Connecticut's youth will be ready for work and life-long learning by age 21.*

In their final report, the Youth Futures Committee identified five substantive areas that shape a young person's readiness: basic needs, positive social and emotional development, physical health, job readiness, and formal education. This report uses four substantive areas drawn from these five areas. These four areas are essentially the same as those in the earlier report, with two (positive social and emotional development and physical health) having been combined for increased simplicity.

## Organization of the Report

The report tracks a number of critical indicators of how well youth are doing in these areas, in accordance with the legislative requirement to address progress in achieving positive results for youth and related expenditures. The presence and quality of the assets in these areas are critical to young people's growth and success.

This report is organized into five major sections. In each of the first four sections, the indicators are presented with an explanation of why the indicator is important to consider and an assessment of how Connecticut is doing, based on one or more comparisons: Connecticut's current status in relation to its past, Connecticut compared to the nation, or a comparison of different racial and ethnic groups within Connecticut. The third comparison is drawn only when disaggregation by race and ethnicity is particularly informative and the data are available. At the end of each of the first four sections is a short discussion of the implications of the cumulative picture yielded by the indicators presented in that section. The indicators are presented for differing time periods depending upon the availability of data, but in each case, the data are the most recent available. A datasheet with detailed technical information is available upon request for each indicator presented.

The final section of the report presents three categories of additional information: 1) budget data related to state and federal investments associated with services to youth; 2) policy recommendations based on the information offered in the four sections, the complete array of indicators, and the implications associated with the indicators in each section; and 3) in response to the legislative requirement, future funding needs are also addressed.

## Criteria for Data Used in the Report

There are two types of data that can be used in discussing issues like the ones addressed in this report. One type of data describes the status or circumstances of various populations in a geographic region (in this case, Connecticut as a state) and identifies issues facing the state's population (e.g., percent of low-birth-weight babies; on-time high school graduation rate, or percent unemployed). The other type of data describes how well particular programs (e.g., out-of-school time, work and learn, mentoring) currently being used are working.

The data used in this report are of the first type – population-level data, chosen for their power to describe circumstances regarding youth statewide that can be most helpful in discussions of what needs to be done for the state as a whole. Data from particular programs (data that tell us "what works"), on the other hand, while important for understanding how much benefit we are gaining from our current investments, are not nearly as helpful in understanding the status of youth across the state, and the needs that have not yet been met.

In order to achieve such a statewide population-level scope, as well as to ensure clarity and consistency in the interpretation of the indicators discussed in this report, we have established the following criteria for the indicators used. Each indicator:

- Represents the status of youth on a statewide basis;
- Does not use data from individual programs<sup>1</sup>;
- Represents some or all of the age range from 12-21;
- Has data that is collected in the same manner on a regular basis over time;
- Has data available for three or more years; and
- Has reliability and validity confirmed by national experts or established institutions.



## Basic Needs

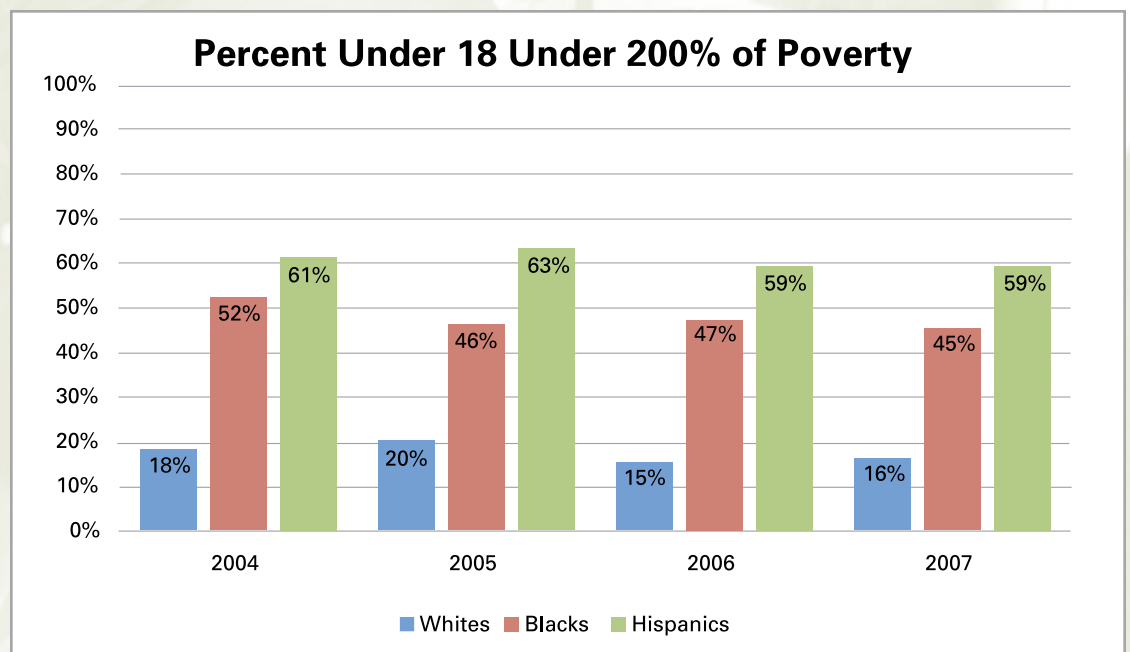
"Basic human needs include housing, clothing, food, and a safe environment. It is unreasonable to believe that children can meet their full potential if they or their families are distracted by the need to find food or shelter." <sup>ii</sup> Even when food and shelter are reasonably secure, many children in poverty face other threats to their basic needs. The threat or actual experience of violence, abuse and neglect in their homes or communities forces many children to use most of their energies just to survive. As a result, they have less energy and fewer opportunities for positive cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Indicator: Percent of children under 18 living in families below 200 percent of poverty<sup>iii</sup>

**In 2007 in Connecticut, 234,000 children (25.8%) were living in families whose earnings were below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.**

### Why is this Important?

Under current federal guidelines, "200 percent of poverty" for a family of three means that household income is less than \$36,620. Children who grow up in poverty face numerous challenges that can affect their physical and mental health as well as their achievement in school. Levels of stress are often high in poor households, with turmoil resulting from constant difficulty in meeting basic needs like food, shelter, transportation, and other daily expenses. If, as is often the case, there is only a single parent, that parent is often working at more than one job, leaving little time for the children. Nutrition often suffers, with adverse effects on children's health.



Living in a neighborhood where poverty is common often means the streets are unsafe and parents keep their children indoors, limiting their opportunities for exercise and play. Health problems may also go undetected or untreated if local doctors refuse to take Medicaid patients (an increasing problem in terms of access to health care for the poor). Research indicates that poor children are disproportionately exposed to risk factors that may impair brain development and affect social and emotional development. A few of these risks include exposure to environmental toxins, inadequate nutrition, maternal depression, parental substance abuse, trauma and abuse, violent crime, divorce, low quality child care, and decreased cognitive stimulation and vocabulary exposure in infancy.

## How is Connecticut Doing?

- *Between 2005 and 2007, an average of 25.8 percent of Connecticut's youth lived below 200 percent of poverty, compared to 38.8 percent of youth nationwide.*
- *There has been little change in the trend in Connecticut during the most recent four years.*
- *While Connecticut's overall poverty rate for youth is well below the national rate, Black and Hispanic youth are over three times as likely to be poor than their White counterparts. Connecticut's economic disparities between Whites and minorities are among the largest in the country.*



Indicator: Students who did not go to school because of safety concerns

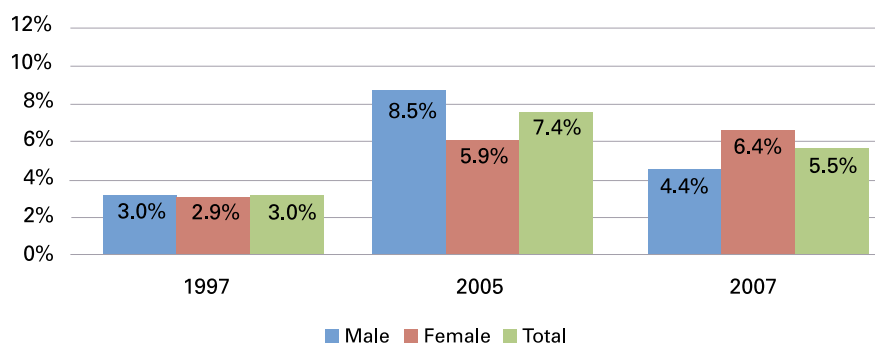
**In 2007, 8,850 Connecticut youth (5%) reported not going to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school on at least one day in the last 30 days.**<sup>vi</sup>

## Why is this Important?

In some Connecticut communities, levels of youth-on-youth violence are disturbingly high. The toll on young people in those communities is heavy, due not only to deaths and serious injuries, but also to the stress and fear that affect their mental health. Safety concerns translate into stress and fear experienced by youth in their communities. Going from home to school, and being in school itself, are seen as dangerous or even hurtful. Learning is adversely affected by such stress and fear, whether due to excessive absence from school, inability to concentrate on academics while in school, or a combination of both. Schools need to be safe and secure places for students, teachers, and staff members in order for youth to fulfill their potential in school. Communities and streets also need to be perceived as safe in order for youth to be able to develop positively.



## Students Who Did Not Go To School Because of Safety Concerns



### How is Connecticut Doing?

- *Safety concerns among youth in Connecticut are similar to those of youth in the nation as a whole.*
- *The trend in Connecticut is not clear from the few data points available, but the situation has clearly not changed for the better between 1997 and 2007.*
- *Two notable changes between 1997 and 2007 are that young women are increasingly likely to express safety concerns and those concerns among young men appear to be declining.*

Indicator: Youth having at least one meal with their family five or more times a week <sup>vii</sup>

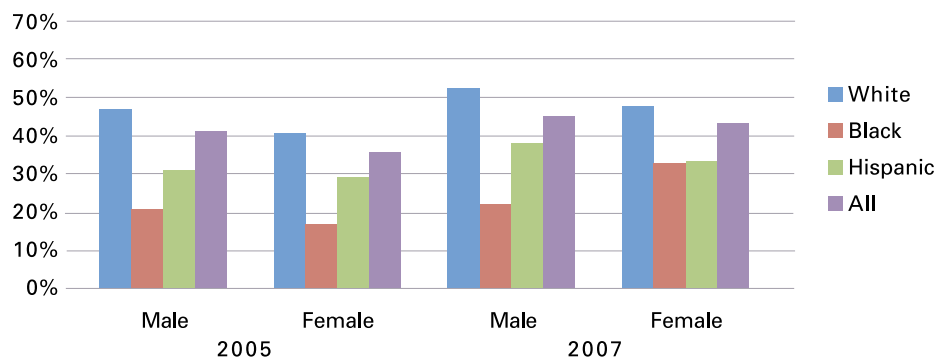
**In 2007, 45 percent of males and 43 percent of females had one or more meals with their families five or more times a week.**

### Why is this Important?

Family mealtimes are a chance for parents to serve as role models, encourage healthy eating habits, and establish family traditions. Other things happen during mealtimes as well, including: socialization of children; establishment of family unity, safety, and security for children; and increased literacy and language development. Youth who frequently have a meal with their family during the week are:

- Less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol;
- Likely to get better grades;
- Less likely to be obese;
- Less likely to have attempted suicide; and
- Less likely to be engaged in sexual activity.

## Percent Having At Least One Meal with Their Family 5 or More Times a Week



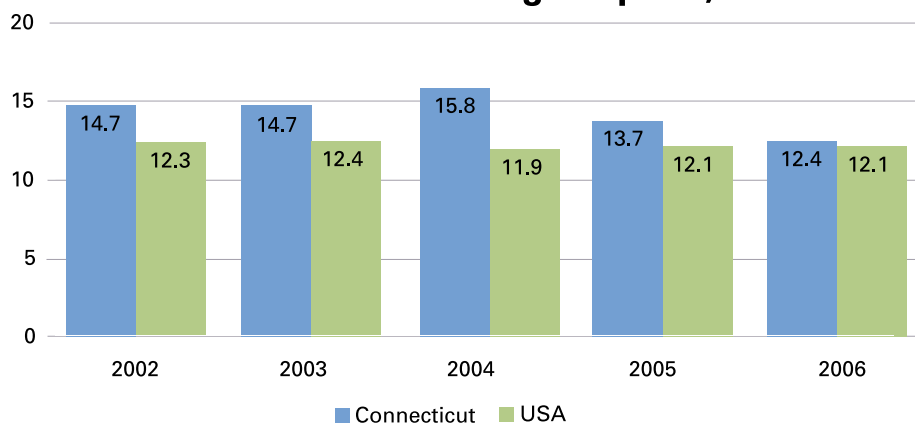
### How is Connecticut Doing?

- *There has been an overall increase in the percent of youth having five or more meals per week with their families between 2005 and 2007.*
- *The smallest increases were for Black males and Hispanic females.*

Indicator: Number of substantiated cases of abuse and neglect<sup>viii</sup>

**In 2006 among children 0-18, 12.4 per 1,000 (10,174) were involved in substantiated cases of abuse or neglect.**<sup>ix</sup>

## Rate of Abuse and Neglect per 1,000



### Why is this Important?

Safety in schools and communities is clearly important. But safety in the home is paramount. Children should be able to grow up free of abuse and neglect, but in too many cases they are subjected to one or both. Abuse and neglect can produce long-term



damage to their physical and mental health. Feelings of isolation can result, with young people feeling "different" when caseworkers begin coming to the home. Child victims of abuse are more likely to have learning, developmental, and behavioral problems as youth and adults. Children's inability to trust others, resulting from the abuse and neglect, can also have negative effects on their interactions with others. Such problems can affect many important areas of their lives, including their ability to form close positive relationships with potential friends or partners and with co-workers and supervisors.

### How is Connecticut Doing?

- *After rising between 2002 and 2004, Connecticut's rate of substantiated abuse and neglect has declined by 3.4 percentage points between 2004 and 2006.*
- *During the same period, Connecticut has had more substantiated cases of abuse and neglect than the national average.*
- *Connecticut's rate has been above the national average for many years, going back to 2002. For 2006, the most recent year available, Connecticut's rate is nearly the same as the national average.*

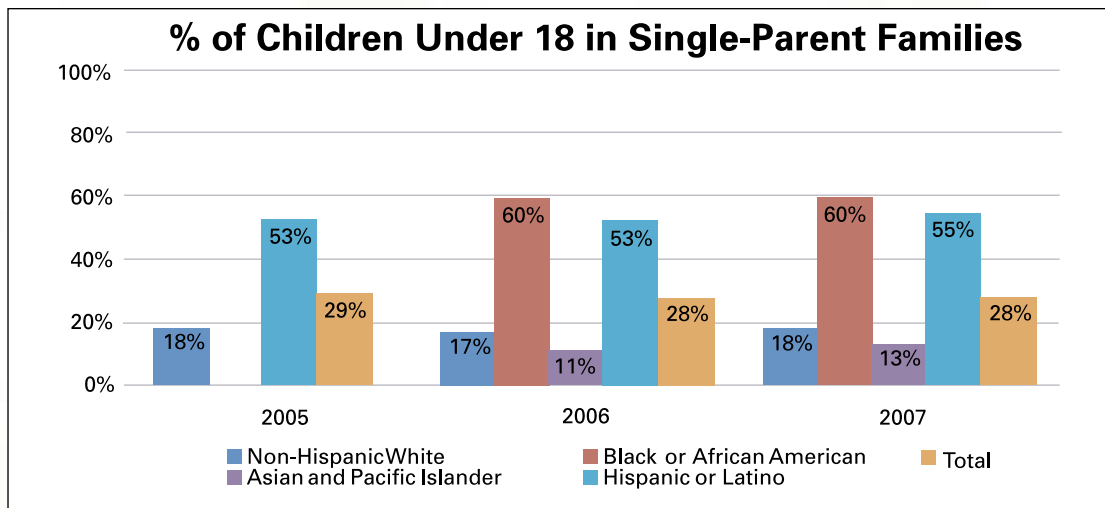
Indicator: Children ages 0-18 in households with only one parent. <sup>x</sup>

**In 2008, 230,000 children (30%) lived in single-parent households.**

### Why is this Important?

Two-parent families tend to have more money, more flexibility, and more time to supervise their children. They tend to offer more emotional support, take a more active part in their education, and arrange other activities for them. In contrast, single-parent families are more likely to experience economic hardship and stressful living conditions – including fewer resources, more frequent moves, and less stability – that take a toll on adults and children alike. When economic hardship and stressful living conditions are present, children are at greater risk of poor academic achievement as well as behavioral, psychological, and health problems. When these circumstances are absent, children who grow up in one-parent families are at less risk for negative outcomes.<sup>xi</sup>





## How is Connecticut Doing?

- *The total percentage of children in single-parent households has remained steady, ranging between 28-30 percent, placing Connecticut just below the national average.*
- *Significant disparities are also evident. While 60 percent of Black children and 53 percent of Hispanic children come from single-parent families, only 18 percent of White, non-Hispanic children live in these households.*
- *Compared to the national averages for minorities, the Black percentage is somewhat lower, the Hispanic percentage is substantially higher, and the White, non-Hispanic percentage is substantially lower.*



## Implications of the Indicators

The broader implications of having significant numbers of children and youth in Connecticut whose basic needs are not being met relate to a wide variety of problems. They converge in adversely affecting the prospects for educational achievement on the part of those young people and limiting their chances for financial self-sufficiency or success. Children grow and develop in at least three important environments: communities, schools, and their families. If those environments are constrained not only by poverty but also by lack of time, their chances of growing to their full potential are severely diminished. Poverty and the many conditions that can accompany it create a web of barriers that children must overcome while, at the same time, attempting to meet the challenges of learning and becoming adults. Parents are afraid to let their children play outside, reducing chances for the natural socialization processes that children gain through unsupervised play where they can learn to work out their differences in a relatively safe environment. Some children are afraid to walk to school, and as a result they miss school rather than face the dangers in the street. Some respond to these dangers by carrying weapons. When children have to deal with these dangers as well as the risk of abuse or neglect at home, they suffer psychologically and emotionally. In such situations, there are limits on the emotional resources they have left to meet the challenges of learning.

One protective factor, however, is when families take the time to have meals together. The time together, especially when the quality of that time encourages communication and modeling of positive behaviors, can be an important influence on young people.

Overall, the family plays a critical role, for better or for worse, in meeting basic needs and determining the likelihood that these young people will be able to develop the knowledge and skills (academic, social, and emotional) needed in order to contribute to a 21st century economy and to their communities and the society as a whole. ■



## Physical and Mental Health

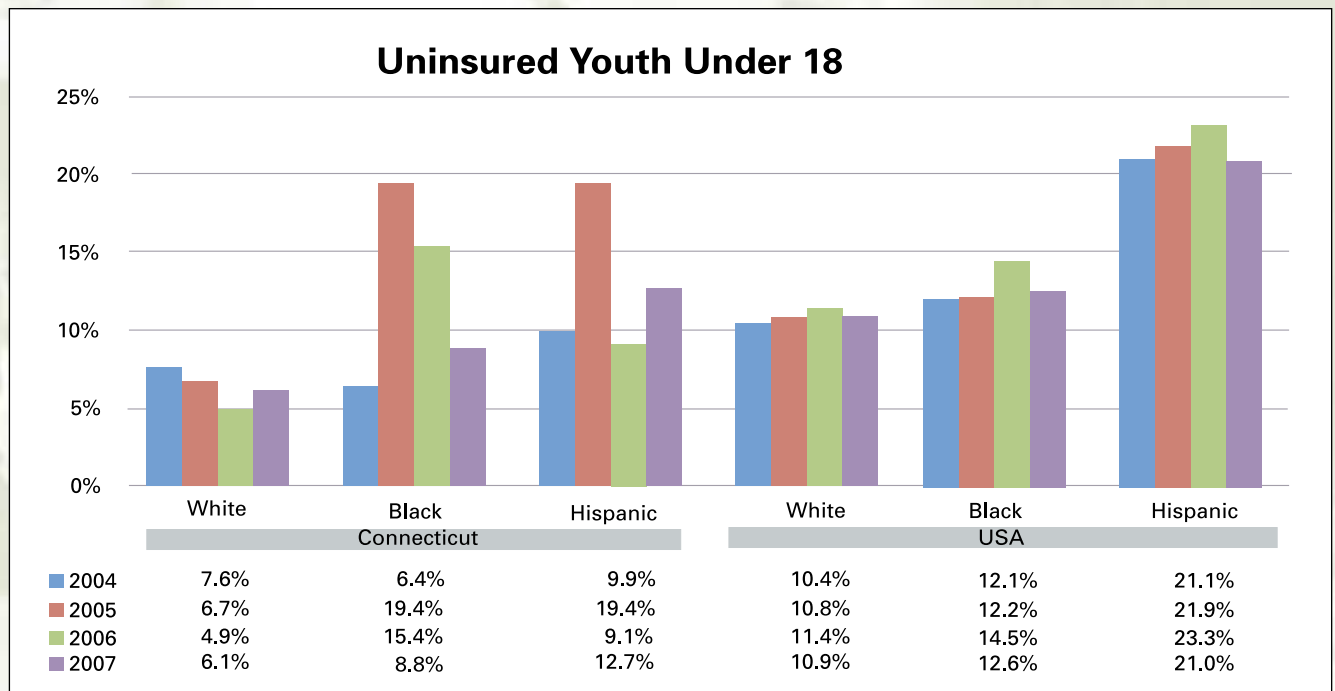
This category includes access to physical and mental health services, as well as the decisions young people make about behaviors that affect their health and the condition of young people's physical environments (which can affect both physical and mental health). It also encompasses the development of positive relationships with adults and the reinforcement of positive values and self-worth that help to build resiliency, a crucial goal in positive youth development.

Indicator: Percent of children under 18 who are not covered by health insurance.<sup>xii</sup>

**In 2007, 55,000 children (6.3%) were uninsured in Connecticut.**

### Why is this Important?

Children covered by health insurance are more likely to receive regular health care (including preventive care) and access to prescription medicines if they need them. Lack of care can result in failure to identify illnesses and other health problems, as well as failure to identify developmental delays. Children who are ill miss school, so there is an educational impact as well. This is a prime example of the "pay now or pay later" phenomenon, in which the cost of prevention at early stages is far outweighed by the costs of dealing with the results when prevention is lacking.



### How is Connecticut Doing?

- *In 2007, 55,000 of Connecticut's children under 18 (6.3%) were without insurance, compared to the US average of 11.2 percent.*
- *The trend in Connecticut dropped between 2005 and 2007, from 8.1 to 6.3 percent.*

Indicator: Teen birth rate <sup>xiii</sup>

**In 2006, births to teenage women were at seven percent, well below the nationwide rate.**

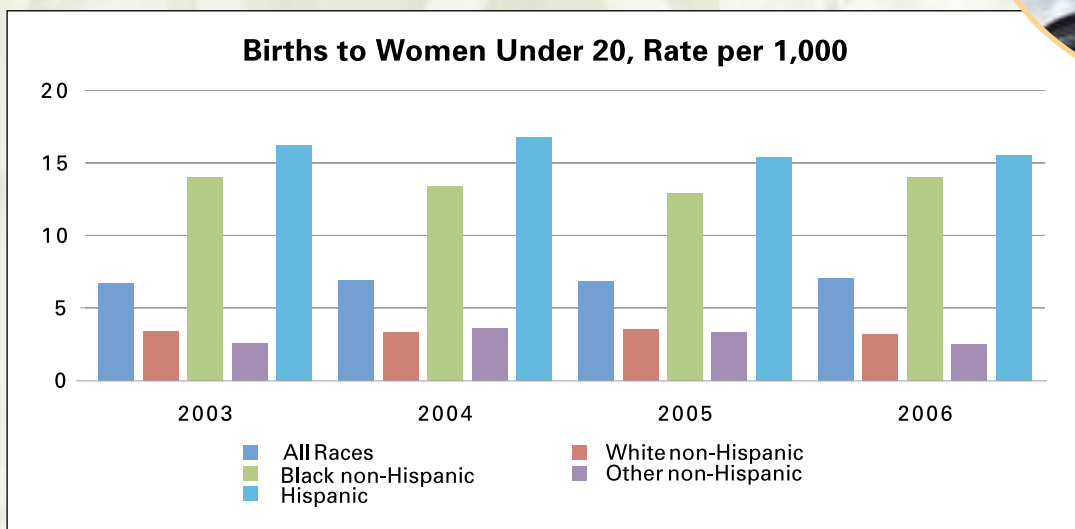
## Why is this Important?

There are three potential sets of consequences when teenage girls become mothers. The health of a teenage mother has a bearing on the baby. Teenage girls are less likely to gain the adequate amount of weight during pregnancy, which leads to low-birth-weight babies. Teenage girls are more likely to continue smoking, increasing the risks of miscarriage and other pregnancy complications such as still birth and premature birth.

Teen pregnancy also runs the risk of pregnancy complications such as anemia, high blood pressure and premature labor. Babies born to teenage mothers are more likely to be of low birth weight and sometimes have complications such as undeveloped organs and subsequent problems such as respiratory distress or vision loss.

There are also consequences for the mother and her future:

- Teenage mothers are more likely to drop out of school;
- Due to lack of adequate job skills, a teen mother may become dependent on welfare or live in poverty; and
- Lack of social support systems and parenting skills lead to a stressful situation arising out of a teen pregnancy.



## How is Connecticut Doing?

- *Connecticut's teen birth rate is well below the national average, but, like the national rate, is showing signs of rising after several years of decline.*
- *When data are disaggregated for 2006, Black and Hispanic women's birth rates (14% and 15.5% respectively) are more than four times as high as non-Hispanic White women's rates (3.2%).*



Indicator: Percent of students who attempted suicide one or more times during the previous 12 months.<sup>xiv 1</sup>

**In 2007, nearly 10 percent of youth reported attempting suicide at least once in the past 12 months.**



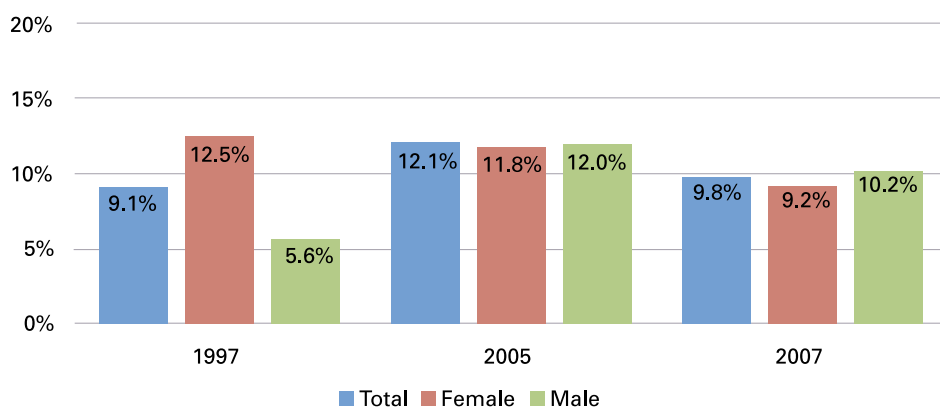
### Why is this Important?

Many people overlook the problem of teen suicide. However, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report that the number of teen suicides has been increasing in recent years. There are more pressures on teenagers than ever before, and many of them are having trouble coping with the demands placed on them. Another problem is that suicide is starting to take on a sort of dark glamour, as some social networking websites feature suicide pacts among their members.

There are a number of factors that lead teenagers to attempt suicide. Depression and stress are clearly two factors. In addition, youth threatened or injured by a peer are 2.4 times more likely to report suicidal thoughts, and 3.3 times more likely to report suicidal behavior than non-victimized peers.

Youth suicide is a serious problem that can have lasting harmful effects on individuals, families, and communities. Investing in programs and policies that reduce peer victimization experiences in schools might have far-reaching effects on suicidal behavior.

### Percent Age 15–17 Attempting Suicide in Past Year



<sup>1</sup> The question regarding attempted suicide is one of several in the Connecticut School Health Survey, which asks questions on a variety of behaviors including the use of drugs and other illegal substances. Many of the questions highlight the harmful actions that youth take in response to stress and the desire to take risks.

## How is Connecticut Doing?

- *In comparison to the nation, Connecticut had a higher rate of attempted suicide (9.8%) than the nation as a whole (6.9%).*
- *Self-inflicted injuries were the third leading cause of injury leading to hospitalization in Connecticut between 2000 and 2004, an average of 1,192 cases per year.*
- *80 percent of suicide attempts occur between the ages of 15 and 49, with those 15-19 having the highest rate within that group.*
- *More than twice as many females between 15 and 19 are hospitalized due to suicide attempts compared to males, although males are more likely to complete the suicide.*
- *The trend over time is not clear. The three years of data available show a spike in 2005, but future data will be necessary to determine any trend.*

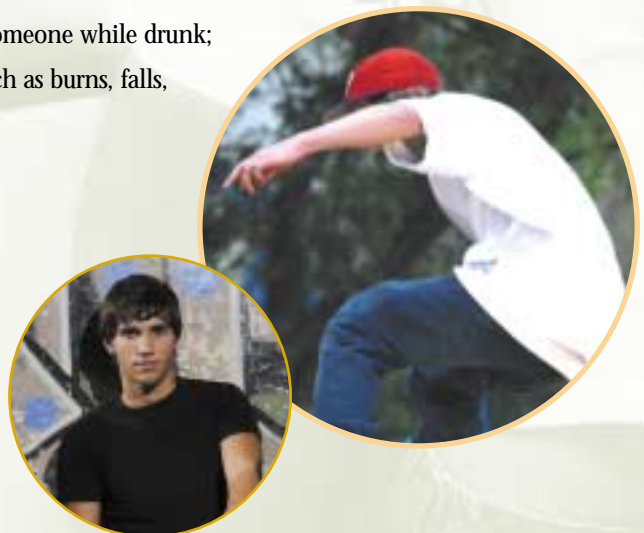
Indicator: Percent of students who had five or more drinks in a row within a couple of hours on at least one day in the past 30 days.<sup>xv 1</sup>

**In 2007, 26.2 percent of respondents age 15-17 reported at least one incident of binge drinking in the last 30 days.**

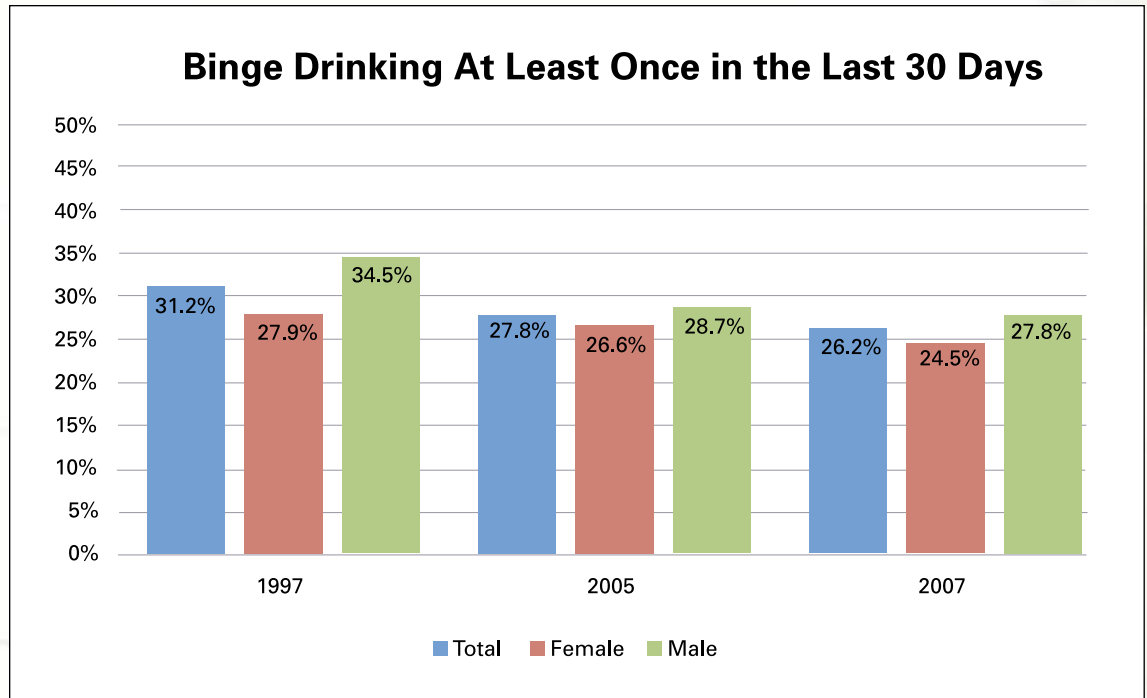
## Why is this Important?

Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience a variety of problems including:

- School problems, such as higher absence and poor or failing grades;
- Social problems, such as fighting and lack of participation in youth activities;
- Legal problems, such as arrest for driving or physically hurting someone while drunk;
- Alcohol-related car crashes and other unintentional injuries, such as burns, falls, and drowning;
- Memory problems;
- Abuse of other drugs; and
- Changes in brain development that may have life-long effects.



<sup>1</sup> The binge drinking question is one of several in the Connecticut School Health Survey.



### How is Connecticut Doing?

- *The rate of binge drinking among Connecticut youth is the same as the national average, 26 percent.*
- *Rates of binge drinking did not change significantly between 2005 and 2007, although the rates for both years are lower than for 1997.*
- *When disaggregated, the data show that while males were more likely than females to engage in binge drinking in 2007, the gap between young men and women has diminished--there is only a three percentage point difference compared to a seven-point difference in 1997.*



## Implications of the Indicators

The indicators reported under Physical and Mental Health are connected by common threads: loss, missed opportunities, and societal costs. Young people can lose skills and talents through illness, injury, or death. They can miss opportunities to gain and develop those skills and talents when their education is hindered by mental or physical health problems. Whether the loss is to the state's workforce, to the "talent pipeline," to families, or to the quality of life for these young people, everyone loses.

Two public costs are significant. The first is the cost of treating illnesses or injuries that could have been prevented, including health problems resulting from alcohol or substance abuse. The other is the significant cost of remedial education for young people whose academic preparation has been adversely affected by health-related problems. In the case of teenage mothers, both the parent and child may require significant remediation.

Losses related to attempted suicide are not obvious simply from the action of attempting suicide. Rather, the losses are linked to the depression and psychological trauma that underlie those suicide attempts. The trauma results in loss of the social and cognitive development required to make the most of educational opportunities. Some of the costs are related to the treatment necessary to improve psychosocial health. The other costs are more long-term, with continuing limitations on the young person's ability to contribute to work and family.

Having health insurance coverage makes it more likely that children will get the health care they need, including preventive care and prescription medications as well as early identification of physical or mental health problems. Those with insurance coverage are more likely to have better health overall, which in turn results in better school attendance and better performance in school, as well as better chances of finding work. Overall, the implications of unhealthy youth include higher public costs for treatment than for prevention.

Births to teenagers have a variety of wide-reaching implications, affecting children as well as parents. Children born to teenage parents are more prone to premature birth, low birth weight, and infant mortality, as well as other health challenges. They are also likely to have comparatively poor academic and developmental outcomes. Teenage parents are likely to rely on public assistance, which incurs costs to society. While we have programs that have proven effective in preventing teenage mothers from having a second child, we still need to find better ways to prevent unintentional first pregnancies. ■





## Job Readiness

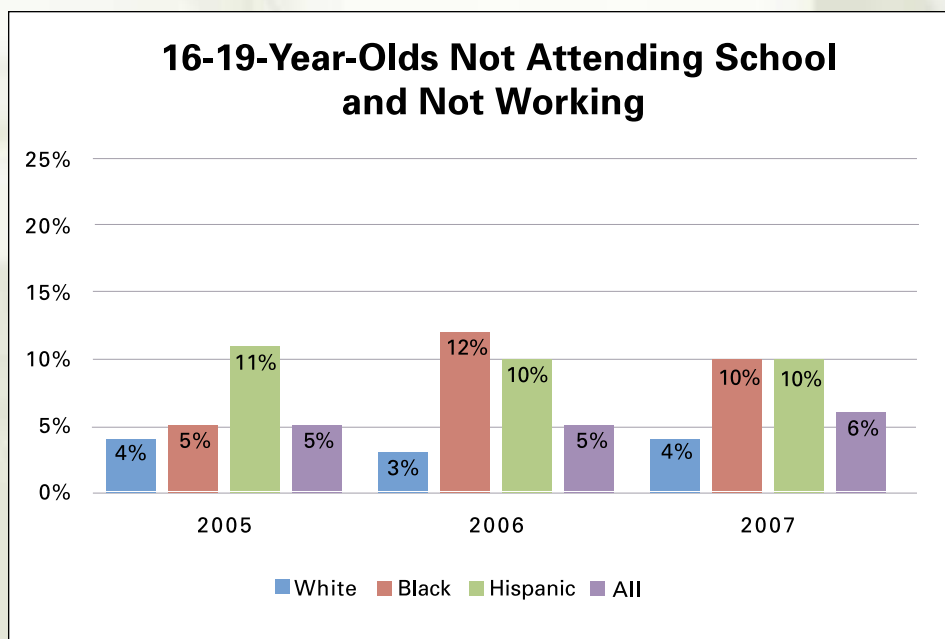
Job readiness is crucially important in order for young people to be able to pursue employment actively and to gain the work experience that they need to prepare for careers. Important components of job readiness include: knowledge of career opportunities, job-seeking and applying skills, access to job training, and workplace experience that teaches the skills necessary for success (positive attitude, timeliness, performance, ability to relate to supervisors, ability to work well with others). Forty percent of Connecticut's workforce in 2020 is projected to come from urban areas, where the gap in reading and math scores between White and minority students is greatest, and so the job readiness of youth is of vital importance for the state's future economic competitiveness.

Indicator: Percent of 16-19-year-olds not working or in school <sup>xvi</sup>

**In 2008, 12,000 youth (6%) were not in school and not working.**

### Why is this Important?

16-19-year-olds who are neither in school nor working are at risk of being trapped in the cycle of poverty. At a critical juncture, their lives are essentially "on hold," with regard both to their educational progress and to their ability to gain work experience that can help them progress toward good careers. Being in this situation puts them at significant risk for diminished employment prospects during their adult years. More immediately, it increases the likelihood of their engaging in risky behaviors or becoming involved in crime.



## How is Connecticut Doing?

- *Connecticut ranks 8th among the states in the percent of youth not working and not in school.*
- *After a decline between 2004 and 2005, the rate has climbed to six percent and remained there for the last two years.*
- *Minority youth are twice as likely as Whites to be out of school and not working at this age.*

Indicator: Percent of high school graduates with at least four years of math and three years of science xvii

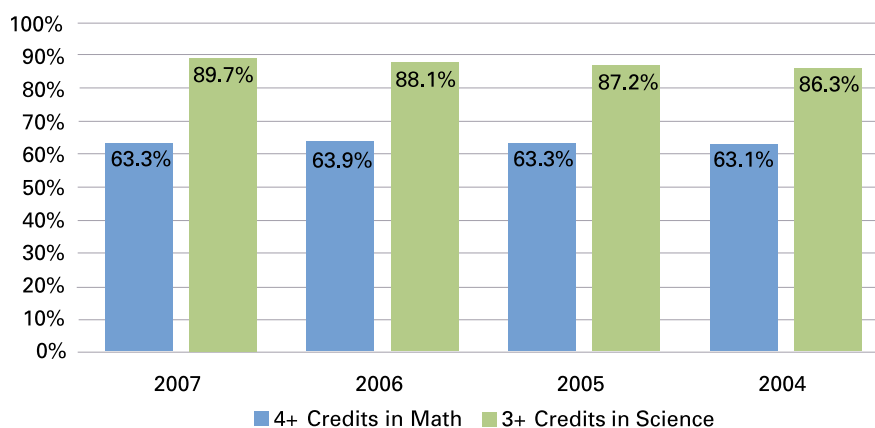
**While the percent of students with three credits in science remains fairly high, the percent with four years of math remained at only 63 percent in 2007.**

## Why is this Important?

Young people who graduate from high school with at least four years of math and three years of science are in a good position relative to their classmates. Their chances of success in the job market are better, and if they choose to go to college their probability of successful completion is also higher. STEM skills (science, technology, engineering, and math) are increasingly recognized as critically important for 21st century workplace success, and so these young people are in an advantageous position with regard to their future work and careers.



**Students Graduating with 4+ Credits in Math and 3+ Credits in Science**



## How is Connecticut Doing?

- *While the decline in the percent with three credits in science is small, the trend is in the wrong direction.*

Indicator: Percent of youth whose head of household is a high-school dropout <sup>xviii</sup>

**In 2007, 76,000 children under 18 (9%) lived in households in which the head of household was a high-school dropout.**

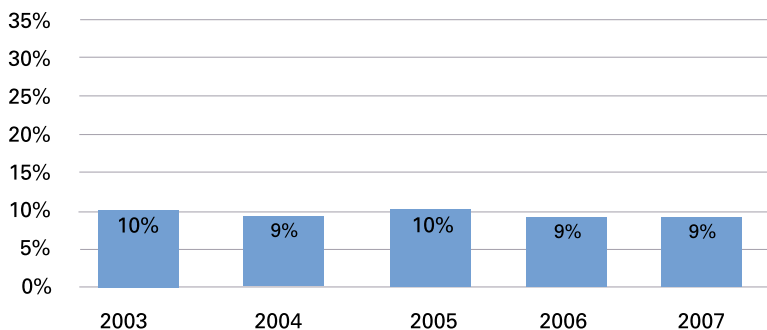


### Why is this Important?

For some years, experts have recognized that parental education, particularly mothers' education level, is associated with children's academic achievement. In cases where problems arise, they begin early. Compared to infants whose mothers have a Bachelor's degree or higher, infants and toddlers whose mothers have less than a high school diploma score lower on both cognitive and behavioral measures, and they are also less likely to be in excellent or very good health. Other research with 12-18-year-olds indicates that maternal education level affects young people's aspirations about post-secondary education.

The effects of increasing mothers' academic achievement are also important because they have a positive impact on children academically (reading in particular). Families in which the head of household has a low education level are often households in which children are generally at risk. These households are usually poor and often have only one parent. Moreover, that one parent is likely to have an inconsistent work history. Increased academic achievement improves the parent's income and strengthens their attachment to the labor market. But recent research suggests that it also improves the parent's involvement with children's schoolwork, leading to greater likelihood of future success for those children.

#### Children Living with Household Head Who is Without a High School Diploma



### How is Connecticut Doing?

- *At nine percent, Connecticut is well below the nationwide rate of 15 percent but nine states have lower rates.*
- *The Connecticut rate has varied by only one percent over the last five years.*

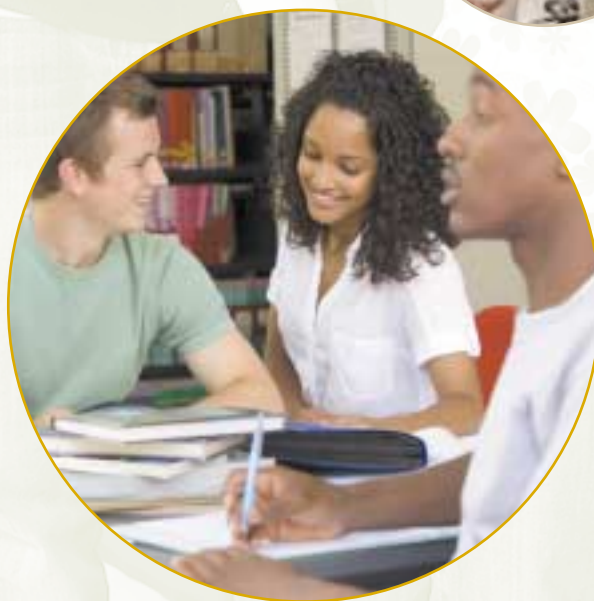


## Implications of the Indicators

Job readiness has obvious implications for the employability of individuals, for their future earnings and contributions to the economy as taxpayers, and for the quality of their individual and family lives. In Connecticut, where 40 percent of the state's workforce is projected to come from urban areas by 2020, the job readiness of all of the state's youth is critically important for filling the talent pipeline with competent people who can contribute to the state's economic competitiveness. The indicators in this section shed light on several aspects of the job readiness of young people.

Evidence from large population analyses link early work experience (which requires job readiness) with a greater likelihood of graduating from high school. Dropping out has been shown to have dramatically negative effects on lifelong employability and earnings. Accordingly, the percent of young people who are neither in school nor working is a key indicator that should be monitored closely. State officials have recently emphasized the importance of dropout prevention, and vigorous efforts on this front should continue to develop policies designed to reduce the percentage of youth who find themselves neither in school nor working full time.

In Connecticut, where the importance of creativity and innovation combined with technical skills is vitally important to the economy, young people with strong math and science backgrounds are particularly needed. Conversely, children in households where no parent has a high school diploma are unlikely to be exposed to adults who model the importance of educational achievement or to be in environments where the pursuit of math and science are valued. Children from such families need especially strong supports in school, encouraging them to open up to their future possibilities through academic achievement and informing them about exciting career options that can be accessible for those with math, science, and technology skills. The parents of those children need to have access and opportunity to further their own education, since that is another way for their children to receive the right messages about learning and its value. ■





## Formal Education

The bar for a minimal level of success in formal education used to be set at completion of a high school education or GED. In light of the increasing skill requirements of the 21st-century workplace, the bar for success is now set higher, and requires post-secondary education or training that leads to a four-year degree, a two-year degree, vocational certification, or other work-related credential.

"The inadequate preparation of too many of our secondary school students and troubling graduation rates from many of our high schools present one of the special challenges to be addressed in the coming years."<sup>1</sup> As noted earlier, 40 percent of the state's work-force in 2020 is projected to come from urban areas, where the achievement gap is greatest, and so the academic preparation of all youth is extremely important.

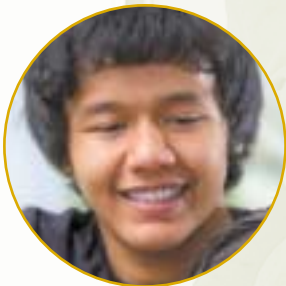
Indicator: High school graduation rate (9th-12th grade on-time graduation) <sup>xxi</sup>

**In 2006, the statewide graduation rate was just under 81 percent.**

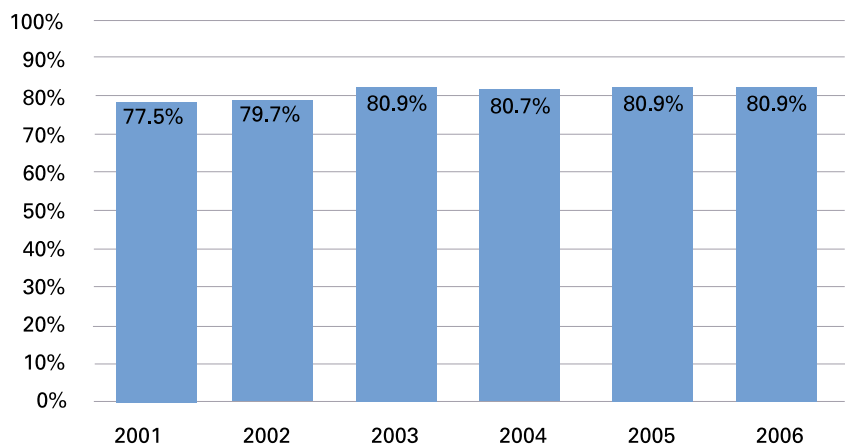
### Why is this Important?

The educational achievement gap is reflected starkly in this indicator. Minority students graduate at significantly lower rates than White students.

Graduating from high school on time (completing grades 9-12 within four years) is also strongly related to whether or not a young person will require significant remediation if he or she goes to college (including community college). Remediation is a large and problematic issue for many colleges in Connecticut, as noted later, and it can be traced back to academic performance in high school and even in middle school. High school graduation is also strongly related to work readiness, as employers look for a high school diploma even in hiring for entry-level jobs.

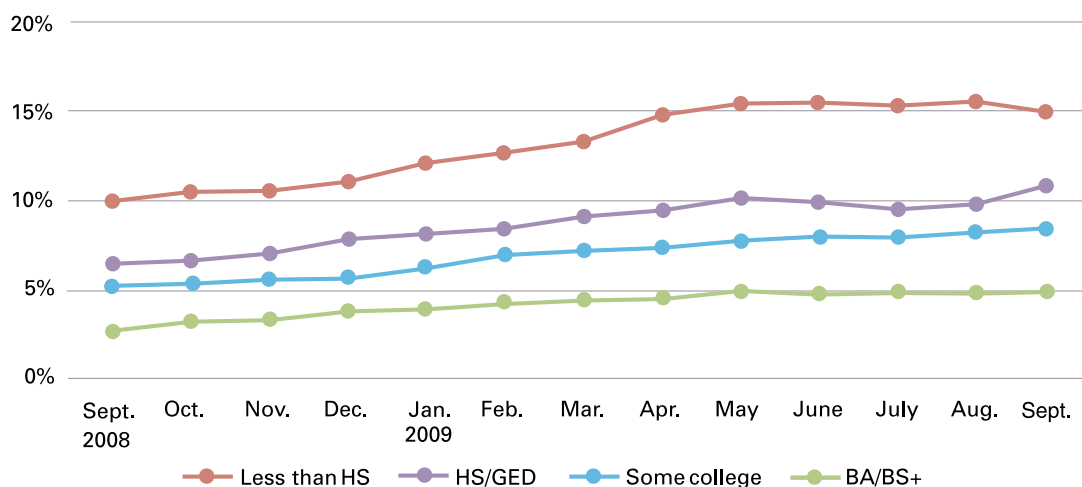


### On-Time High School Graduation Rate



<sup>1</sup> "2009 Annual Report Card," Connecticut Employment and Training Commission, p. 20.

## National Unemployment Rates by Education Level



## How is Connecticut Doing?

- *In 2005-2006, Connecticut had one of the highest graduation rates in the country, although there are 12 states with higher rates.*
- *After some gains from 2000-2001 to 2001-2002, Connecticut's graduation rate has settled at just under 81 percent.*

Indicator: 8th grade reading and math scores (NAEP)

**In 2007, 33 percent of 8th graders showed proficiency in reading and 35 percent showed proficiency in math.** <sup>xxii</sup>

## Why is this Important?

Eighth-grade reading and math scores are a powerful predictor of the degree of academic success an individual student is likely to have in high school, and also of students' work readiness. These scores are related to the family environment (whether young children are read to, and whether they hear spoken words and learn them).

Another factor is the increasing number of English Language Learners in the state. ELL students face the challenge of attaining English proficiency while trying to master academic content in general education classrooms.

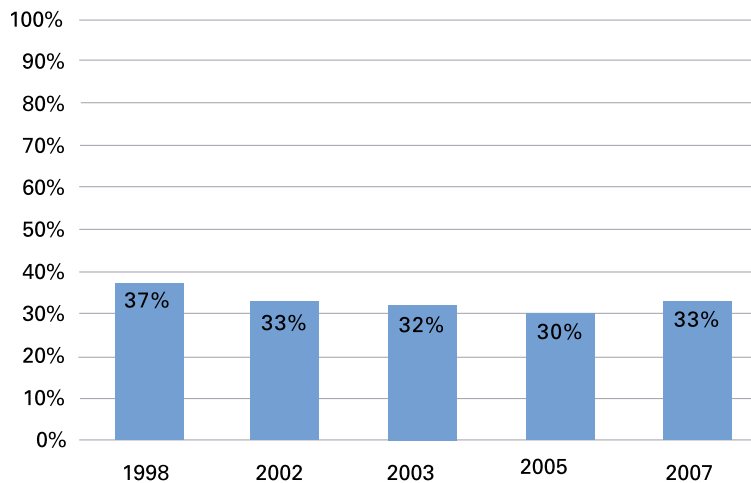
Standardized testing illustrates the resultant academic achievement gap. On the Connecticut Mastery Test (Grades 3 – 8), a smaller share of ELL students achieved proficiency or better compared with all students on Math (61.8% versus 82.2%) and Reading (49.9% and 75.5%). Similarly, on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (Grade 10), fewer ELL students than all students achieved proficiency on Math (32.7% versus 79.9%) and Reading (41.8%).



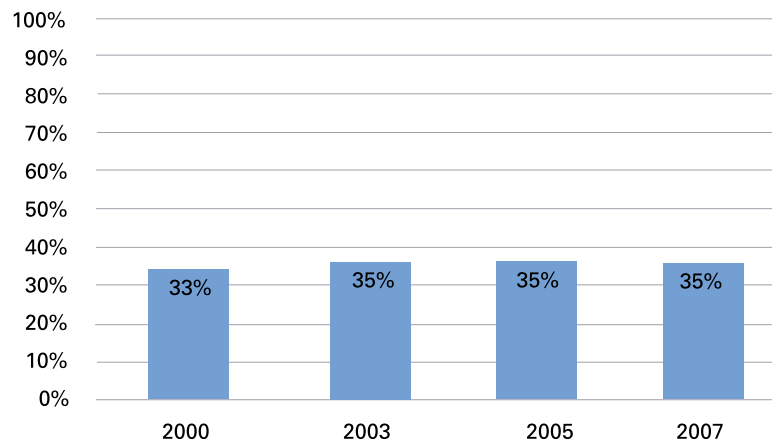
In addition, whether or not a child goes to pre-school before kindergarten is a key factor. Some or all of these elements have a bearing on the educational achievement gap between White and minority students. The middle-school years are generally recognized as a crucial threshold time for youth development, and scores on reading and math at that stage of young people's development are important as an indicator.



### 8th Grade Reading Proficiency (NAEP)



### 8th Grade Math Proficiency (NAEP)



### How is Connecticut Doing?

- *Connecticut's 8th grade mathematics and reading performance in 2007 were above the national average.*
- *The reading and math scores have remained about the same in the four most recent years.*
- *The reading score gap between Blacks and Whites remained similar between 1998 and 2007 and was not different than the national score gap. Although there were gains for both Whites and Blacks between 1990 and 2007, the math score gap between the two groups in 2007 was significantly above the national average.*



Indicator: On-time college graduation rate (three years for community colleges, six years for four-year colleges)<sup>2</sup> xxiii

**The community college system on-time graduation rate for 2007 was 10 percent, four points lower than in 2003 and five points lower than its national peers.**

**The state university system undergraduate on-time graduation rate for 2007 was 43 percent, three points higher than in 2004 but five points below its national peers.**

**UConn, Storrs undergraduate on-time graduation rate for 2007 was 74 percent, four points higher than 2004 and five points higher than its national peers.**

**Minority (Black and Hispanic) graduation rates in all schools are lower than White student rates.**

### Why is this Important?

These data suggest the worst of all potential situations: students who do not have the academic ability to handle the level of rigor that college demands, combined with institutions that lack the resources to help these students succeed.

The situation is further aggravated by several factors. First, Black and Hispanic students are more likely to drop out despite the fact that increasing numbers of them are beginning college. One factor that is becoming more widely recognized is the fact that ongoing support is needed by many low-income and minority youth in order for them to complete college successfully. In addition, some young people are simply not prepared for college (even with strong support) and would be better advised to enter post-secondary vocational/technical training for the numerous "middle-skill" jobs that pay well and that need capable workers. At present, remediation is needed by significant numbers of college freshmen, especially at community colleges, and the dropout rate is high. "The heavy demand for and cost of providing remedial and developmental instruction at the post-secondary level for high school graduates who lack the reading, writing and math skills to succeed in college places high additional costs on students and educational institutions and slows the progress of student acquisition of 21st century skills." xxiv (21st century skills include such skills as critical thinking, problem-solving, and working in teams, among others.)

The expectation that every young person should complete college has become pervasive in many parts of our society. However, it is unrealistic and unnecessary in some cases. There are large numbers of middle-skill jobs that require post-secondary training but not necessarily a college degree. The opportunity for college should be available for every young person who genuinely wants to travel that path, but other options for technical training, short of a four-year college degree, can also be beneficial in terms of long-term earnings potential.

In that regard, the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission has endorsed the policy position that "All Connecticut workers must have access to and acquire the equivalent of at least two years of education or training beyond high school, leading to an Associate's degree, a comparable vocational credential, or similar industry certification, including demonstrable competence in core academic, STEM, and 21st century skills, to compete in the workplace, thrive financially and contribute productively as a taxpayer, citizen and consumer." xxv

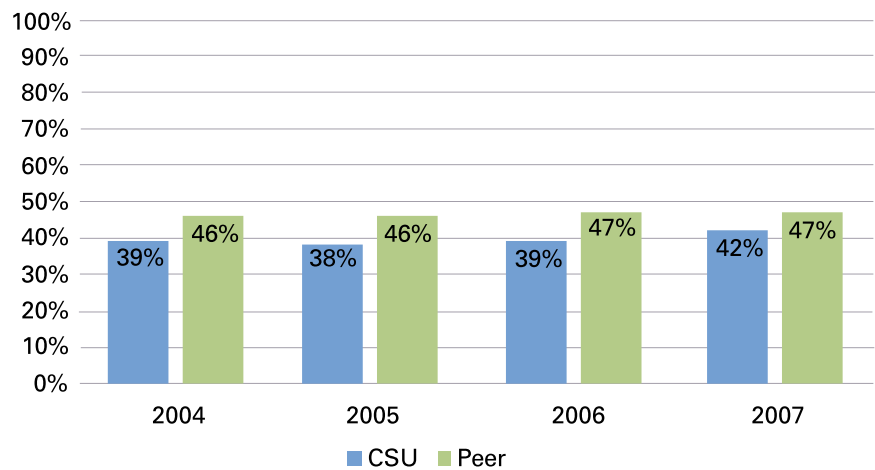


<sup>2</sup> The national standard for graduation rates uses a 6-year time frame for Bachelor degrees and a 3-year time frame for Associate degrees. A nationwide system of peer identification is also used, where individual institutions or post-secondary systems are matched too similar institutions or systems (peers) around the country.

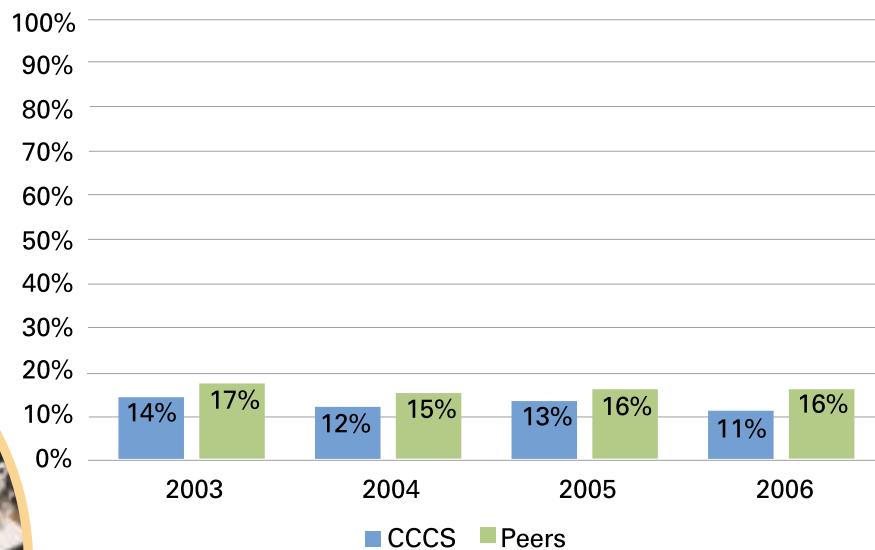




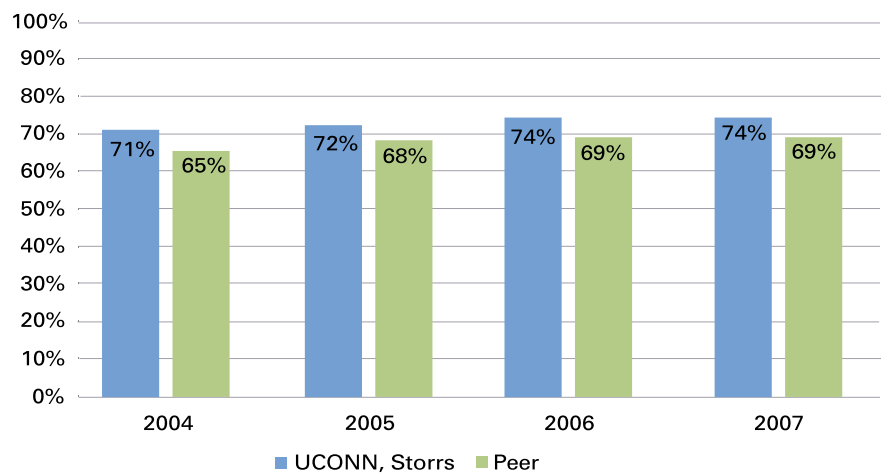
### Connecticut State University System 6-Year Graduation Rate



### Connecticut Community College System 3-Year Graduation Rate



### University of Connecticut, Storrs 6-Year Graduation Rate



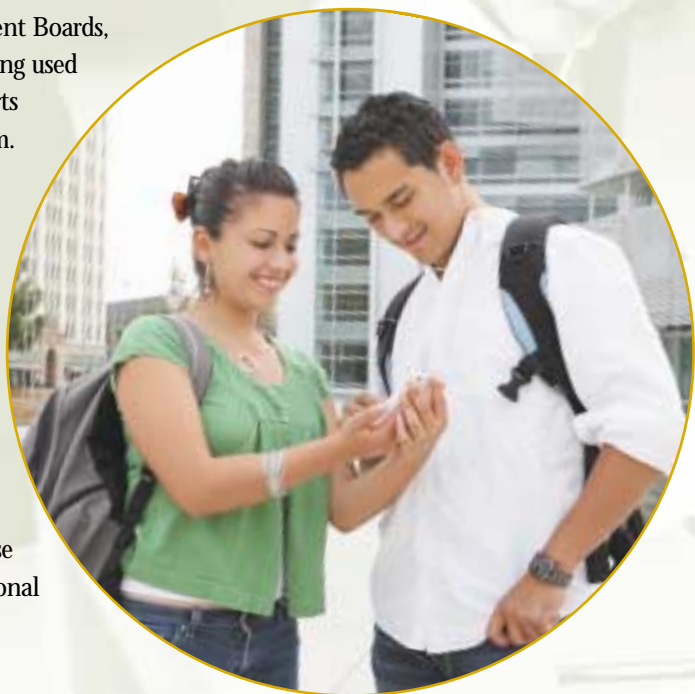
## How is Connecticut Doing?

- *Only UConn, Storrs has a graduation rate higher than its peer institutions.*
- *UConn and the CSU system have shown some improvement in the past five years, but the community college system's graduation rate has actually declined.*
- *All institutions are faced with continuing disparities in graduation rates between Black and Hispanic students and White students.*

## Implications of the Indicators

The education of Connecticut's children is of critical importance, not only for their future individual and family lives but also in order for the state to have a pipeline of talent that can support future economic competitiveness. The indicators in this section provide a snapshot of the educational situation in the state, and the picture is troubling in many ways. Together with many other observers, the CETC has gone on record expressing concern over the inadequate academic preparation of many students, as evidenced by disappointing high school and college graduation rates, the excessive need for remediation of entering college students, and the overall academic achievement gap. Connecticut has had a long and proud tradition of academic excellence, but the disturbing current reality is the erosion of that excellence in too many cases. The impact of educational achievement on job readiness and the workforce is direct and inescapable. Low levels of education perpetuate a cycle of poverty that often extends to succeeding generations with costs that must be borne by the society as a whole.

Through some of the state's Regional Workforce Investment Boards, the development of a system of career competencies is being used in out-of-school-time programs. There are also some efforts to infuse work-related content into high school curriculum. Both of these efforts show promise in making high school more relevant for many disaffected young people, particularly in urban areas. That possibility of increased relevance also has implications for dropout prevention. In addition to relevance, many young people need increased emotional maturity to succeed in school. One way that maturity develops is through a relationship with a caring adult. Researchers and young people themselves identify the importance of a caring adult (e.g., a teacher, counselor, or coach) in their lives as important to their ability to achieve their potential. These realities may help to inform policies to address an educational situation that is increasingly disturbing in Connecticut. ■



# Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the requirements of Special Act 08-3, along with the analyses of the indicators and their implications.

1. The first recommendation is to create an entity to conduct the functions listed in the legislation, and to be the state's "nerve center" for data and information related to youth policy. These functions are crucially important for enhancing the state's talent pipeline, building the future workforce (upon which future economic competitiveness depends), and reporting on our progress.

As described in the legislation, the state needs to build the capacity to collect, report, and analyze data that can help track progress on youth development and guide policy decisions at the state and local levels. Connecticut needs a central entity that can serve as a repository of youth-related data and information for state policy-makers as well as local planners. The creation of such an entity would require funding support. Among other activities, this entity would do the following:

- Be a central repository for data related to youth development;
- Produce regular reports on the status of youth in the state and the progress being made to identify and implement strategies that work;
- Make data available to local and state planners and policy-makers;
- Conduct policy-relevant research and analysis;
- Develop policy guidelines for the delivery of youth services based on appropriate outcomes consistent with best/evidence-based practices for promoting positive youth development;
- Work with relevant state agencies and local service providers at the local community level to develop community-based strategic plans that advance positive youth development;
- Leverage financial support and co-investment for local efforts;
- Report on participation and outcomes for the target population, build capacity for public reporting and analysis, and measure progress toward attainment of positive youth outcomes.

2. The "Implications of the Indicators" sections of this report contain a number of "common threads" that can form the foundation of policy recommendations. Those common ideas include costs (public and societal); missed opportunities; losses affecting individuals, families, and society; education; and workforce preparation. Accordingly, we recommend that state policy-makers develop policies that recognize the following:

- The importance of educational achievement for future success and preparation for the workforce, and the importance of keeping young people in school;
- The importance of early identification of youth at risk in school, taking the time to use the data that we have;
- The importance of supporting families with "wrap-around" services (e.g., Multidimensional Family Therapy, Intensive In-Home Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services, and Family Resource Centers) so that they can meet basic and socio-emotional needs, providing the foundation for young people's success in life;
- The potential missed opportunities for gaining skills and talents if education is hindered by health problems (physical or mental), and the implications of those missed opportunities for workforce preparation;
- The importance of early intervention (including greater awareness of health and healthy behaviors among parents and youth) to reduce costs (public and societal) of health problems, dropouts, educational remediation, teen pregnancy, and crime/incarceration;

- The importance of a holistic approach to positive youth development (good test scores/cognitive development are not enough; young people need socio-emotional development too, as well as emphasis on healthy behaviors); and
  - The importance of strengthening collaborations among organizations in order to address the above issues.
3. A data development agenda should be created. The state needs to identify more clearly the gaps in knowledge about youth in Connecticut, and where better information is needed. For example:
    - Include ongoing work on attendance and suspensions/expulsions (support and publicize efforts that are already under way);
    - Identify ways to include more positive and asset-based indicators (similar to the indicator on page 5 showing percent of youth having at least one meal with their families five or more times a week); and
    - Collect additional evidence not only about "what works," but also about where various approaches are proving successful, through mapping efforts.
  4. The state needs to support youth employment in a more systematic way in order to help grow the future workforce. Integrating academic instruction with work experience has shown promise as a way to re-engage many disaffected youth and give them the necessary skills and experiences to improve their academic work and succeed in the workforce. The state needs to increase its strategic investments in supporting and promoting more of those kinds of opportunities, both during the summer months and year-round.
  5. The state needs to improve the capacity for providing data from the state level to local communities to inform local planning.
  6. The state needs to help facilitate better collaboration between schools and local community groups (an example is what has been happening in Hartford), and to support and publicize efforts already under way.

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## Future Funding Needs

- As described in the first of the "Policy Recommendations" above, the state needs the capacity to collect, report, and analyze data that can help track progress on youth development and guide policy decisions at the state and local levels. Connecticut needs a central entity that can serve as a repository of youth-related data and information for state policy-makers as well as local planners. Details on the further functions of such an entity are listed above. The creation of such an entity would require funding support. These functions are crucially important for enhancing the state's talent pipeline and building the future workforce, and require a more serious investment than a "within available appropriations" approach.
- In order to enable the CETC Youth Committee to continue producing future versions of this report, funding will be needed to support research, technical assistance, production, and dissemination of the report.
- Support is also needed for the implementation of local strategic plans for positive youth development. Pilot planning communities have been selected by the Youth Policy Council/CETC Youth Committee and they will provide important information on how to move forward on this important approach to making better use of the state's investments in youth. Specific details on the nature and quantity of the support necessary will be better understood after the first round of pilots has been completed.



## Agency Budget Data, State Fiscal Year 2008-09\*

### Board of Education Services for the Blind

Services and supports for children between 12 and 21	\$ 1,500,000
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### Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (DSS)

Vocational Rehabilitation for young adults	\$ 4,900,000
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### Department of Children and Families

Prevention/Education Services	\$ 419,927
Family Support, Child Safety and Reunification Services: Community-based	5,760,130
Juvenile Justice Services: Community-based	11,705,003
Medical Services	191,209
Mental Health Services: Community-based	16,369,628
Preparation for Adult Living Services: Community-based	2,248,723
Substance Abuse Services: Community-based	4,273,403
Out of Home Care Support and Services	1,177,327
Out of Home Care: Congregate Settings	132,647,720
Out of Home Care: Family-like Settings	9,740,765
Out of Home Care: Independent Living	10,861,373
Out of Home Care: Juvenile Justice Services	25,289,921
Hospitals	34,711,520

**Sub-total \$255,396,649**

### Department of Developmental Services

Support services for clients aging out of residential services w/ another agency or school system	\$ 2,857,000
Vocational supports for clients graduating from high school	6,614,000

**Sub-total \$ 9,471,000**

### Department of Correction

Unified School District #1 (students 21 and younger)	\$ 8,277,995
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### Department of Higher Education (students 21 and under)

Community Colleges	\$ 72,153,084
UConn	193,916,029
CSU	103,149,835
Charter Oak State College	461,302

**Sub-total \$369,680,250**

<b>Department of Labor</b> (all figures pro-rated for clients 21 and under)	
Jobs First Employment System	\$ 4,772,070
Wagner-Peyser (One-Stop system support)	539,470
WIA Adult & Dislocated Workers	471,272
WIA Youth (14-21)	6,309,045
State Youth Employment & Learning Program	5,000,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$ 17,091,857</b>

<b>Department of Public Health</b>	
School-Based Health Center Program	\$ 10,440,646
HIV/AIDS Prevention	369,192
Youth Camps	428,887
Pediatric Easy Breathing Program (Asthma)	500,000
Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Program	500,000
Sexually Transmitted Disease Testing & Treatment	150,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$ 12,388,725</b>

<b>Department of Social Services</b>	
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	\$ 59,638,170
Temporary Assistance to Families	28,545,483
HUSKY A	175,290,870
Family Planning	1,024,669
Teen Pregnancy Prevention	1,464,547
Behavioral Health	6,030,849
Preventative Dental	43,270
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$272,037,858</b>

<b>**State Department of Education</b>	
Special Education	\$ 251,334,110
Adult Education	25,460,244
K-12 Education	2,278,296,592
Out-of-School Time	16,923,436
Health and Nutrition	112,682,409
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$ 2,684,696,791</b>

<b>(Estimated) Total:</b>	<b>\$ 3,399,293,471</b>
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\* Figures shown are rough estimates, based on guidelines given to state agencies in requesting information. The agencies have all been tremendously helpful and cooperative in providing their budget data, but we emphasize that the intent here is to indicate an "order-of-magnitude" picture of the state's investment in youth rather than to show exact dollar amounts. In some cases, agency totals include substantial percentages of federal funds; in others, programs are supported primarily or solely with state funds.

\*\* The State Department of Education was able to pro-rate their figures only for certain services for the targeted population; in all other cases the numbers reflect services provided to the public school student population in grades PK through 12.

# End Notes

- i HUSKY data is the one exception since it captures the vast majority of uninsured youth statewide
- ii "Connecticut's Framework for Positive Youth Development: 2008 Vision for Action Report" Youth Futures Committee, p.7.
- iii U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
- iv U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
- v National Center for Children in Poverty. (1999). "Poverty and Brain Development." Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health. [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_398.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_398.html) Mather, M. & Adams, D. (2006) A KIDS COUNT/PRB Report on Census 2000: The Risk of Negative Child Outcomes in Low-Income Families. KIDS COUNT & Population Reference Bureau. <http://www.aecf.org/upload/PublicationFiles/DA3622H1234.pdf> Huffman, L.C., Mehlinger, S.L., & Kerivan, A.S. (2000). Risk Factors for Academic and Behavioral Problems at the Beginning of School. The Child and Mental Health Foundation Agencies Network.
- vi Connecticut School Health Survey, Connecticut Department of Public Health
- vii Connecticut School Health Survey, Connecticut Department of Public Health
- viii Connecticut Department of Children and Families and U.S. Census Bureau
- ix CWLA National Data Analysis System (<http://ndas.cwla.org>)
- xi U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
- xii Amato, P.R. & Maynard, R.A. 2006. Decreasing nonmarital births and strengthening marriage to reduce poverty. *The Future of Children* 17(2):117-41. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
- xiii Child Trends analysis of 1990-2005 Natality Data Set CD Series 21, numbers 2-9, 11-12, 14-16 (SETS versions), and 16H and 17 Ha (ASCII version), National Center for health Statistics.
- xiv Connecticut School Health Survey, Connecticut Department of Public Health
- xv Connecticut School Health Survey, Connecticut Department of Public Health
- xvi Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 200 Supplementary Survey, 2001 Supplementary Survey, 2002 through 2007 American Community Survey
- xvii Connecticut State Department of Education
- xviii U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
- xix Key Social, Income, Housing, Civic, Health and Incarcerations Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: findings for Connecticut Adults in the 21st Century. October 2009. Sum, A.; Khatiwada, I; McLaughlin, J.; with Palm, S. (Prepared for Our Piece of the Pie, Capital Workforce Partners, Nellie Mae Education Foundation and the Connecticut Office for Workforce Competitiveness.
- xx "2009 Annual Report/Card: A Talent-Based Strategy for Economic Competitiveness," Connecticut Employment and Training Commission, p. 16.
- xxi U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics
- xxii National KIDS COUNT Program
- xxiii Connecticut State Department of Higher Education, "Higher Education Counts: Achieving Results 2009"
- xxiv Connecticut Employment and Training Commission, "2009 Annual Report Card," p. 16.
- xxv Connecticut Employment and Training Commission, "2009 Annual Report Card," p. 13.



## Youth Policy Council/ Youth Committee of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission

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