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## Child poverty rate remains high

By: [Jennifer Bissell](#) | Posted date: **September 27, 2013** | In: [Economy](#), [Fairfield](#), [Government](#) | comment : 0

The percentage of children living in poverty in Connecticut has increased 2.2 percent in the last four years, according to new U.S. Census data.

Nearly 10 years ago, state officials hoped to see the child poverty rate closer to 5 percent by now. But in the most recent American Community Survey data release, the percentage of Connecticut children living in poverty in 2012 was up to 14.8 percent.

"It's a serious concern for the state as a whole," said Mary Pat C. Healy, executive director of the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition. "Poverty has an impact on everything: health, education, access to healthy foods and future income."

As the economy continues to improve, experts hope the number of children in poverty will decrease. However between 2011 and 2012, when unemployment did lessen, there was no statistically significant decrease in the number of children in poverty in the state.

Roughly 40 percent of Bridgeport children live in poverty, Healy said, as it is a more urban and diverse area. The rate of poverty there is more than three times that of Fairfield County. About 11 percent of Fairfield County children lived in poverty in 2012.

"We're in a region that has incredible wealth, but too many of our families are struggling," Healy said. "In a fragile economy, like we're in, things are not improving as fast as we want to see ... There might be improvements in the economy in other parts of the state. But in a city like Bridgeport, it is much more difficult."

The Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition is a research advocacy group committed to the wellbeing of children.

In 2004, the state Legislature established the Child Poverty and Prevention Council with the goal of reducing child poverty to 5 percent in 2014. But with the recession and slow grow-back period, officials doubt the council will meet the state mandate. The child poverty rate was at 10.8 percent in 2003, the baseline year for the mandate.

"We are concerned about the rate of child poverty," said Anne Foley, chairwoman of the child poverty council. "But it's reflective of what's going on nationally. Things aren't only getting worse here."

Connecticut historically has had one of the lowest child-poverty rates in the country and it is still below the nationwide average of 15.9 percent. Plus, Foley said, the 2012 Census data is based on 2011 incomes, which may not yet reflect recent policy initiatives by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy.

Since 2011, Malloy has enacted several recommendations put forward by the council, Foley said. The state has started an earned income tax credit program for low-income families, increased supportive and affordable housing units, placed higher emphasis on early child education and created several job initiatives through the Jobs Act.

But there's always more that we can do, Foley said. In light of recent legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives that would significantly scale back food stamps, Foley stressed the importance of continuing support for programs that help needy families.

"Our studies show that getting more people on food stamps, not less, is one of the best ways to get people out of poverty, as it stabilizes their food source," Foley said. "We hope things turn around in the future."

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