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GUIDELINES FOR ADOPTION OF NEW CORE CITY DESIGNATION December 2012 HEALTH Epidemiologist and Evaluator Group

I. Background

RI KIDS COUNT coined the term core cities back in 1995 when they published their first Factbook using the 1990 Census. Cities/towns that had 15% or more of children living below the poverty threshold were classified as core cities and included Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence and Woonsocket. West Warwick was later added following the 2000 Census.

The main change in the 2010 Census is data products are derived from the “short-form” census questionnaire that collects age, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino origin, relationship, housing tenure. The past census used the “long-form” to capture more demographic and socioeconomic characteristics such as educational attainment, commuting, income, housing costs, and poverty. The long form is no longer collected as part of the Decennial Census, and instead has been replaced by the American Community Survey (ACS). As a continuous sample survey, ACS does not count everyone but relies on a sample of population each year and provide estimates of the characteristics of the population with margin of errors. Margin of error enables data users to measure the range of accuracy around each estimate. The larger the margin of error, the lower the accuracy of the estimate—and the less confidence one should have that the estimate is close to the true value. (Resource: US Census Bureau, <https://ask.census.gov>)

Because of this change in data collection, RI Kids Count changed their definition of the Rhode Island core cities. With the publication of their 2012 Factbook, RI KIDS COUNT used 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) data and modified the threshold to 25% as their cut off for children living in poverty. This new definition resulted in four cities (Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence and Woonsocket) with the highest percentages of children living below the poverty threshold in Rhode Island, and dropped Newport and West Warwick that display less reliable poverty level estimates with wide margins of errors (see attached data tables regarding error estimates).

II. Purpose of the guidelines

A discussion at a Department of Health Epidemiologist and Program Evaluators Meeting was held to understand the new Kids Count designation and a decision was made to research and develop a policy for HEALTH to have a standard guideline and provide direction.

III. Three Recommendations for Core City

1) Implement the new KIDS count Core City Designation.

Having considered the margin of errors of the percent of children under age 18 living below poverty, the estimates for Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence and Woonsocket are reliable and would remain as cities with the highest percentages of children living below the poverty threshold in Rhode Island where more than one in four (25%) children live below the poverty threshold.

- The Epidemiology and Evaluator Group recommends that starting in 2012 (or, when displaying 2011 data) , HEALTH programs should use the Kids Count 2012 definition for four core cities versus the prior six core cities.

2) Direct comparison should not be made.

The new designation is derived from a different data source; previously decennial Census was used and now five-year American Community Survey estimates are used. Secondly, the threshold changed from 15 percent to 25 percent of children living below poverty. Thirdly, two core cities have been dropped from the prior designation. It is not accurate to compare past core cities with new core cities.

- The Epidemiology and Evaluator Group recommends not comparing past core city analyses (six cities) with analyses using the new four core city designation. When monitoring trends or making comparisons across years, it is recommended that previous data are re-analyzed with the new four core city designation (e.g. compare the percent of children who are obese in 2008 living in core cities, versus the percent of children who are obese in 2012 living in core cities).

3) Suggested standard citation or footnote indicating the change.

It is important to document the change in data reports, burden documents, etc.

- The Epidemiology and Evaluator Group recommends using the following citation:
 - Prior to 2012, six core cities were identified as Rhode Island communities in which more than 15% of the children live below the poverty threshold according to the 2000 Census. They included: Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket. Beginning in 2012, four core cities were identified as Rhode Island communities in which more than 25% of the children live below the poverty threshold according to the 2006-2010 American Community Survey, conducted by the US Census Bureau. They include: Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

IV. Other considerations

The core city designation is not the only indicator that can be used to assess economic burden or geographic distribution of Rhode Islanders. HEALTH programs can use other designations and indicators at their discretion.