



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

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**More Illinois Children Living in Poverty, in Families without Secure
Employment, National Report Reveals**
Number of High School Dropouts, Infant Mortality Rate Decreases

CHICAGO – Illinois children and their families continue to face challenging economic conditions as more children are living in poverty and in families without secure parental employment, according to the 2009 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The percentage of children in Illinois living in poverty increased 13 percent between 2000 and 2007, from 15 percent in 2000 to 17 percent in 2007. During the same time period, *Data Book* indicators show that the percentage of children living in families without secure parental employment rose from 29 percent to 31 percent. While both measures are lower than 2007 national averages, the Illinois indicators increased at a faster rate than in the United States.

Additionally, the report found that 31 percent of Illinois children live in single parent families.

“Many Illinois families are experiencing unprecedented hardships, losing jobs and homes, watching helplessly as the value of their assets plummets, and losing services on which they urgently rely. Some families who were securely in the middle class are sliding into poverty, and those who were already in poverty are slipping even further,” said Voices for Illinois Children Interim President Gaylord Gieseke. “These are difficult, challenging times, and we all must do everything we can to strengthen the capacity of communities to help meet the needs of children and families.”

Now in its 20th year, the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* provides information and statistical trends on the needs and conditions of America’s most disadvantaged children and families.

The *Data Book* also reveals some encouraging news: Looking across all well-being indicators, Illinois was one of five states with the biggest improvement in its rankings between 1999-2000 and 2006-07. Other states include Connecticut, Maryland, New York and North Carolina.

Among the report’s findings:

- **Infant mortality:** Illinois’ infant mortality rate decreased 15 percent, from 8.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 7.2 per 1,000 in 2006. Yet, the state’s rate remains above the national average of 6.7 per 1,000 in 2006.
- **Teen birth rate:** Illinois’ rate of births to teens ages 15 to 19 dropped 19 percent from 2000 to 2006; however, the rate remained the same from 2005 to 2006 at 39 per 1,000 births.

- High school dropouts: Between 2000 and 2007, the percentage of teens ages 16 to 19 who are high school dropouts decreased from 9 percent to 6 percent.

“According to these indicators, children’s well-being has improved. Yet, more recent economic indicators and real-life stories from communities across Illinois show the true, current challenges families are facing and the reality that our work is far from done,” Gieseke said.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* ranks Illinois 24th in the nation in children’s well-being, the same rank as in 2007. Since 2000, Illinois improved on six of the 10 key indicators, including infant mortality rate, teen birth rate, the child death rate, teen death rate, the number of high school dropouts, and the percentage of students not in school and not working. Illinois has moved up significantly since 1994, when the state placed 39th for its quality of life for children.

The *Data Book* essay, “Counting What Counts,” looks at the country’s progress in keeping track of children’s well-being, measuring the impact of public programs, and holding ourselves accountable for improving their futures.

“Results matter, and during these challenging circumstances, they matter even more,” Gieseke said. “Illinois’ funding shortfalls make it essential that policymakers have access to timely, high-quality data to help ensure that every dollar spent goes to effective programs that provide real support for our most vulnerable populations. KIDS COUNT provides a powerful tool to measure children’s well-being in order to improve results for them, their families and their communities.”

This year’s *Data Book* is complemented by the expanded KIDS COUNT Data Center that contains hundreds of measures of child well-being covering national, state, county, and city information. Users can now access geographic profiles that include information on education, economic well-being, the number of children in immigrant families, health and many more topics. To access information for Illinois, visit datacenter.kidscount.org/il.

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Voices for Illinois Children champions the full development of every child in Illinois to assure the future well-being of everyone in the state. We work with families, communities and policymakers on all issues to help children grow up healthy, happy, safe, loved, and well educated. For more information, visit www.voices4kids.org.