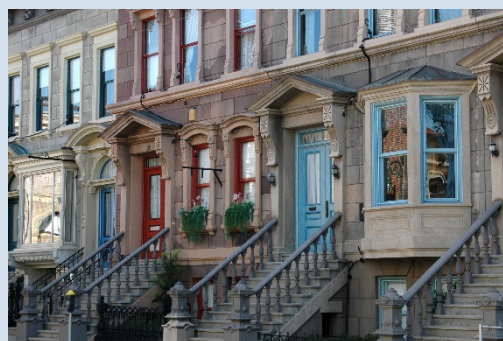## NJSHAD Provides Critical Data for Identifying and Addressing NJ's Child Health Issues

What was the problem/situation?

Peter Chen, staff attorney with Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ), wants to get his hands on all the detailed health data that's available for New Jersey's children. "ACNJ is an advocacy organization, and we consistently need accurate up-to-date detailed information, so we can track the health of New Jersey's kids. We especially need to understand which groups of kids are experiencing poor outcomes so that we can work with partners throughout NJ to work to fix the situation."

Alana Vega, Kids Count Coordinator with ACNJ, is specifically funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to annually create and publish the New Jersey and the Newark Kids Count Data Books, as well as the Kids Count County Pocket Guides, which bring together detailed statistics and data for children and youth within New Jersey overall, by county, and for New Jersey's largest city, Newark. The task involves gathering and packaging the latest statistics and five-year trend data for multiple content areas: demographics, family economic security, food insecurity, child health, child protection, child care, education, and teens. "Data acquisition is a huge task, and data needs to be available for Newark, each of NJ's 21 NJ counties, and for NJ overall. Additionally, it's important that health data be available by age group, race, ethnicity, and country of birth. Since updated ACNJ Data Books are published annually, the newest child health data needs to be reliably available each year."

How was Tracking involved?

Advocates for Children of NJ depend on the NJ State Health Assessment Data (NJSHAD) System, to provide easy access to needed health datasets for their advocacy activities and Kids Count Data Books. The NJ Department of Health's Center for Health Statistics and Informatics has partnered with NJ Tracking to create the indicators and online dataset queries for all NJ births, deaths, inpatient hospitalizations, and emergency department visits used by ACNJ. NJSHAD dataset query variables allow users to analyze individual level data sets. For example, users of the Hospitalization Query can analyze individual-level inpatient hospitalizations and emergency department visits of children using year of hospital discharge; age; race and/or ethnicity; sex; diagnostic codes (such as neonatal abstinence syndrome, or primary asthma); procedure codes; primary payer; discharge status; and geographic area of residence (by county or municipality).

What action was taken to resolve the problem?

As stated by ACNJ's Alana Vega, "The wealth of health data that's available in our new 2018 Newark Kids Count Data Book is only possible because of NJSHAD. Our Data Books and targeted analyses are used by policy makers who need accurate and up-to-date data on the health status of NJ's kids. Because of the way you can drill down by race and ethnicity, you can get super specific using NJSHAD."

In July of 2018, ACNJ issued a new data publication called Babies Count, A NJ Kids Count Report. The report includes indicators of family support, early learning, and health for NJ children from birth to age 3. "The health section is the largest because with NJSHAD you can drill down to the detailed data you want. We've included data on infant mortality, low birthweights, and prenatal care access, and survey data from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS). These data points give readers a snapshot of how New Jersey's infants and toddlers are faring."

As stated by ACNJ's Peter Chen, "Both NJSHAD and our Kids Count Data Books share the common goal of providing NJ communities with agreed-upon and trusted sets of data that policymakers can work from. I'm very grateful that the NJDOH understands and shares online datasets that support our needs. Without NJSHAD, we could not do our work as effectively or efficiently."

NJSHAD serves as the main data portal for NJDOH, providing public access to data and information from the entire New Jersey Department of Health, and hosts datasets for the New Jersey Environmental Public Health Tracking (NJEPHT) Program. NJSHAD provides static public health indicators which combine data and information, and dynamic custom public health query tools. The functionality, content, and utility of NJSHAD and the NJEPHT portal are constantly being enhanced.