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## **2010 KIDS COUNT Data Book Ranks Arizona 39<sup>th</sup>**

Phoenix – In collaboration with The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Children's Action Alliance (CAA) today released its annual comparison of conditions for children. This year shows, as in previous years, that many children growing up in Arizona will face tough odds.

Looking across all well-being indicators tracked through the *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, Arizona ranked 39th in the nation this year, compared to 40th last year and 39th in 2008. Arizona has seen some progress in conditions for kids since 2000. The percentage of 16-19 year olds who have dropped out of high school has been cut in half since 2000, exceeding the national drop in the rate. The child death rate, teen birth rate, and child poverty rate have also seen improvements in Arizona since 2000. Arizona, however, continues to rank in the bottom half of the nation in all of these categories and ranks in the bottom ten for the rate of teens who are dropouts.

Nationwide, New Hampshire, Minnesota, and Vermont rank highest, and Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi rank the lowest. Six states with the biggest improvements in their rankings between 2000-2007 (health data) and 2000-2008 (economic data) are New York, Maryland, North Carolina, Illinois, Oregon, and Wyoming. The five states with the biggest drops in their rankings between 2000-2007 and 2000-2008 are Montana, South Dakota, Maine, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Arizona's consistent ratings among the worst in the nation clearly indicate the need for elected leaders who will put children first. Arizona needs leadership, attention and commitment from state lawmakers to improve the health, education, and security of children. Votes at the state capitol every year on health care, Child Protective Services, juvenile justice, child care and education affect the lives of thousands of children and shape our future workforce and competitiveness.

During this election season, CAA is educating voters about these issues and others through our 2010 candidate questionnaire. Last month, CAA distributed to every legislative and gubernatorial candidate a questionnaire about their position on key issues and a fact sheet on the status of children in their legislative district. Completed questionnaires and the fact sheets are posted at [www.azchildren.org](http://www.azchildren.org) and voters are encouraged to visit the site to find their candidates' responses.

A preliminary analysis of the completed questionnaires gives us some reason to hope for improved conditions for Arizona kids. Across party lines, almost unanimously, the more than 60 candidates who have responded have stated their support to fully fund KidsCare and lift the enrollment freeze.

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*Children's Action Alliance is an independent voice for Arizona children at the state capitol and in the community. CAA is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to promoting the well-being of all of Arizona's children and their families through research, policy development, media campaigns and advocacy. [www.azchildren.org](http://www.azchildren.org)*

*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 and supplemental data launches at 12:01 a.m., July 27, 2010 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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