



PRESS RELEASE

Community Report: The Status of Branford Children Released

Branford, October 15th, 2015: Branford's children are the focus of a recent report released by the Branford Early Childhood Collaborative (BECC). The Community Report: The Status of Branford Children presents a compilation of public data on important factors influencing children in Branford. It shows, similar to many communities, Branford is experiencing a shift in socio-economics, race and ethnicity. This report is important because demographic changes can influence the health patterns in the region, the number and type of services and resources in the area, and can have profound economic implications.

"We hope that this report will be used to take stock and prompt action to rally around our youngest most vulnerable citizens," said Robin Comey, Coordinator of Branford Early Childhood Collaborative. "We have an obligation to offer all children high-quality opportunities that are affordable to families from all backgrounds."

Among the findings of the report, which examined data on a variety of demographic, safety, health and education measures:

- Since 2010 we have seen an **increase of 71%** in households qualifying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Since 2009, Free and Reduced Lunch eligibility **rose 44% to 26.4%** of Branford students, grades K – 4.
- According to Ct. Department of Social Services, cases of substantiated abuse and neglect reports have increased **70% over the past 5 years (2009-2014)** with physical neglect cases making up more than 70% of the substantiated cases.
- In 2012, just over three quarters, **77.5%**, of our children (0-8 years) enrolled in Husky A, had one well-child visit in the past year and only **59.4%** of the same children had regular dental care.
- In early education, the Kindergarten Entrance Inventory, a teacher-administered report that measures how children are ready-for-kindergarten, shows over a four year period (2010-2014) that we have made little progress with **1 in 5 of our children requiring a substantial degree of instructional support** in both language and literacy domains.

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- Branford Public Schools (BPS) reported to have a fluctuating ELL (English Language Learning) population with over **1 in 4 having entered after the first day of school**. There were 40 languages, other than English spoken by students at BPS in the 2014-2015 school year.
- When investigating the 2012 Third Grade CMT scores in Branford, low-income children are not performing as well as their higher-income peers, as is the trend throughout the United States, In Branford we found a **25%-29% performance gap** between those students who qualified for free & reduced lunch and those that did not qualify.

While this report stops short on making recommendations, some bright spots that were recognized:

- An increased focus on making food available for children through; the USDA's Summer Meals Initiative; Feed Branford Kids, a voluntary elementary weekend food program; and the School Breakfast program.
- The expansion of East Shore District Health Department's (ESDHD) federally funded home visiting program, Nurturing Families Network to service Branford's at-risk families.
- Branford receives a 5-year School Readiness grant through Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood providing low cost preschool for thirteen, 3 and 4 year olds.
- Additional resources and staffing through Branford Public Schools for the ELL/ESOL students using Title III consolidated grants as well as a District Strategic Success Plan that prioritizes the performance gap through careful data analysis at the district, school, and classroom level.

"Creating a coordinated network of supports for children and families before the children enter the school system is critical," said Meredith Gaffney, Accountability Project Coordinator of the Status Report.

"Investment in early childhood pays dividends to local governments across time, and across systems as disparate as education, health care, and law enforcement."

Branford Early Childhood Collaborative is funded by a partnership grant from the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund (GMF), The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, The Children's Fund of Connecticut and the community. The BECC works with community partners across the birth through age 8 continuum to provide analysis and advocate for a sustainable, systematic approach to improving outcomes for Branford children. This report was made possible with funding from Graustein Memorial Fund and the Greater New Haven Community Foundation. The Community Report: Status of Branford Children is available online at www.BranfordBECC.org with hard copies available upon request.

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