New Britain Children and Youth: 2000

by Priscilla F. Canny, PhD, Michelle Beaulieu and Meredith L. Rogers

Connecticut Voices for Children
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of the Child</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic History</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Population</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Poverty</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant and Child Health</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Health</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilient Youth</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a Difference</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary Table</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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All of the photographs in this report were taken in New Britain. We would like to extend a special thank you to all of the New Britain children and youth depicted in these photos.
Methodology

*New Britain Children and Youth 2000* is the product of the first-ever effort to compile data on a wide range of indicators of child and youth well-being in New Britain in a single and comprehensive report. This report is intended for a technical audience that has some familiarity with data and statistics on child indicators.

The information included in this report is compiled primarily from readily available public sources, integrating data about children and youth to present a composite picture of child well-being in New Britain. Ethnic, geographic and temporal differences in these data in New Britain and similar towns in Connecticut are highlighted where appropriate. While this report includes a wealth of data on children and youth in New Britain, the included indicators cannot completely define the challenges and strengths of our children and youth. Nevertheless, we hope that this report will serve as a useful resource and guide for agencies, organizations and individuals interested in child well-being in New Britain.

The data presented in this report reflect the experiences of children from birth through adolescence in New Britain. We have chosen to present individual indicators in one or more of the following ways in order to highlight the most important implications of the data:

- annual data for a single year,
- three-year averages to minimize statistical fluctuations,
- trends over many years to illustrate important changes and permit long-term comparisons,
- and geographic comparisons between New Britain, Meriden, Hartford and Connecticut. We chose Hartford as an example of another large city in Connecticut and Meriden because it has almost as many children as New Britain and a similar industrial history.

While we have included only the most current, accurate, reliable data available, often these data are two or three years old. The primary sources of data used in this report include state and local agencies, the Voice of New Britain Youth Survey and the US Bureau of the Census. A detailed list of sources is included at the end of this report, and the sources of individual data are cited with tables and in text, where necessary.

A few notes to keep in mind as you read this report:

- Beware of small numbers! Since the population of New Britain is relatively modest in comparison with other cities, data on rare events (such as infant deaths) may fluctuate widely from year to year, by virtue of their small numbers. Multiple-year averages are useful tools for overcoming this variability, and are used in several sections to help illustrate temporal trends and progress toward city goals.

- As we approach the 2000 Census, information from the 1990 Census becomes less reliable. Unfortunately, an accurate count of New Britain’s child population is obtained only during Census years. For the years between the Census (1990-2000), the number of children in Connecticut towns, and their distribution by age and sex, can only be estimated. Estimates for 1997 and 1998 have been obtained from the State Department of Public Health and the Department of Economic and Community Development (provided by Claritas), respectively.

- In many places in this report, we include a short definition of the indicators discussed and how they are calculated. For some of the common indicators, however, we have not included this information. In such cases, we ask that you look to the source of the data (such as the Strategic School Profiles) for clarification, if needed.

We hope that this report will serve to stimulate dialogue throughout New Britain about how best to improve the health and well-being of children and youth in this city. Together, we can use these data to guide our efforts toward addressing the most pressing challenges New Britain children and youth are facing today.

Sources: Two child well-being reports, *Wilmington Kidscount* and *Keeping Track of New York City’s Children*, were used in the preparation of this page.
New Britain children are resilient. As the pages to follow show, many of New Britain’s children and youth are thriving, despite the adverse effects of the city's changing economy. In most cases, this resilience is a direct reflection of the good will and commitment towards improving the lives of children that is so evident in the community. It is this commitment that offers children in the city a promise of change, of increased opportunities and exposure to fewer risks, in the years to come.

As an example of their resilience, New Britain children are doing well in many areas, particularly education. The majority of students who graduate from New Britain high schools attend college or other educational institutions. In addition, an increasing proportion of elementary and middle school students are meeting goals on the Connecticut Mastery Test and the President’s Physical Fitness Test.

The data presented in this report also demonstrate that New Britain children face several challenges to their well-being. One of the purposes of this report is to identify these challenges with the hope of highlighting important areas where resources and programs for children should be targeted in New Britain. Some of the most pressing challenges noted in this report include:

- **Child Poverty**: One in four children in New Britain lives in a home with income below the federal poverty level.
- **Prenatal care and Infant Mortality**: Nearly one quarter of infants in New Britain are born with late or no prenatal care. The infant mortality rate in the city is almost twice the rate in Connecticut overall.
- **Teen Births**: The teen birth rate in New Britain is more than twice the rate for the state as a whole.
- **High School Drop-Out Rate**: Nearly one-third of students in New Britain’s class of 1998 dropped out of high school before graduating.
- **Violence**: One fifth of New Britain 7th graders reported carrying a weapon during the past month in 1999.

New Britain Children and Youth 2000 is the first comprehensive report on the status of children and youth in this city. It is intended to serve as a benchmark, against which we may measure the success of future efforts to improve the lives of children and youth in New Britain. We hope this report will also stimulate dialogue among New Britain residents, organizations, businesses and agencies about the welfare of children living in the city, and where resources may be best targeted to enhance their well-being. Through communication and collaboration, we can address the many challenges facing New Britain children and youth, and make this city an even better place for children to grow, play and learn.
New Britain Children and Youth: 1999

Economic History

New Britain’s Transition to the “New Economy”
A Special Report by Shelley Geballe, JD, MPH

For most of the 20th century, the vitality of the US economy was determined by the success of its major manufacturing industries....Today, information, technology, communications, and intellectual capital, rather than energy and raw materials, power business.

Remaining Vibrant in the New Economy
National Governors Association (1999)

Few Connecticut cities illustrate the challenges of the transition to the “New Economy” better than New Britain. By the beginning of the 20th century, New Britain had earned a national reputation as a center of innovation and industrial production. For decades, New Britain was a thriving center of heavy industry, becoming nationally-known for production of hardware, machine tools, specialty steels and other metal products. Even without post-secondary or advanced education, many of its residents earned incomes sufficient to support a family with only one parent working.

At the end of the 1950s, 24,000 manufacturing jobs employed about 60% of New Britain’s labor force. Ninety percent of these jobs were in nine large manufacturing companies and nearly 75% of those working in manufacturing jobs were members of unions and received union wages. The proportion of New Britain’s residents employed in manufacturing was nearly one-third greater than the state average.

During the 1960s, four of New Britain’s five largest employers left the city, citing changing production requirements, the need to replace outdated equipment and plants, and the desire to relocate to sites with lower costs. By 1965, the number of manufacturing jobs had fallen to 17,000, a decline of more than 25% in only seven years.

Then, in the 1970s, New Britain’s ball bearing industry collapsed. Once a world leader in this sector, New Britain lost out to production overseas that was less expensive and more technologically advanced.

In 1984, three of the city’s top six employers (The Stanley Works, Fafnir Bearing, and Litton Industries/New Britain Machine) were still unionized industrial manufacturing firms. But by 1994, only The Stanley Works still existed in New Britain, second now to New Britain General Hospital in total employment, and employing only 54% of the number of employees it had in 1984. From 1981 to 1990, the proportion of New Britain jobs in manufacturing fell from 44% to 23%. Despite this decline, manufacturing remained — if just barely — the city’s largest sectoral employer.

However, by 1994, four of New Britain’s top six employers were non-profit organizations and only two of the top fourteen employers were in manufacturing. In 1998, five of the top seven employers in New Britain were non-profit, service-related or government organizations (New Britain General Hospital, City of New Britain, Central Connecticut State University, The Hospital for Special Care, and the State of Connecticut). Of the 9,600 jobs contributed by these top seven employers in 1998, 72% were now in the service sector, while only 19% were in manufacturing and 9% in construction.

The impact on the city and its families of these shifts in New Britain’s economy was significant:

- Between 1966 and 1996, New Britain lost more than one-fifth of all its jobs, resulting in a decline from 32,515 jobs to only 25,670. Only six Connecticut towns lost a greater proportion of their jobs over this period, including Bridgeport, East Hartford, Ansonia, and Naugatuck. By comparison, jobs increased in several of New Britain’s neighboring towns, including Berlin, Plainville and Southington.

- In 1980, only 49% of the city’s workforce worked outside New Britain. By the mid1990s, more than 63% of New Britain’s employed residents worked outside the city.
Economic History

- New Britain’s unemployment rate consistently exceeds state averages. In December 1999, 4% of New Britain residents were unemployed, compared to 2% of residents in the state as a whole.

- As industrial and commercial firms left New Britain, the Grand List declined and more of the burden of funding the municipal budget was shifted to individual homeowners. In addition, approximately one third of the town’s property is exempt from local property taxes.

As the State of the City: An Analysis of New Britain (May 1996) concluded:

The employment picture for New Britain appears to have deteriorated rather significantly over the last 35 years. New Britain has lost a significant number of jobs, many of them in the relatively high wage manufacturing sector. As in the country as a whole, there has been a marked shift in the local economy from manufacturing employment to the service sector. As a whole while median household income has risen, the number of workers per household needed to maintain that income level has also increased. [A] ‘disappearance of work’ is what happened in New Britain over the last three and a half decades.

The Increasing Importance of Education

The New Britain Normal School, founded in 1849 to train Connecticut elementary school teachers, is Connecticut’s oldest state-supported institution of higher education. In 1983, more than one hundred years later, it became Central Connecticut State University. This tradition of higher education can be the ticket to New Britain’s renewed prosperity, as many civic leaders have understood.

Since 1960, there has been a steady increase in the educational attainment of New Britain adult residents age 25 and older:

- In 1960, more than two-thirds (67%) of New Britain’s adult residents had less than a high school education. By 1990, only 35% had less than a high school education.
- The proportion of New Britain adults who were high school graduates doubled between 1960 and 1990, from nearly one in three to 65%.
- In 1960, 6% of New Britain’s adults had between one and three years of college education, compared with 18% in 1990.
- In 1960, only 6% of New Britain adults age 25 and older had four or more years of college. By 1990, this proportion increased three-fold – to 17%.

Despite this consistent progress, there is much room for growth, as the educational attainment of New Britain residents aged 25 and older continues to fall below state averages. As of the 1990 census:

- Only 65% of New Britain residents aged 25 or older are high school graduates, compared with 79% statewide.
- 35% of New Britain residents have some post-secondary education, compared with nearly 50% statewide.
- 17% of New Britain residents have four or more years of college, compared with 27% statewide.

In the old economy, states prospered by having workers who were skilled with their hands and who could reliably work in repetitive and often physically demanding jobs. In the New Economy, states will prosper if their workers are good with their minds...

The State New Economy Index: Benchmarking Economic Transformation in the States (July 1999)

Additional Sources:
CT Policy and Economic Council
New Britain is home to more than sixteen thousand children under the age of 18, who comprise nearly 24% of the city’s population. The number of children living in New Britain declined by 32% between 1970 and 1990, while the city’s total population declined by only 10%, similar to overall state trends.

- In 1998, 30% of the city’s children were between the ages of 0 and 4 years, 30% were between the ages of 5 and 9 years, and 40% were ages 10 to 17 years.

### New Britain Children and Youth: 1970-1998

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>6,326</td>
<td>4,111</td>
<td>5,357</td>
<td>4,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>6,386</td>
<td>3,915</td>
<td>4,507</td>
<td>4,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-17</td>
<td>11,543</td>
<td>7,688</td>
<td>6,074</td>
<td>6,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;18</td>
<td>24,255</td>
<td>15,714</td>
<td>15,938</td>
<td>16,457</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: US Bureau of the Census and Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

Note: The total number of children in the age group 5-17 years is reported by DECD for 1998; the breakdowns into the 5-9 and 10-17 year age groups reflect our estimates based on this total.

### Child Population (1990)

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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total children under age 18</td>
<td>15,938</td>
<td>38,390</td>
<td>14,111</td>
<td>749,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% children white</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% children black</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% children Hispanic †</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% children “other” race</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Bureau of the Census

† Hispanic children can be of any race

Note: The only data available on child population by race/ethnicity is derived from the US Census, conducted once every 10 years.
The racial and ethnic composition of New Britain’s children is changing, according to the most recent data available on New Britain’s children and youth by race, which are derived from the census. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of white children living in New Britain decreased by half (see chart, below). The number of black children in the city increased by 10%, and the number of Hispanic children in New Britain nearly doubled.

- Specifically, the proportion of New Britain children who were white decreased from 93% in 1970 to 67% in 1990. The proportions of children who were black and Hispanic increased from 7% to 11% and from 8% to 32%, respectively.

- In 1998-1999, one-third of children enrolled in New Britain’s public schools were white, 17% were black, 47% were Hispanic and 3% were Asian-American.

The child population in New Britain is not evenly distributed throughout the city. While the overall populations in three neighborhoods contain 12% children or less, the populations in another three neighborhoods are comprised of 23% to 34% children.

Source: US Bureau of the Census
Mapped by Julie Herbst

*Hispanic children can be of any race
More than one in four children in New Britain lived at or below the poverty level in 1990. This proportion in children is twice the poverty rate for the population of New Britain as a whole.

Research shows that poverty places children at risk of several negative outcomes, including low birthweight, infant mortality and delayed immunization. As children who are poor grow, they are faced with additional risks, including lead poisoning, teen pregnancy and exposure to violence, both in the home and in the community. Poor children are also less likely to achieve academic success, often experiencing delayed cognitive, social and emotional development.

In this report, we present several different measures of child poverty in New Britain. The most widely used measure is the child poverty rate. Calculated each decade by the US Bureau of the Census, the child poverty rate is defined as the proportion of children living in families with incomes below the federal poverty level (in 1998, the federal poverty level was $13,650 for a family of three and $16,450 for a family of four).

- The child poverty rate in New Britain in 1990 was more than twice the rate for the state as a whole.

While the child poverty rate is the most reliable measure of child poverty available, we also report several more recent economic indicators in an attempt to portray the current state of child poverty in New Britain. These indicators include participation in programs for low-income families, such as Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), a component of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the proportion of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school, also known as the school district poverty rate, and per capita income.

- One quarter of New Britain children were receiving TFA funds in May 1998.
- More than one half of the children enrolled in New Britain public schools in 1998-1999 were eligible for free or reduced-price meals. This percentage was more than twice the average for the state as a whole, 25%.
- In 1998-1999, the school district poverty rate in New Britain was 56%. This was the 6th highest rate in the state that year.
- New Britain had one of the lowest per capita incomes in the state in 1998, ranking 160th out of 169 towns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Poverty--1998</th>
<th>New Britain</th>
<th>Hartford</th>
<th>Meriden</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child poverty rate (1990)</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School district poverty rate (98-99)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children receiving TFA benefits</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita income</td>
<td>$18,110</td>
<td>$13,271</td>
<td>$19,862</td>
<td>$27,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank of per capita income</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: US Bureau of the Census, Connecticut Department of Education, Connecticut Department of Social Services and Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

1 The definition of school poverty was changed between 1997-1998 and 1998-1999, from students receiving free or reduced-price meals to students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

2 equals the proportion of public school students in district who are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals. Children attending public schools qualify for free meals if their families’ incomes are at or below 130% of the federal poverty level. Reduced-price meals are available to students whose families have incomes between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty level.

3 also referred to as TANF benefits

Note: 1990 child poverty rate from the US Census includes “persons for whom poverty status is determined.”
A child who is healthy is ready to learn, play and grow into a healthy and successful adult. An unhealthy child may face delays in intellectual, physical, emotional and social development. Research shows that these deficits can reduce a child’s opportunities for future success.

The first step in ensuring the health of a child is to provide the child with appropriate access to health care services. One way to measure access to health care in Medicaid children is by monitoring their attendance at scheduled Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) visits. EPSDT is a component of the federal Medicaid program that provides preventive and follow-up health services to poor children.

Many of New Britain’s poor children are gaining access to the health care they need. During the first quarter of 1998, 38% of Medicaid children in New Britain attended their EPSDT visits “on-time.” This proportion increased to approximately 44% during the middle of the year, then dropped down to 34% for the third quarter of 1998. Although these rates are similar to what was observed in the state as a whole in 1998, continued efforts are needed to further enhance access to health care for poor children in New Britain.

Another measure of access to healthcare is the use of preventive dental services. In 1997-1998, 44% of New Britain children enrolled in Medicaid received preventive dental services. This proportion is noticeably higher than the utilization of preventive dental services among Medicaid children in the state as a whole, which was 37% during the same period.

The following pages demonstrate that, while the New Britain community has taken steps to improve the overall health status of children living in the city, additional efforts are needed. More than one quarter of children in New Britain are born to mothers who have not received adequate prenatal care. Moreover, infant mortality in the city is more than 75% higher than for the state as a whole, but similar to rates in other cities its size in Connecticut.

Prenatal care, low birthweight and infant mortality form a constellation of factors that make an important statement about the health of infants in a particular town, state or country. Because New Britain is a relatively small city, the high infant mortality rate in the city may not alone be cause for concern. However, the fact that inadequate prenatal care, infant mortality and low birthweight are on the rise in New Britain is worth special attention.

In this section:
- Prenatal Care
- Births
- Low Birthweight
- Infant Mortality
- Child Deaths
- Immunizations
- Lead Poisoning
- Asthma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infant and Child Health--1997</th>
<th>New Britain</th>
<th>Hartford</th>
<th>Meriden</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late or no prenatal care</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-adequate prenatal care</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate (^1,2)</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low birthweight</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevated blood lead level (1998) (^3)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health

\(^1\) rate is infant deaths per 1,000 live births
\(^2\) the 3-year average infant mortality rate in Meriden is 4.2 deaths/1,000 live births
\(^3\) rate is the percent of children with a valid blood lead test who have elevated blood lead levels (10 micrograms/deciliter or higher)
**Prenatal Care**

Early and adequate prenatal care promotes healthy pregnancies through the timely detection of maternal and fetal health problems and by providing health behavior advice. A healthy pregnancy improves the chances of having a healthy baby.

When a woman does not attend all of her recommended prenatal care visits, her prenatal care is defined as either late or non-adequate. If the first prenatal visit occurs after the first trimester of pregnancy, it is considered late. Prenatal care is defined as non-adequate using an index based on the timing of the first prenatal visit, the total number of prenatal visits and the length of gestation.

- In 1997, 22% of pregnant women in New Britain received late or no prenatal care and 25% received non-adequate prenatal care.

- The proportion of women with late or no prenatal care in New Britain was exceeded (marginally) by only three other cities in Connecticut in 1997: Meriden, New Haven and Waterbury.

- In 1997, New Britain also had one of the highest proportions of women receiving non-adequate prenatal care in the state.

Moreover, this situation appears to be getting worse, rather than better. Since 1989, the percentage of pregnant women who receive late or no prenatal care in New Britain has almost doubled from 11% in 1989 to 22% in 1997. The majority of this increase occurred between 1994 and 1995.

- In 1997, the percentage of pregnant Hispanic women in New Britain who received late or no prenatal care was 26%—nearly twice as high as the proportion in white women, 14%.

- The same year, 20% of pregnant black women in New Britain received late or no prenatal care.

However, the racial gap in prenatal care appears to be narrowing.

- In 1989-1991, black and Hispanic women in New Britain were 36% and 100% more likely than white women to receive late or no prenatal care, respectively. In 1995-1997, these differences dropped to 15% and 81%, respectively.

**Adequacy of prenatal care in New Britain varies by racial and ethnic groups.** This trend is not unique to New Britain, but is observed throughout the state and the nation.
**Births**

Between 1989 and 1997, the number of births in New Britain decreased by 28%, from 1,301 births to 939 births.

- The overall birth rate in New Britain fell from 17 births per 1,000 population in 1990 to 13 births per 1,000 population in 1997.

Note: Calculating birth rates by race requires an accurate population count by race, which is only available every 10 years. Therefore, we have not calculated birth rates by race for the chart below, which shows the number of births instead.

**Low Birthweight**

Children born smaller than 5.5 pounds (2,500 grams) are considered to be of low birthweight. Studies show that low birthweight is strongly correlated with a lack of maternal preventive health care services and health promoting behaviors, and places infants at risk of future developmental delays.

- Since 1989, the low birthweight rate in New Britain has increased from 8% to 11%.
- In 1997, the low birthweight rate in New Britain was lower than in Hartford, but higher than in Meriden.
- Also in 1997, New Britain’s low birthweight rate was one of the highest in the state.

Low birthweight varies by race and ethnicity in New Britain, as it does throughout Connecticut and the nation.

- In 1997, the percentage of infants born at low birthweight was higher for black infants, 15%, than for white, 11%, or Hispanic infants, 10%.

Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health
Infant and Child Health

Infant Mortality

The public health literature shows that the infant mortality rate can be a key indicator of the health status of a city, state or country. For instance, infant mortality is known to be associated with maternal health, prenatal care and access to quality health care. The infant mortality rate equals the number of infant deaths before age one in a given population for every 1,000 live births during a specific time period (usually a year).

- In 1997, there were 939 live births and 12 infant deaths in New Britain. This calculates to an infant mortality rate of 12.8 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births. Because the actual number of infant deaths in New Britain in any given year is small, it is generally more accurate to average the infant mortality rate in New Britain over a 3-year period, as we have done in the chart, below.

- New Britain's infant mortality rate was slightly lower than Hartford's in 1997 (13.3) and higher than the infant mortality rates in Meriden (0.0) and Connecticut as a whole (7.2).

- The chart below shows that, while the infant mortality rate is decreasing in Connecticut and the nation, it is increasing in New Britain.

![Infant Mortality Rates: 1989-1997 3-year Averages](chart)

Sources: Annie E. Casey Foundation and Connecticut Department of Public Health

New Britain Infant Mortality Rate by Race: 1989-1997

3-Year Averages

![New Britain Infant Mortality Rate by Race: 1989-1997 3-Year Averages](chart)

Sources: Connecticut Department of Public Health

Similar to trends in the state and country as a whole, infant mortality rates vary by race and ethnicity in New Britain.

- In 1997, the infant mortality rates for black and Hispanic infants in New Britain were 25 and 19 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively. These rates were 200% and 45% higher than the infant mortality rate among white infants that year, respectively.

- Since 1989, the infant mortality rate has risen in New Britain in all racial and ethnic groups.

Importantly, the racial gap in infant mortality is disappearing in New Britain.

- In 1989-1991, the infant mortality rate in black infants was double the rate in white infants living in New Britain. In 1995-1997, there was no difference in infant mortality rates between the two races.

Child Deaths

In 1997, no child between the ages of 5 and 15 years died in New Britain. There were two child deaths in the 1-5 year age group.
**Immunizations**

Complete vaccination helps prevent childhood diseases and their long-term negative consequences. The proportion of children who are adequately immunized also reflects patterns in access to health care. Adequate immunization includes four doses of diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus vaccine, three doses of polio vaccine and a single dose of measles/mumps/rubella vaccine by age two--this is known as the 4:3:1 schedule.

Data collected by the New Britain Immunization Program indicate that the proportion of children adequately immunized by age two in New Britain is on the rise.

- Sixty-five percent of children seen in community health centers in New Britain were fully immunized by age two in 1998, an improvement from 47% in 1997.
- Eighty-three percent of two-year-olds seen in hospital-based pediatric clinics were adequately immunized the same year.
- All of the children seen in well child clinics in New Britain were adequately immunized by age two in 1998, compared with 57% in 1993. Of New Britain children seen in private medical practices, 89% were adequately immunized by age two in 1998.
- In 1997, 78% of two-year-olds seen in WIC sites were adequately immunized. These children, as well as those immunized at hospital-based pediatric clinics, also received the three recommended doses of Haemophilus influenzae vaccine, which protects children against a common cause of meningitis.

In each of the settings listed above, a greater proportion of New Britain children were adequately immunized in 1998 than in the state as a whole. However, the numbers of New Britain children used to calculate these rates were small, and comparing these rates to state figures may be misleading.

**Lead Poisoning**

Lead poisoning can have serious harmful effects on a child's physical growth, intellectual development, hearing and kidney function, even at low levels of exposure. In extreme cases, lead poisoning can cause convulsions and even death. The most well-known route of exposure to lead in children is through eating paint dust. However, children can also be exposed to lead through soil and water.

Houses built prior to 1950 are more likely than newer homes to contain lead-based paint. Since poorer children are more likely to live in older homes that contain deteriorated lead paint than children from wealthier families, they are at an increased risk of lead exposure. The poor nutrition often seen in children living in poverty compounds this risk, increasing their chances of becoming sick after lead exposure.

Nearly half (49%) of the homes in New Britain were built prior to 1950. New Britain is ranked 2nd among the towns with the highest percentages of pre-1950 housing in Hartford County.

- Since 1996, the proportion of New Britain children under six years of age diagnosed with elevated blood levels has remained constant at 3%.\(^1\)
- In 1998, this proportion was lower in New Britain than in Hartford, Meriden or the state as a whole, at 3%, 6%, 6% and 4%, respectively.
- The proportion of children under six years of age who were screened for lead poisoning in New Britain increased between 1995 and 1998, from 27% to 35%.

\(^1\) The normal blood lead level for children is zero micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines lead poisoning as a blood lead level at or above 10 mcg/dL. Medical intervention is recommended for children with blood levels equal to or greater than 20 mcg/dL.
Asthma

Asthma, a disease that causes obstruction and inflammation of the airways, affects nearly 5 million children nationwide. The latest research suggests that asthma begins early in childhood, and, if inadequately managed, causes physical damage to the lung that may be irreversible. Studies show that asthma is more common among low income and minority children than in other children.

Nationally, researchers are beginning to examine the incidence and prevalence of asthma. This is also the case in New Britain, where no data are available on the rates of asthma in children. However, the following data on asthma hospitalizations offer an indication of the importance of this health problem among New Britain children and youth.

In fiscal year 1997:

- Asthma was one of the top three reasons for New Britain children to be in the hospital.¹
- More than 2,800 children were hospitalized for asthma in Connecticut. Nearly half of these children were younger than 5 years of age.
- The asthma hospital discharge rate is the number of children admitted to and discharged from hospitals for asthma episodes per every 1,000 children discharged overall. Among children enrolled in Medicaid, New Britain had the 7th highest asthma hospital discharge rate in the state during this period, calculating to nearly four out of every 1,000 children.
- The asthma hospital discharge rate for all children in New Britain was close to five out of every 1,000 children in the city.

### Asthma Hospital Discharges: Fiscal Year 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Britain</th>
<th>Hartford</th>
<th>Meriden</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>number of discharges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rate per 1,000 children age 0-17 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹excludes births.

Source: Office of Health Care Access
Youth living in New Britain today have the potential to become the city’s leaders of tomorrow, but only if we are successful in teaching them the skills they need to avoid the unique health risks teens face today. Many teens who become pregnant drop out of high school and raise their children in poverty. Early cigarette smoking can lead to chronic diseases affecting the lungs and heart, which can keep adults—young and old—from participating in a variety of healthy activities. Even one-time abuse of drugs or alcohol can have serious consequences.

The data presented in this section demonstrate that New Britain teens often resist peer pressure to smoke, drink and have sex at a young age. In fact, the rates of these activities are lower in New Britain than in the state as a whole, according to data from the 1999 Voice of New Britain Youth study. Nevertheless, New Britain youth—like teens everywhere—are exposed too often to drugs, alcohol, sex and violence, and continued efforts are needed to protect our teens from these dangers.

The New Britain Foundation for Public Giving and the United Way of the Capital Area commissioned the Voice of New Britain Youth study in 1999 to gain insight into the overall well-being of New Britain adolescents. We have included much of these data in this report, as they are the most current data available on adolescent well-being in New Britain. However, we urge readers to be cognizant of the fact that this study was conducted in New Britain schools, therefore high-risk teens who have already dropped out of school are not represented in these data. Readers should also be aware that, while the Voice of New Britain Youth study was conducted in 1999, the most recent comparable data for the state and ERG I* are from the latest statewide Voice of Connecticut Youth study, conducted in 1996.

Many of the adolescents who remain in high school in New Britain participate in a variety of positive, healthy behaviors. In the Voice of New Britain Youth survey, half (51%) of students surveyed in grades 9 and 11 had all five of the following characteristics: tried hard in school, expected to be successful in their future work, were not depressed, and refrained from smoking and drinking. These students were significantly more likely than others involved in the study to believe that their parents understand and care about them, to share their thoughts and feelings with their parents, to eat dinner with their families regularly, and to live in a home without a gun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adolescent Health--1999</th>
<th>New Britain</th>
<th>Hartford</th>
<th>Meriden</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teen birth rate (1997)</strong>&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smoking (monthly or more often): 7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; graders</strong></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alcohol use (monthly or more often): 7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; graders</strong></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;9&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marijuana use (a few times or more in past year): 7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; graders</strong></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Connecticut State Department of Education Created Education Reference Groups (ERGs) to compare districts with similar levels of need and socioeconomic characteristics. New Britain is in ERG I.*

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1 rate is the number of births per 100,000 girls age 15 to 19 years
2 Data for Connecticut are from the 1996 Voice of Connecticut Youth Survey.
Adolescent Health

Smoking, alcohol and drug use

Smoking

According to the Voice of New Britain Youth Survey, 5% of New Britain 7th graders, 14% of 9th graders and 21% of 11th graders smoked cigarettes monthly or more often in 1999.

- These percentages are lower than the proportions of students in the state as a whole who reported recent smoking in 1996--10%, 22% and 28%, respectively--but higher than the proportions of ERG I teens who smoked.
- Approximately half of New Britain students who report smoking monthly or more often are actually daily smokers.
- As the chart below shows, smoking increases dramatically with age in New Britain. This is also the case in the state as a whole.

Alcohol Use

In 1999, 6% of 7th graders, 15% of 9th graders and close to one fifth of 11th grade students in New Britain reported drinking alcohol monthly or more often in the past year.

- These percentages were all lower than in Connecticut as a whole in 1996: 8%, 24% and 35%, respectively.
- New Britain students, like other students in ERG I, are less likely than teens throughout the state to report getting drunk. Nevertheless, getting drunk remains a problem for some New Britain students: 11% of 7th graders, 14% of 9th graders and 21% of 11th graders in 1999 reported getting drunk in the past week--this calculates to a 50% difference between grades 9 and 11.
- More than half of New Britain students said in 1997 that strict parenting plays a very important role in deterring teens from alcohol use (Connecticut Substance Abuse Prevention Survey).

Teens Who Smoke Cigarettes:
(monthly or more often)
New Britain 1999 and Connecticut 1996

Source: Voice of New Britain Youth Survey

Teens Who Drink Alcohol:
(monthly or more often)
New Britain 1999 and Connecticut 1996

Source: Voice of New Britain Youth Survey
Adolescent Health

Marijuana and Drug Use

More than one quarter of New Britain high school juniors reported in 1999 that they had used marijuana a few times or more that year.

- Also in 1999, 9% of New Britain 7th grade students and 25% of 9th grade students had used marijuana a few times or more.
- This level of marijuana use is lower than is observed in students across the state. In Connecticut as a whole in 1996, 11% of 7th grade students, 32% of 9th grade students and 41% of 11th grade students had used marijuana a few times or more in 1999.

Few New Britain students used other drugs in 1999.

- 4%, 4% and 0% of 7th, 9th and 11th graders, respectively, used inhalants,
- Virtually no students in New Britain reported using hallucinogens (LSD, acid, mushrooms), cocaine or crack, heroin/morphine/codeine, illegal injectable drugs or sedatives.

Age Trends

Although fewer teens in New Britain are using drugs and alcohol than in the state as a whole, the data from the 1999 Voice of New Britain Youth survey demonstrate disturbing trends in these high-risk activities as teens age, particularly between the 7th and 9th grades.

- The proportion of New Britain students who smoke monthly or more often increases 180% between grades 7 and 9, and by another 50% from grades 9 to 11. Overall, more than three times as many students reported smoking in grade 11 than in grade 7.
- In 1999, the percentage of New Britain students who drank monthly or more often doubles between grades 7 and 9, and increases another 27% between grades 9 and 11.
- The proportion of students who said they had smoked marijuana a few times or more increases by more than 175% between grades 7 and 9 in 1999. Between grades 7 and 11, marijuana use increases by more than 200%.

Risk Behaviors by Grade
New Britain: 1999

![Graph showing trends in drug use]

Source: Voice of New Britain Youth Survey
Physical Activity and Nutrition

New Britain youth, like teens throughout Connecticut, have learned the benefits of regular physical activity. Between 64% and 72% of students in each of grades 7, 9 and 11 report playing an active sport once or more a week, and 77%, 75% and 70% report doing some other physical activity once or more each week. Moreover, the majority of students are meeting current national recommendations for rigorous exercise at least three times a week. In 1999, 62% of all students reported working, playing or exercising vigorously at least three times every week.

Most New Britain students are having at least one serving from each of the food groups every day. However, like teens everywhere, many are not meeting current national guidelines for nutrition.

- Data from the Voice of New Britain Youth and Voice of Connecticut Youth surveys suggests that, for the most part, New Britain youth and Connecticut youth have similar eating habits.
- Research shows that eating breakfast improves behavior and academic performance in school children. In 1999, 45% of New Britain high school students reported eating breakfast on school days compared with 58% of Connecticut teens. This difference was greatest among 9th and 11th graders.

### Teen Nutrition:
#### Daily Breakfast and Foods Eaten Once or More a Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breakfast (on school days)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grains</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fruit</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eggs, poultry, fish or beans</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegetables</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low-fat milk or yogurt</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Voice of New Britain Youth, Voice of Connecticut Youth
Adolescent Health

Births to Teen Mothers/Teen Sexual Activity

Births to Teen Mothers

Teen birth statistics can be expressed in two ways. The most intuitive is the teen birth rate, which is the number of births per 1,000 girls age 15 to 19 years. More commonly available, however, is the percent of births to teens, which is the percentage of all births that are to teen mothers.

- In 1997, there were 172 births to 15- to 19-year-old girls in New Britain. That year, New Britain had the fourth highest teen birth rate in the state, at 81 births per 1000 females aged 15-19, exceeded only by Hartford, Bridgeport and Waterbury.

- The proportion of all births that were to teen mothers in New Britain was the third highest in the state in 1997. That year, 19% of all births in New Britain were to mothers younger than 20 years of age.

- The percentage of births to teens in New Britain was more than twice the state rate in 1997, which was 8%.

- In 1997, the proportion of births that were to teen mothers in New Britain was highest among Hispanic teens and lowest in white teens.

Percent of all Births that are to Teens (younger than 20 years of age)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New Britain</th>
<th>Hartford</th>
<th>Meriden</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>black</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health

The majority of teen pregnancy interventions (61%) in New Britain target Hispanic youth. White youth are targeted by only 25% of interventions, and black youth are specifically targeted by even fewer teen pregnancy prevention services.

Teen Sexual Activity

On the 1999 Voice of New Britain Youth Survey, nearly half of all New Britain high school juniors reported that they were sexually active, as did 21% of 9th graders and 15% of 7th graders. In 1996, similar proportions of students in the state as a whole reported having had sexual intercourse--49% of 11th graders, 32% of 9th graders and 15% of 7th graders (data from the Voice of Connecticut Youth Survey).

- More than 40% of sexually active high school freshmen said they had had three or more sexual partners, and 16% said they had had 6 or more sexual partners.

- Among sexually active 11th graders, these percentages were actually lower: 33% and 11%, respectively.

Not enough sexually active New Britain students are using condoms to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

- In 1999, 56% of 9th graders who had had sex and 64% of 11th graders who had had sex reported using a condom during their last sexual intercourse.

1 data from Rosemary Richter, University of Connecticut Health Center Family Planning Program
Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Adolescents age 15-19 years old comprise the highest risk age group for sexually transmitted diseases in Connecticut. However, some progress is being made in preventing these diseases, since the number of cases of chlamydia and gonorrhea in Connecticut decreased between 1992 and 1996 in almost every age group.

In 1998, 121 New Britain youth under age 20 years were diagnosed with chlamydia and 19 with gonorrhea.

- The numbers of cases of chlamydia and gonorrhea were lower in New Britain in 1998 than in Hartford, but higher than in Meriden.

- In New Britain, 44% of all cases of chlamydia and 24% of all cases of gonorrhea were diagnosed in youth under age 20 in 1998.

- The majority of chlamydia and gonorrhea cases in youth are diagnosed in females, partly because women are more likely than men to be screened for sexually transmitted diseases. In New Britain in 1998, 88% of chlamydia cases and 68% of gonorrhea cases in teens were diagnosed in females.

- The proportions of these sexually transmitted diseases that were diagnosed in young women was similar in Hartford and New Haven in 1998, at 90% and 90%, respectively, for chlamydia and 75% and 80%, respectively, for gonorrhea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexually Transmitted Diseases Among Youth</th>
<th>Number of Cases in 1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chlamydia</td>
<td>Gonorrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Britain</strong></td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hartford</strong></td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meriden</strong></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: data are for youth younger than 20 years of age
Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health
Education

Education has been called the “great equalizer” because it is a “vehicle for advancing the social and economic status of children and families, compensating for poverty and distressed environments, and, for millions of kids, paving the way to opportunities unavailable to their parents.” When a child does not obtain an adequate education, the opportunity for future success is jeopardized. Research demonstrates that the income level an individual achieves is directly correlated with the number of years of education he or she has obtained.

Providing all New Britain students with the tools required for academic success will be a critical step in closing the gaps in social and health outcomes among the city’s races, ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes.

City educators have instituted several programs and services to enhance educational opportunities for New Britain students, including technology assistance, speech and language therapy, physical and occupational therapy, nutritional counseling, mentoring programs, family training and parent education.

The New Britain school district also participates in a variety of interdistrict programs, such as the Interdistrict Leadership Project: Adventure in Diversity, Multi-cultural Arts Project, Amistad Reborn, Urban/ Suburban Partnership, Elementary Technology Program, Stepping Stones and Partners in Science.

However, the high dropout rate in the city--twice the state rate in 1998--suggests that even more programs are needed to keep New Britain teens in school.

The New Britain school district is a member of Education Reference Group2 (ERG I). Other ERG I school districts include Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New London, Waterbury and Windham.

\textbf{In this section:}

- Enrollment
- Education Expenditures
- Facilities
- Special Education
- Physical Fitness
- Academic Achievement
- Dropout Rates
- Post-Graduation Activities

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Education: 1998-1999} & New Britain & Hartford & Meriden & ERG I \\
\hline
\textbf{District enrollment} & 9,957 & 22,456 & 8,753 & -- \\
\textbf{Free and reduced price meals} & 56\% & 89\% & 40\% & 74\% \\
\textbf{Minority students} & 67\% & 96\% & 43\% & -- \\
\textbf{Students with non-English home language} & 62\% & 56\% & 22\% & 39\% \\
\textbf{Students receiving special education resources} & 17\% & 17\% & 16\% & 17\% \\
\textbf{Students per computer} & 8 & 4 & 7 & 6 \\
\textbf{4th grade CMT reading (1999): students at or above goal} & 31\% & 20\% & 44\% & 23\% \\
\textbf{8th grade CMT reading (1999): students at or above goal} & 36\% & 36\% & 49\% & 35\% \\
\textbf{10th grade CAPT language arts: students at or above goal} & 36\% & 10\% & 29\% & 18\% \\
\textbf{SAT combined score: math plus verbal (class of 1998)} & 907 & 777 & 979 & 824 \\
\textbf{Seniors attending higher education (class of 1998)} & 77\% & 52\% & 73\% & 70\% \\
\textbf{Cumulative dropout rate (class of 1998)} & 32\% & 51\% & 21\% & 35\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Education Comparison}
\end{table}

Source: Connecticut Department of Education

\footnote{1} Annie E. Casey Foundation, Success in Schools: Education Ideas that Count, 1997
\footnote{2} The Connecticut Department of Education created Education Reference Groups (ERGs) to compare districts with similar levels of need and socioeconomic characteristics.
Enrollment

There are currently 14 public schools and eight parochial and private schools in New Britain.

- Eighty-five percent of all New Britain students were enrolled in public schools in 1998-1999.

- The number of children enrolled in New Britain public schools increased by 34% between the 1986-1987 and 1997-1998 school years. During this period, elementary and high school enrollment each increased by approximately 40%, while middle school enrollment increased 59%.

- Sixty-seven percent of the children enrolled in New Britain public schools in 1998-1999 were minority students.¹

The New Britain school district faces the increased challenge of teaching students whose primary home language is not English. Due to the diverse and rich heritage of New Britain residents, over 40 languages are spoken in the city.

- In 1998-1999, more than 60% of the students enrolled in New Britain public schools lived in homes where the primary language spoken was not English.

In 1998-1999, a higher proportion of public school students in New Britain came from homes where English was not the primary language spoken than any in any other town or city in the state.

¹ The Connecticut Department of Education defines minority students as black, Hispanic, Native American or American Indian or Asian American.

Nearly half of New Britain’s public school students are enrolled in elementary school.

- In 1998-1999, 5,464 students were enrolled in New Britain elementary schools, 2,224 were enrolled in middle schools and 2,222 were enrolled in New Britain High School.
Education

Education Expenditures

In 1997-1998, New Britain spent more than $89.1 million on educational programs, averaging to $9,115 per pupil. The city spent approximately $330 more per pupil for education than the state average that year.

- Between 1996-1997 and 1997-1998, per pupil education expenditures for high school students dropped 9% in New Britain, to $7,616, while per pupil expenditures for elementary and middle school students increased by this proportion, to $6,658.

- In 1997-1998, the majority of New Britain’s education dollars came from state sources, while, in the state as a whole, the majority of education dollars came from local sources.

Education Expenditures by Source: 1997-1998

Facilities

A school’s physical infrastructure and learning tools can have a significant impact on children’s educational success. Older schools increase a child’s risk of ingesting lead-based paint or being injured by unstable structuring. A student’s access to books, computers and other educational tools affects the academic and technical skills he or she can acquire at school.

- The average New Britain public school was constructed in 1954. While the fourteen public schools were built between 27 and 74 years ago, each school was significantly renovated within the last 7 years.

- New Britain students’ access to library books varies significantly among schools. Each student at Chamberlain Elementary School had access to 24 library books per student in 1998-1999, while Smith school students had access to 9 books per student.

Access to computers also varies markedly among New Britain public schools.

- On average, each computer was shared by 8 students in New Britain schools in 1998-99, compared with an average student-to-computer ratio of 6 in the state as a whole.

- While Smalley Academy had one computer for every 3 students in 1998-1999, academic computers at Northend were shared by 13 students each the same year.
**Special Education**

Children need special education services for a variety of reasons. Currently, the New Britain school district is financially responsible for educating 1,653 students with disabilities. Of these children, 36% are learning disabled, 8% are mentally retarded, 22% are diagnosed as having a serious emotional disturbance, 12% have speech impairments, and the remainder are in need of special education services for other reasons.

- The proportion of New Britain students who are classified as special education increased by 9% during the five-year period from 1993-1994 to 1998-99.
- In 1998-99, 17% of New Britain public school students required special education resources, compared with 17% of students in Hartford, 16% of those in Meriden and 14% of students in the state overall.

**Physical Fitness**

The President’s Physical Fitness Test is taken annually by 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th graders across the country. The test consists of four parts: sit-and-reach, sit-ups, pull-ups and a one-mile run. To pass each test, children must meet or exceed national standards set for their age and gender.

- Between 1995 and 1999, there was no change, overall, in the proportion of New Britain students who met all four goals on the President’s Physical Fitness test.
- Test results in 1999 suggest that physical fitness is again on the rise in New Britain schools, as 23% of students who took the President’s Physical Fitness Test passed all four tests that year. In the state as a whole, 38% of students passed all four tests in 1999; 23% and 27% of students in Hartford and Meriden, respectively, passed all four tests in 1999.

---

**Percent of Total District Expenditures on Special Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Britain</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartford</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meriden</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Average</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Connecticut Department of Education

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**President’s Physical Fitness Test Students Passing All Four Tests**

![Graph showing percentage of students passing all four tests from 1995-1996 to 1998-1999 for New Britain and Connecticut.](source: Connecticut Department of Education)
**Academic Achievement**

*The Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMT)*

The CMT measures academic preparation in three subject areas: reading, writing and math. These tests are administered annually to Connecticut public school students in the 4th, 6th and 8th grades.

Although the percentages of New Britain students who met state goals on the CMT in 1999 were below state averages, CMT scores in New Britain appear to be on the rise.

- Between 1998 and 1999, New Britain 4th graders improved on two sections of the CMT, 6th graders improved on all three sections of the CMT and 8th graders improved on one of the three sections of the CMT. Students in all three grades have improved on all three sections of the test in the past 5 years.

  **The percentage of New Britain students meeting the state goals on the CMT has increased since 1993-1994, particularly on the writing portion of the test.**

*Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)*

The CAPT was developed to measure math, language arts, science and interdisciplinary academic skills in Connecticut 10th grade students.

Although New Britain CAPT scores are below the state average, they show continuing positive signs of improvement. A higher percentage of students in the district met or exceeded state goals on the language arts and interdisciplinary sections of the test this year, compared with 1997-1998. The proportion of students who met or exceeded state goals on the science portion of the test was the same both years.

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**Connecticut Mastery Test**

| New Britain Students Meeting or Exceeding State Goals on the Three Tests |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Grade 4**              | **1994**        | **1995**        | **1996**        | **1997**        | **1998**        | **1999**        |
| Reading                  | 22%             | 24%             | 27%             | 34%             | 33%             | 31%             |
| Writing                  | 25%             | 32%             | 27%             | 35%             | 44%             | 47%             |
| Math                     | 38%             | 37%             | 39%             | 39%             | 41%             | 42%             |
| **Grade 6**              | **1994**        | **1995**        | **1996**        | **1997**        | **1998**        | **1999**        |
| Reading                  | 30%             | 31%             | 28%             | 27%             | 33%             | 35%             |
| Writing                  | 20%             | 22%             | 22%             | 22%             | 28%             | 30%             |
| Math                     | 21%             | 20%             | 21%             | 22%             | 17%             | 22%             |
| **Grade 8**              | **1994**        | **1995**        | **1996**        | **1997**        | **1998**        | **1999**        |
| Reading                  | 32%             | 26%             | 36%             | 38%             | 40%             | 36%             |
| Writing                  | 11%             | 15%             | 27%             | 28%             | 30%             | 37%             |
| Math                     | 18%             | 14%             | 21%             | 23%             | 23%             | 19%             |

Source: Connecticut Department of Education

**Connecticut Academic Performance Test**

| New Britain Students At or Above State Goals on the Four Tests |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                            | **94-95**       | **95-96**       | **96-97**       | **97-98**       | **98-99**       |
| Math                      | 22%             | 25%             | 22%             | 33%             | 28%             |
| Language Arts             | 31%             | 24%             | 17%             | 29%             | 36%             |
| Science                   | 19%             | 18%             | 20%             | 28%             | 28%             |
| Interdisciplinary         | 37%             | 26%             | 23%             | 27%             | 31%             |

Source: Connecticut Department of Education

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New Britain Children and Youth: 2000
**Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)**

The SAT is administered voluntarily to students in their junior and senior years of high school. The test is required for admission to most colleges and universities and includes sections on math and verbal reasoning, with a maximum score of 800 on each section.

The percentage of New Britain graduates electing to take the SAT has increased during the past three years.

- Fifty-eight percent of students in New Britain’s class of 1996 took the SAT compared with 69% of those in the class of 1998.
- New Britain’s class of 1998 scored, on average, 460 points on the Math section of the SAT and 447 points on its Verbal section.
- In 1998, the average combined math and verbal score for New Britain students was 907, compared with 1,007 statewide.

**New Britain Combined SAT Scores: Classes of 1996-1998**

![Bar graph showing SAT scores for classes of 1996-1998](chart.png)

**Dropout Rates**

Research conducted by the US Bureau of the Census indicates that a child’s future earning potential is directly related to the level of education he or she attains. Therefore, students who drop out of school are more likely than high school graduates to live in poverty as adults. Moreover, high school dropouts are more likely than their peers who graduate to have poor social outcomes, including delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse and early pregnancy.

The cumulative dropout rate is high in New Britain, and appears to be growing. One quarter of students in New Britain’s high school graduating class of 1997 dropped out of school, while nearly one third of students in the class of 1998 dropped out of school.

- The proportion of New Britain students from the class of 1998 who dropped out of high school was twice the rate for the state as a whole, though lower than in Hartford and New Britain’s ERG group, ERG I.

**Post-graduation Activities**

More than three quarters of New Britain high school graduates are pursuing higher education, including both two-year and four-year programs.

- More than three quarters (77%) of students in New Britain’s class of 1998 went on to pursue higher education after graduating from high school. This proportion is similar to the percentage of students pursuing higher education in the state as a whole (77%), and higher than the rates in Hartford (53%) and Meriden (73%).

*Source: Connecticut Department of Education*
A safe environment is essential for a child to develop trust, self-confidence and effective interpersonal skills—all critical developmental steps. Exposure to violence can have a wide range of short- and long-term harmful effects on children.

As the following pages show, too many New Britain youth face threats to their safety at home, in their neighborhoods and in school. Exposure to violence threatens many aspects of these children’s lives, placing them at risk of poor academic, social and emotional outcomes.

Studies show that children and youth who are exposed to violence as victims or witnesses are more likely to become perpetrators of violence themselves, and to suffer depression or other psychiatric disorders. Children who witness violence may also experience sleep disturbances, attention disorders and aggressive behaviors.

Moreover, the recent epidemic of school violence has left many children feeling unsafe at school. Last year, 8% of New Britain 7th graders, 5% of 9th graders and 8% of 11th graders stayed home from school once or more because they didn’t feel safe.

### Safety and Security--1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety and Security--1998</th>
<th>New Britain</th>
<th>Hartford</th>
<th>Meriden</th>
<th>Conn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantiated child abuse and neglect (1997-1998)</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth violent crime arrest rate</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>154</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of family violence arrests</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>1,679</td>
<td>552</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th grade students who carried a weapon in past 30 days (1999)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Connecticut Department of Children and Families, Connecticut Department of Public Safety and 1999 Voice of New Britain Youth Survey

1 Per 100,000 10-17 year olds

2 Data are from the 1996 Voice of Connecticut Youth Survey
Child Abuse and Neglect

The effects of child abuse are not limited to the immediate physical and emotional pain inflicted on a child. Child abuse and neglect increase the chances that a child will have poor social, emotional and academic outcomes. When abused children reach adolescence, they are more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as delinquency, early and unprotected sexual activity and drug and alcohol use. Adult victims of child abuse may suffer emotional and mental health disorders, and are more likely than other adults to abuse their own children.

In 1998, there were 1,283 reports of child abuse and neglect in New Britain. The same year, 708 children were confirmed as being abused or neglected following investigations by the Department of Children and Families.

- In New Britain in 1998, 74% of all substantiated reports to the Department of Children and Families were for physical neglect, 12% were for physical abuse and 2% for sexual abuse.
- The proportion of children who were found to be abused, neglected or uncared for in 1998 was similar in New Britain, Hartford and Meriden, at 4.3%, 4.4% and 4.6%, respectively. These rates were approximately twice the rate of confirmed abuse and neglect for Connecticut as a whole, which was 2.3% in 1998.
- Reports of child abuse and neglect are on the rise in New Britain, increasing by 40% between fiscal years 1995 and 1998.

In 1999, New Britain high school students who took part in the Voice of New Britain Youth Survey were asked if they had ever been physically or sexually abused.

- Between 13% and 16% of students in grades 7, 9 and 11 reported that they had been physically abused by an adult on one or more occasions.
- Between 7% and 10% of students in the three grades reported that they had been sexually abused by a family member or someone else.

Teen Deaths

Four New Britain adolescents aged 15 to 19 years old died in 1997. Two of these deaths were the result of motor vehicle accidents, one was classified as a homicide, and one death was associated with unidentified causes.

\[\text{Source: Connecticut Department of Children and Families}\]


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>1019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>1067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>1283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A single report may include more than one child.

Not all of these children are a subset of those included in the 1,283 reports in 1998 because they could have been reported in an earlier year.
Safety and Security

Exposure to Violence

Exposure to violence in the home can profoundly impact a child’s social, emotional and cognitive development.

Safety at Home

In 1998, 18% of all incidents of family violence in Connecticut directly involved children.

- Nearly 20% of all victims of family violence in 1998 were children younger than 18 years of age; 11% of all perpetrators were also children in this age group.
- Children were in the home during almost half of all family violence incidents in Connecticut in 1998.
- In New Britain, 771 individuals were arrested for family violence in 1998.
  - New Britain had the 5th highest number of family violence incidents in the state that year.
  - Family violence arrests decreased by 3% in New Britain between 1997 and 1998, and by a similar proportion in the state as a whole.

Some New Britain students are worried about the violence that takes place in their homes. In 1999, 16% of 7th graders, 7% of 9th graders and 6% of 11th graders said that they worried a lot about the violence in their homes. Similar proportions of students also worried a lot about the violence in their neighborhoods.

Family Violence Arrests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New Britain</th>
<th>Hartford</th>
<th>Meriden</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>2,056</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>19,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>1,679</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>18,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change 97-98</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>-18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Connecticut Department of Public Safety

Safety in the Neighborhood

On a 1997 survey, substantially more New Britain 11th and 12th grade students said they felt their neighborhoods were unsafe compared with 11th and 12th graders statewide.

11th-12th Graders Perceptions Of Their Neighborhoods: 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New Britain</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>was not a safe place</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had to be tough to get along</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot of gangs</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot of people carrying weapons</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot of drugs sold</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1997 Connecticut Substance Abuse Prevention Student Survey

Weapons

In 1999, 9% of New Britain 7th graders, 20% of 9th graders and 19% of 11th graders reported that there was a gun in their home. Moreover, 3%-4% of the students said that they had guns of their own.

- Another 7% of 7th graders, 14% of 9th graders and 12% of 11th graders believed that, if they wanted to, they could get a gun in less than a day.
- Also in 1999, 21%, 21% and 15% of students in grades 7, 9 and 11, respectively, reported carrying a weapon once or more in the past month.
- Fewer students--3%, 4% and 3%, respectively--had carried weapons in school during the past month.
Youth Violence and Delinquency

New Britain youth committed almost 25% fewer violent crimes in 1998 than in 1997. In 1998, New Britain youth were arrested for 266 major offenses, 45 of which were violent crimes (murder, manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault). This calculates to a juvenile violent crime arrest rate of 678 arrests for every 100,000 youth ages 10 to 17 years in the city.

- The number of arrests for major offenses—violent offenses plus larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft and arson—among youth in New Britain was down from 424 in 1997 to 266 in 1998.

In 1997, youth criminal activity varied greatly with grade, generally peaking in the 9th grade, according to the Substance Abuse Prevention School Survey.

- On the survey, 7% of 5th and 6th graders reported stealing something worth less than $50. This proportion increased to 41% in 9th graders, then dropped to 29% in 11th and 12th graders.

- The proportion of New Britain students who reported purposefully damaging or destroying someone else's property was 7% in 5th and 6th graders, 25% in 9th graders and 18% in 11th and 12th graders.

- In 1997, 8% of 7th and 8th grade students in New Britain said that they had been arrested, compared with 11% of 9th graders and 5% of 11th and 12th graders.

- On the same survey, 9% of New Britain 11th-12th grade students reported selling illegal drugs.

Data from the 1999 Voice of New Britain Youth Survey indicate that youth delinquent behavior is still an important problem in New Britain.

- That year, 13% of 7th graders, 15% of 9th graders and 20% of 11th graders reported being truant once or more in the past week.

- Between 27% and 36% of teens in the three grades—with the highest proportion in 9th graders—said that they had deliberately damaged someone else's property once or more in the past year.

- More than one quarter of students in the three grades had taken something from a store without paying for it once or more in the past year.

- Nineteen percent of 7th graders, 20% of 9th graders and 14% of 11th graders had "gotten into trouble with the police" once or more in 1999.

Although fighting and gang activity were also common among New Britain high school students in 1999, data from the Voice of New Britain Youth suggest a positive trend is emerging in gang involvement.

- In 1999, 42%, 27% and 17% of students in grades 7, 9 and 11, respectively, reported getting into a serious physical fight once or more in the past year.

- In 1999, 12% of 7th graders, 16% of 9th graders and 3% of 11th graders reported that they had belonged to a gang, while only 2%, 4% and 0% of these students, respectively, were still part of a gang.

- These trends indicate that efforts to reduce gang activity in New Britain are having a positive effect.
The data in this report demonstrate that, like youth across Connecticut, New Britain youth face daily challenges to their health and well-being: drug and alcohol use, pressure to be sexually active at an early age and violence at home, at school and in the community. Yet, as this report shows, many New Britain youth are finding ways to rise above these challenges. In general, such “resilient youth” are characterized by a variety of protective or “resilient” factors, including participation in extracurricular activities, high self-esteem, optimism about the future and access to positive adult and peer role models.

- In 1999, 25% to 37% of New Britain high school students in the 7th, 9th and 11th grades reported volunteering in their community or school at least once during the past week.

- In the three grades, 45%, 39% and 25% of students, respectively, did activities with a youth group once or more in the past week.

- One third of all 7th graders, more than half of the 9th graders and two fifths of the 11th graders surveyed attended a religious service at least once in the past week.

- At least one quarter of students in grades 7, 9 and 11 were in one or more clubs or teams at school in 1999.

New Britain teens are also finding other constructive ways to fill their free time.

- Between 65% and 70% of students in grades 7, 9 and 11 reported reading for fun once or more in the past week.

- Approximately three-quarters of students in the three grades had played a musical instrument or done another hobby once or more during the week before being surveyed.

- In 1999, 58% of 7th graders, 74% of 9th graders and 79% of 11th graders expected to eventually complete a four-year college degree.

- More than one-quarter of students in the three grades expected to also finish graduate or professional school.

- Between 74% and 85% of students in the three grades believe that they will be successful or that it is “pretty likely” that they will be successful in the work they choose as adults.

Families play an important role in providing teens with the tools they need to make positive life choices. In 1999:

- 73% of 7th graders, 71% of 9th graders and 69% of 11th graders said that their parents had high expectations of them.

- More than one-third of students in the three grades said that their parents sometimes share an activity with them at night, and approximately 20% of students said their parents share an evening activity with them often.

- For the majority of students (71%-83%), parents wanted to know where they were and who they were with often or almost always.

- Sixty-six percent of 7th graders, 49% of 9th graders and 44% of 11th graders believe that their family understands them quite a bit or very much.

- Between 88% and 93% of students feel that their mothers care about them quite a bit or very much, and 75% to 78% believe that their fathers care about them quite a bit or very much.

- Between 72% and 85% of students said in 1999 that at least one adult other than their parents cares about them quite a bit or very much.

- Many students eat dinner with their families at least four times a week, 65% of 7th graders, 54% of 9th graders and 38% of 11th graders.
New Britain children and adolescents face many of the challenges placed before youth in cities throughout the nation. All over the US, infants are born into the world with inadequate prenatal care, young children miss important immunization opportunities, and teens are pressured to use drugs and alcohol, initiate early sexual activity, and become involved in crime and violence. Fortunately, the children and youth of New Britain are also the recipients of many programs and services designed to beat these difficult odds, and make a difference in their lives.

While there are numerous programs, organizations and individuals actively “Making a Difference” in the lives of New Britain children and youth, we are able to describe just a few examples of such programs in this report. These and other projects are testaments to the enormous commitment of the New Britain community to making their city a better place for children and youth to learn, play and grow into healthy and successful adults.

**Big Brothers/Big Sisters of New Britain**
Big Brothers/Big Sisters is considered to be the “premier mentoring agency in the nation,” according to New Britain Coordinator, Sue McGann. Studies show that children involved in the program are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, to be truant or to become involved in gangs.

Currently, between 35 and 40 New Britain children are matched one-on-one with volunteer Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Program developers hope to add 55 to 60 more Latino children to this list each year for the next 3 years, through a new initiative designed to offer greater outreach to the Latino community.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of New Britain collaborates with the New Britain Mentoring Project, Drugs Don’t Work! and other local, state and national organizations to provide a variety of services to children and youth enrolled in the program.

**Community Mental Health Affiliates**
Although this organization is based in New Britain, its programs also serve children and adolescents in other Connecticut towns.

Community Mental Health Affiliates provides 24-hour emergency mental health services to children and youth in these towns following community crises (for example, the tragic lottery shooting), family deaths and other emergencies. The group also provides emergency services for youth-at-risk, who are often identified by their families or school systems. Emergency mental health service providers are always on-site within one hour of a call.

Community Mental Health Affiliates is also known for a relatively new and innovative program, The Cove, a support program for children, adolescents and families recovering from a death in the family. New Britain children and youth currently receive counseling, emergency mental health services and other services through the Cove, which is supported by a team of well-trained community volunteers.

**Destiny’s Golden Squad (DGS) Peer Education Project**
A project of the New Britain Health Department, DGS trains up to 15 New Britain 8th graders each year to educate their peers about healthy behaviors and positive choices. Students in the program are recruited primarily from Roosevelt Middle School. A measure of the two-year-old program’s success, 18 students applied to DGS its first year, while more than 60 students applied this year.

One of the projects organized by the Peer Educators in DGS is a skit about important health issues facing middle-school students—drug and alcohol abuse by peers and parents, suicide, and many others—which is created by the Peer Educators and played-out in an assembly at the middle school. The Peer Educators also serve as important resources for students, connecting them with needed resources in the community and serving as “someone to turn to” in times of personal crisis.
The Peer Educators also work on a community level through a series of youth symposia and other activities. Past programs have included a community-based youth symposium on HIV/AIDS and an AIDS Awareness Day. The students in DGS are “very dedicated,” committing many hours of work to community service each year, according to program founder Valerie Ingram.

**Exercise the Right Choice**

More than 600 New Britain youth have a safe place to stay, play and learn each day after school, thanks to the city Parks and Recreation Department’s “Exercise the Right Choice Program.” Approximately six years ago, the Department received state funding to develop an after-school program for middle-school students, particularly low-income and at-risk youth. This funding led to the institution of Exercise the Right Choice, which offers teens a place to go after school, an opportunity to learn and play in a supervised environment, and access to coordinated youth services.

Numerous studies show that the hours between the end of the school day and the end of parents’ work days is the time when youth are at greatest risk of becoming involved in risky behaviors, such as drug and alcohol use and violence. Exercise the Right Choice offers middle school students a variety of “positive constructive alternatives” to these activities, right in their own schools, every day. Through the program, students can receive homework tutoring, a variety of social services and guidance and counseling. Each day, the teens are also involved in workshops that teach them life skills, arts or computers, and in a diverse assortment of recreational activities. According to the City of New Britain, “[t]his project provides opportunities that enhance self esteem and the quality of life through contributing to each child’s physical, social, emotional, cultural, creative and educational growth and development.”

While Exercise the Right Choice runs from 2:35 to 5:25 each school day, and from 9:00-1:00 each Saturday during winter break, the program doesn’t stop there. Program directors coordinate frequent evening and weekend programs, such as “After School Blasts” and Friday dances—often attended by more than 200 teens—as well as fun field-trips to local sporting events and other events.

**Klingberg Family Centers**

Klingberg Family Centers offers an array of services to children and families affected by abuse designed to ensure that families offer their children “a safe, nurturing home environment,” according to the Centers.

- **The Residential Treatment Program** serves children and adolescents who are emotionally and psychiatrically impaired.
- Through the **Acute Care Unit**, children and their families receive individual, group and family treatment, psychiatric evaluation and treatment and special education classes, among other services.
- The **Special Education School** offers a full, approved academic curriculum for special education students who are living at home with their families.
- The Centers also offer **Extended Day Treatment** to students between the ages of 5 and 15 years through an intensive after-school program.
- The **Home-based Family Services** component of the center offers in-home services to more than 300 families of children and adolescents who are returning home from out-of-home placements.
- A new program, **Special Families for Special Kids**, will recruit and train foster and adoptive families for children served by the Centers.
- **A Respite Care Services** program, being developed in collaboration with several other human services agencies, will offer a “much-needed break” to families of seriously emotional disturbed children and youth who need specially trained care.
New Britain Children and Youth: 2000

Making a Difference

MOMS

Well over 200 young mothers and their infants have been served through New Britain General Hospital’s MOMS program. The goals of the program, which has been in place since 1986, are to prevent child abuse and neglect, provide a safe and nonjudgmental environment where young, first-time mothers can connect with others like them, to educate young mothers about child development and job opportunities, and to help foster self esteem. MOMS is based on a well-known program called MELD—Minnesota Early Learning Design—which has been implemented successfully throughout the country for the past three decades.

The program consists of two “support groups,” each run by 2-3 well-trained facilitators who were young mothers themselves, which meet once a week. Each mother who attends the program is asked to provide a 2-year commitment, after which she formally graduates from MOMS. Over the past 14 years, approximately half of the women who have started the program have graduated.

The groups meet each week at the First Church of Christ in New Britain, where a team of nearly 20 volunteers provides transportation, food and group facilitation.

Signs of the program’s success include its persistence in the community and continued funding since 1986. In addition, while MOMS does provide some outreach services, most of its participants are drawn to the program by word-of-mouth.

New Britain General Hospital Asthma Education Program

Education is perhaps the best way to reduce hospital admissions for asthma in children, and to improve the quality of life for children who must live with this chronic disorder. For this reason, health care workers at New Britain General Hospital provide hands-on education on asthma management to each child admitted to the Emergency Department (ED) for asthma, and also to the child’s parents.

Each child and adult admitted to New Britain General Hospital for asthma receives an asthma kit. The kit contains a spacer (a device that helps deliver inhaled asthma medications more effectively), a peak flow monitor (a device that is used to measure breathing capacity and to monitor asthma symptoms), several educational pamphlets and forms on living with asthma, asthma triggers, asthma signs and symptoms, when to go to the hospital, and other important issues in asthma management, and an instructional video on how to use the spacer and peak flow meter.

Once children admitted to the ED for asthma receive appropriate medication, they and their parents watch the instructional video in the ED and practice using the spacer and peak flow meter with the help of health care professionals. When the children leave, they take the asthma kit with them for further education at home.

Fortunately, the New Britain General Hospital is able to provide asthma kits to all children admitted to the ED with asthma, regardless of their insurance status, through grants. In 1998, more than 1,000 patients were admitted to New Britain General Hospital’s ED with asthma, of whom 26% were children younger than 16 years of age.

While it is difficult to measure the impact the hospital’s program has on quality of life for children with asthma in New Britain, data from the hospital indicates that fewer patients are returning to the ED within a few weeks of being treated for an asthma exacerbation now that the educational program is in effect.

Pathways/Senderos

Children who are doing poorly in school are at the highest risk of becoming parents as teens. This understanding is what led to the development of Pathways/Senderos, a neighborhood program designed to reinforce academics, teach life skills and promote sports among high risk boys and girls attending elementary school in the Arch Street Neighborhood. Currently 48 children from two local elementary schools are participating in the program—each of these children is eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school.
Children involved in the program meet at the center, which is walking distance from both school and home, each day after school until 5:30. After receiving assistance with their homework, the children can take part in sports or a variety of programs designed around family life, sex education, career awareness and other life skills. Students with a C-average or better in school can also work in the Pathways/Senderos bulk mailing business, if they wish.

In the summer, Pathways/Senderos also runs a recreational program to keep kids connected to the center. Less emphasis is placed on academics and life skills during summer sessions.

In the seven years the program has been in place, only one child involved in the program has gone on to become pregnant as a teen. In addition, a few of the program’s children who have graduated from high school—the first in their families to do so—have attended college with assistance from financial scholarships coordinated through the center.

YWCA

More than 50 girls in the New Britain 6th through 8th grades attend after-school courses twice a week through YWCA STRIVE. The program trains young women in a variety of life skills, including subjects particularly relevant to their development, such as peer pressure and sexual responsibility. The groups also have opportunities to visit college campuses and take part in a variety of recreational activities, including art and computers.

Local responses to the program have been “extremely positive,” according to Tracey Madden-Hennesey. It’s not unusual to have 100 girls from each New Britain middle school apply for the program each year, she said.

The YWCA also supports programs aimed at younger children, in particular its Bully Proof project. Using an 11-week curriculum modified from “Sticks and Stones,” developed by researchers at Wellesley College, instructors at the YWCA teach 4th and 5th grade students about bullying—a precursor to sexual assault and other forms of violence in later grades—how to react positively to bullies and how to recognize situations in which bullying can occur. Program directors estimate that approximately 100 New Britain children learn about bullies through the project each year. The program is also available to students attending schools in Bristol, Plainville and Southington.

Photograph by Cheryl Barrett
### Summary Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of the Child--1998</th>
<th>New Britain</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of children under age 18</strong></td>
<td>16,457</td>
<td>766,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Per capita income</strong></td>
<td>$18,110</td>
<td>$27,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child poverty rate (1990)</strong></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District poverty rate (98-99)</strong></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Late or no prenatal care (1997)</strong></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infant mortality rate (1997)</strong></td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teen birth rate (1997)</strong></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students with non-English home language (98-99)</strong></td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4th grade CMT reading: students at or above goal (98-99)</strong></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10th grade CAPT language arts: students at or above goal (98-99)</strong></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAT total score (97-98)</strong></td>
<td>907</td>
<td>1007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cumulative dropout rate (class of 1998)</strong></td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seniors attending higher education (class of 1998)</strong></td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth violent crime arrest rate</strong></td>
<td>678</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7th graders who smoke (1999)</strong></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7th graders who drink alcohol (1999)</strong></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7th graders who carried a weapon in the past month (1999)</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1 district poverty rate equals the proportion of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals
2 rate is infant deaths per 1,000 live births
3 rate is the number of births per 100,000 girls ages 15-19 years
4 rate is violent crime arrests (murder, manslaughter, robbery, forcible rape and aggravated assault) per 100,000 youth ages 10-17 years
5 monthly or more often in the past year
6 Connecticut data are from the 1996 Voice of Connecticut Youth Survey


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New Britain Children and Youth: 2000

42