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A Project of  
The Annie E. Casey  
Foundation

***National Foundation Calls for “Data Revolution” to Track Progress,  
Improve Lives of Vulnerable Kids:  
Federal, State and Local Government Action Needed***  
*2009 KIDS COUNT Data Book Shows 900,000 More Children Living in Poverty*

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Baltimore, Md., July 28, 2009 – The Annie E. Casey Foundation today called for improvements to the nation’s ability to design and evaluate programs aimed at the needs of children and families living in poverty. Casey, in releasing its 20<sup>th</sup> annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, makes it clear that the basis for improving the outcomes of this country’s most disadvantaged children and families lies in identifying where they are, the conditions that they live in, and the effectiveness of current programs to improve outcomes.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* and the new Data Center (<http://datacenter.kidscount.org>) respond to this need by providing a consistent, reliable source of information about children’s well-being. Data on 10 key measures are now available at the state, county, and city level, providing policymakers with the most comprehensive source of information.

“Better futures for children will not occur simply by combining better data, stronger data analysis, and an increased use of new technology,” says Douglas W. Nelson, president and CEO of the Baltimore-based Casey Foundation. “But by counting what counts in the lives of children and families, we can better hold ourselves accountable to our national commitment to meet the needs and boost the outcomes for less-fortunate children. It’s time to focus on the evolving needs of the next generation of millions of children whose future well-being is on the line.”

In this year’s *Data Book* essay, “Counting What Counts,” Casey calls on federal leaders, state and local decision makers, and children’s advocates to transform how they use data to improve the lives of vulnerable children through:

- **Leadership at the federal level to develop high-quality data systems:** Key recommendations include fully funding, properly managing, and successfully promoting the 2010 Census; updating the U.S. poverty measure; increasing data collection on child and family well-being; and addressing problems in the National Vital Statistics System.
- **Commitment at the state and local level to improve performance measurement:** Steps that can be taken include enhancing administrative databases, improving data analysis, promoting data-driven practice improvements, and expanding the use of new information technologies.
- **Engagement of children’s advocates and other concerned leaders:** Awareness and mobilization efforts include using compelling data to inform and strengthen advocacy; identifying critical, measureable benchmarks; and using neighborhood indicators and community mapping to clarify challenges and identify opportunities for helping families succeed.

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“Access to timely and easily understood data can lead to better-informed policies, more focused programming, and more efficient use of taxpayer dollars,” declares Patrick McCarthy, senior vice president of the Casey Foundation. “Despite the temptations to cut back on government-financed systems during hard economic times, ensuring that policy makers and managers have the information they need to make critically important decisions can deliver an immense payoff in reduced waste and improved results for children.”

The 20<sup>th</sup> annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* indicators show that national trends in child well-being have improved slightly since 2000. These national trends, however, are not on par with the well-being improvements that were seen at the end of the 1990s.

“KIDS COUNT has slightly more good news than bad for children, but there are some trends going in the wrong direction,” says Laura Beavers, coordinator of the national KIDS COUNT project. “The poverty rate for children remains between 17 and 19 percent thus far this decade – the rate of 18 percent in 2007 means 900,000 more children were living in poverty nationally than in 2000, a number that spurs our call for change.”

In addition, the teen birth rate is trending upward after more than a decade of steady decline. Although still below the rate in 2000, the teen birth rate increased from 40 to 42 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19 between 2005 and 2006. The latest increase was widespread, with the teen birth rate going up in 41 states.

Looking across all well-being indicators, New Hampshire, Minnesota, and Utah rank highest, and Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi rank the lowest. Five states with the biggest improvement in their rankings between 1999-2000 and 2006-07 are New York, Connecticut, Maryland, North Carolina, and Illinois. The six states with the biggest drops in their rankings during this same period are Montana, Maine, Alaska, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Vermont.

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization, whose primary mission is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today’s vulnerable children and families. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).*

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state-by-state rankings, supplemental data, and the essay launches at 11:00 a.m. EDT on July 28, 2009 at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>. Through the KIDS COUNT Data Center, users can download the complete *Data Book*, access hundreds of other measures of child well-being, and view real-time information on portable devices.

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