



"The goal of Trenton Kids Count is to provide a statistical and meaningful profile of the children and youth living in Trenton." Advocates for Children of New Jersey

Last week we had the opportunity to attend a gathering of Trenton's non-profit, business, and faith community to learn about the updated Kids Count. The Event was hosted by the Smith Family Foundation, The Burke Foundation and the Princeton Area Community Foundation. The data reveals some changes in the data from 2019, the time of the last Kids Count.

The Kids Count presents demographic data and then breaks down the data into six areas of impact: Family Economic Security, Child Health, Child Protection, Child Care, Education and Teens. And we must consider that all this data was impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Here are some take aways:

- The data tells us several stories; first that the demographics in Trenton are shifting somewhat, economic security is somewhat better but there are still too many families living in extreme poverty.
- There are better birth outcomes but there is still a long way to go to provide the optimum support for mothers. And lead in the water and ground in Trenton continues to cause health issues for children.
- There was a decline in children needing Child Protection and Permanency services, with less cases of substantiated findings of abuse and neglect. Another note is the Federal oversight of the NJ Department of Children and Families is ending after 20 years.

- There continues to be a demand for childcare providers and this segment of the service industry was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 shutdowns and safety protocols.
- The Education statistics really show the effect the pandemic had on learning. This information is stunning. **In English Language Arts Assessment Results, we learn that 79% of all 4th grade students need strong in school support in order to learn compared to 41% statewide. 56% of students in 10th grade need advance levels of support compared to 21% statewide.** These students have a lot of catching up in an education system that is significantly underfunded and overburdened.

When we look at Teens, we see a steady rate of teen pregnancy and teen deaths from 2016-2020. Clearly this is a result of the huge challenges faced by families in Trenton and the Trenton School District.

During the event, a panel consisting of Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, Dr. Rachel J. Evans of Henry J. Austin Health Center, Denise Kreiss, parent coordinator and homeless liaison for the Trenton Public Schools, and moderator Eleanor Horne, trustee emeritus of the Princeton Area Community Foundation offered insights into the data. Everyone wants to see these children and youth exceed expectations, but as Dr. Evans said it is difficult because the healthcare, education and government systems do not offer the change that is necessary for that to happen.

Here is a [LINK](#) to use to read the Kids Count document online. This data informs our work at UPT and although it can sometimes feel like we are faced with an overwhelming task, it is work worth the time and effort. Every kid counts.