



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

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National Report Reveals Encouraging and Disturbing Trends for Illinois Children

Increase in Percentage of Low Birthweight Babies and Children Living In Poverty

Chicago, IL, July 27, 2010 – The proportion of low birthweight babies in Illinois rose from 7.9 percent in 2000 to 8.5 percent in 2007 – an increase similar to nationwide trends. In addition, the child poverty rate in Illinois gradually increased from 15 percent in 2000 to 17 percent in 2008. (A family of two adults and two children were considered living in poverty if their income in 2008 fell below \$21,834.) About 535,000 children in Illinois were living in poverty in 2008.

These findings are presented in the *2010 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The increase in low birthweight babies is a cause for concern because these babies are at higher risk for various health problems, including high blood pressure and diabetes, even in adulthood. Various studies have identified this trend but there is no clear explanation as to why. In Illinois, the Family Case Management program, which serves low-income families, strives to reduce infant mortality and very low birthweights and to assure access to medical and dental care for eligible families.

“In an effort to improve prenatal care and birth outcomes, Illinois also has long recognized the benefits of home visitation programs,” said Kathy Ryg, President for Voices for Illinois Children. “These programs provide supportive services to new and expectant parents, especially teenage parents, through home visitation to improve the parent-child relationship and to promote children’s healthy growth and development. All of these programs face the possibility of substantial budget cuts in FY11.”

The report also showed substantial improvement on these indicators:

- The **infant mortality rate** in Illinois was 6.7 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2007, down from 7.2 per 1,000 births in 2006 and 8.5 per 1,000 in 2000. The decline in infant mortality since 2000 has been steeper in Illinois than in any other state.
- Between 2000 and 2005, the **birth rate among females ages 15-19 declined** substantially in both Illinois and the U.S. as a whole. From 2005 to 2007, the nationwide rate increased from 40 to 43 births per 1,000 females, suggesting a possible reversal of the longer-term trend. Over the same period of time, the teen birth rate in Illinois showed a slight increase from 39 to 40 births per

1,000. In 2008, the state's teen birth rate dropped back to 39 per 1,000. (Nationwide data for 2008 are not yet available.)

Voices for Illinois Children did an extensive examination on children living in poverty in the 2010 Illinois Kids Count Data Book, *Children and Families in a Time of Economic Crisis*.

“We recognize that the data for 2008 do not reflect the full effects of the recession,” Ryg said. “Going forward, we have a tremendous amount of work to do in an effort to combat the long term effects of both the national recession and the state fiscal crisis for children and families in Illinois.”

The Casey Foundation's 21st annual *Data Book* is complemented by the expanded KIDS COUNT Data Center, which contains hundreds of measures of child well-being and allows users to create maps and graphs of the data at the national, state, county, and city levels. To access information for Illinois, go to <http://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.