



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

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Contact: Julie Parente
(312) 516-5551

Need for Economic Support for Illinois Families, Foster Care Improvements Highlighted in National Report

CHICAGO – The economic conditions of Illinois children and families is worsening as more children are living in poverty and more are living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment, according to the national 2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The report ranks Illinois 26th in the nation, down from 24th in 2006 despite improvements in seven of the 10 key indicators of child well-being. Illinois has moved up significantly since 1994, when the state placed 39th for its quality of life for children.

Among the report's findings:

- **Child poverty:** Sixteen percent of Illinois children are living in poverty, up from 15 percent in 2000. Eight percent of Illinois children live in extreme poverty, while 36 percent live in low-income families.
- **Parental employment:** Thirty-two percent of children live in families that lack secure employment, up from 29 percent in 2000.

But there is encouraging news: fewer teens are dropping out of school, and the infant mortality rate and teen birth rate continue to fall, according to the report.

The report shows over 22,000 Illinois children are in foster care and in need of permanent family connections. In 2004, seven of every 1,000 Illinois children lived in foster care, less than the national average of 10 of every 1,000 children.

While Illinois has made great strides in decreasing the number of children in foster care by securing permanent homes for them, many children who remain in foster care are older. In 2004 over 1,000 foster children “aged out” of the system at age 18 without having a permanent family.

“All Illinois children – especially those in foster care – need strong families and lasting family connections,” Voices for Illinois Children President Jerry Stermer said. “We all share the responsibility of helping every child achieve his or her full potential. We need to strengthen policies that support families by investing in education, health care and critical human services, and by ensuring that foster children who leave the system have the supports they need to succeed in life.”

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