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CONTACT:

Jane Zehnder-Merrell

(517) 487-5436

janez@michleagueforhumansvs.org

Judy Putnam

(517) 487-5436

jputnam@michleagueforhumansvs.org

Michigan slips to No. 30 from No. 27 in child well-being; Lack of secure jobs, high infant mortality pull state down

Michigan fell to No. 30 among the 50 states in the annual KIDS COUNT report on child well-being released today, the state's worst ranking in more than a decade. Michigan ranked 27th for child well-being in the previous four reports by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which provides an overall rank based on 10 measures of child well-being.

In this year's report, Michigan was among the 10 worst states when it comes to lack of secure parental employment, ranking 44th, with No. 1 being the state with the best or lowest rate.

In 2008, 31 percent of Michigan children lived in families where no adult had full-time, year-round employment, compared with 27 percent of children nationally.

"Unfortunately, as bad as this indicator is, we know that our state experienced a sharp increase in job losses in late 2008 and through 2009, which is not fully reflected in these data," said Kids Count in Michigan Director Jane Zehnder-Merrell, a senior research associate at the Michigan League for Human Services. "The full impact will be more evident in next year's report."

On another measure, Michigan was 40th in the country for infant mortality, with nearly eight deaths per 1,000 live births, compared with a national rate of 6.7 deaths per 1,000 births.

"This report reconfirms the urgency to work to improve the survival rates of babies in Michigan," said Amy Zaagman, executive director of the Michigan Council on Maternal and Child Health. "We simply cannot accept a ranking of No. 40 out of 50."

Despite the poor ranking, Michigan has showed a small improvement in infant mortality rates between 2000 and 2007. In addition, the report covered infant deaths in 2007. The 2008 data, not included in this report, shows Michigan improving to 7.4 deaths per 1,000 births.

Since then, however, more budget cuts have hit hard at programs aimed at reducing infant mortality. Family, maternal and child health programs included in the Michigan Department of Community Health budget have fallen from \$60 million in 2002 to \$30 million this fiscal year.

Michigan League for
Human Services
1223 Turner St. Suite G-1
Lansing, MI 48906

(517) 487-5436
Fax (517) 371-4546
Tollfree: (800) 837-5436

Web Site
www.milhs.org

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and
MICHIGAN'S CHILDREN

In addition, state program cuts in the current year budget include \$4.2 million in family planning, \$1.7 million in infant mortality reduction, \$1 million cut from Nurse Family Partnership program and nearly \$100,000 from the Fetal Infant Mortality Review. More cuts across state services are expected as the state faces a \$2 billion shortfall for the next fiscal year.

Since 2000, Michigan improved on five of the 10 indicators, worsened on two, remained the same on one while two others (lack of secure parental employment and teens not working and not in school) could not be compared with previous years because of changes in the data.

The biggest area of improvement was a 40 percent drop in the percent of teens, ages 16 to 19, who are not in school and do not have high school diploma or a GED. Only 6 percent of teens in Michigan were not in school and not graduates, ranking Michigan the 15th best state on that indicator.

Other areas of improvement are:

- Teen birth rate: 34 births per 1,000 teens ages 15-19 (Michigan ranks No. 14)
- Teen death rate: 59 deaths per 100,000 teens, ages 15-19 (Michigan ranks No. 19)
- Child deaths: 18 per 100,000 children ages 1-14 (Michigan ranks No. 15)

Areas that have worsened since 2000 included child poverty with a 36 percent jump in the poverty rate. The report ranks Michigan No. 32 for child poverty, with 19 percent of children living in poverty in 2008, up from 14 percent in 2000.

The percent of low birthweight babies weighing less than five and one-half pounds also worsened some since 2000, at 8.2 percent. The 2007 rate, however, was lower than in 2006.

The percent of children in single-parent families remained the same (32%) with Michigan ranking 23rd on that indicator.

Kids Count in Michigan is a collaboration of the Michigan League for Human Services, a nonprofit, nonpartisan statewide advocacy group for low-income families, and Michigan's Children, a nonprofit voice for children and families in Michigan. It is part of a national effort to measure the well-being of children at state and local levels. The state project is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation of Baltimore, The Skillman Foundation of Detroit, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, and the Michigan Association of United Ways.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The report and more Michigan data can be found at www.aecf.org.