



### **Invest in Our Future: There are More Than 3.2 Million Children in Illinois**

#### **Illinois families are struggling to meet their children's basic needs.**

- One in six Illinois children currently live in poverty, many of them in rural and urban areas of the state. The child poverty rate has been slowly increasing since 2000.
- The poverty rate for female-headed households with children rose to 37 percent in 2005-2006 — a five percentage point increase since 1999.
- On average, more than 37,000 families received cash assistance through AFDC/TANF per month in 2006.

#### **Not all Illinois children are prepared for success in school, the workforce and beyond.**

- Illinois consistently ranks 49th in the nation for the size of the per-student spending gap between the state's wealthy and poor school districts.
- Less than 80 percent of Illinois high school students graduated with a regular diploma four years after starting 9th grade in 2004-2005.
- One in 19 public school students in grades 9-12 dropped out of school between one year and the next in 2003-2004 — the highest event dropout rate among Midwestern states.

#### **We must do more to safeguard children's social, emotional and physical well-being.**

- One in five Illinois children has a diagnosable mental illness. More than two-thirds of these children receive no services at all.
- One in six children in low-income families were without health insurance in 2005-2006 — the highest proportion among Midwestern states.
- Seven out of every 1,000 children died before their first birthday during the years 2002-2004. Among African-American babies, 15 of every 1,000 babies born those years died.
- Almost nine percent of babies born in 2005 were of low birthweight (less than five and a half pounds).

#### **Many Illinois children and youth continue to be at risk.**

- More than seven out of every 1,000 children — more than 24,000 children — were abused or neglected in 2006.
- African-American children continue to be overrepresented in the Illinois child welfare system. They comprise about 18 percent of the overall child population but about 61 percent of the substitute care population.
- Fewer than one in five foster children in Illinois achieved permanency in 2006.
- On average, one in 13 Illinois teens between the ages of 16 and 19 were not in school and not working between 2004-2006.

*Source: "Illinois Kids Count 2008," Voices for Illinois Children*

*Illinois children's lives have improved dramatically thanks to good public policies, but there's still more work to do!*