



EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
Until July 27th, 12:01 a.m. EDT

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***2010 KIDS COUNT Data Book Calls for Timely, Reliable Data to
Capture Great Recession and State Budget Crises' Effect on Children***

St. Paul, MN. July 27, 2010 – The improvements in child well-being experienced in the 1990s during times of economic prosperity are in jeopardy. This is a result of little investment in programs that support children and families coupled with the current economic downturn that has affected families with high unemployment rates and negative job growth.

The 21st annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* indicators show:

- Five areas of improvement: infant mortality rate, child death rate, teen death rate, teen birth rate, and teens not in school and not high school graduates;
- Three areas have worsened: children in poverty, low birth-weight babies, and children in single-parent families;
- Two areas are not comparable, based on 2008 available data. This is due to changes in the American Community Survey's questionnaire regarding employment and affect the percent of teens not in school and not working, and the percent of children in families where no parents works full-time year-round.

“While the number of children living in poverty in Minnesota dropped slightly from 2007 to 2008, the decrease is not statistically significant and still remains high compared to child poverty rates at the beginning of the decade. We have 26,000 more children living in poverty than we did in 2000,” stated Kara Arzamendia, Research Director of Children’s Defense Fund-Minnesota.

It is also important to note that the economic indicators in the 2010 report come from the 2008 American Community Survey, which reflects information for the 12 months prior to the survey date. Most U.S. families did not feel economic downturn effects like high unemployment until the end of 2008 and into late 2009.

“There is always lag time in the data, which is frustrating for social service providers who see an immediate need among struggling families. We won’t know the true impact of the recession for at least another year or two, perhaps longer. When a recession hits, it takes a while for families to fall into trouble. First the primary income earner is laid off, then the unemployment benefits run out, and as a last resort the family may spend down savings before applying for public assistance like food support or medical assistance. Unfortunately, we don’t have many programs that can keep families afloat before they lose everything,” says Arzamendia.

Looking across all well-being indicators, Minnesota ranks number two for the second year in a row, only behind New Hampshire who has also held its number one ranking for the last two years. Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi rank the lowest overall.

“Even though Minnesota ranks second among the 50 states, we should not be satisfied comparing ourselves with Texas or Louisiana. A more meaningful approach is to look at the trends within Minnesota. How are Minnesota’s children doing today compared to the beginning of the decade or during the 1990s? This is the best benchmark to gauge our progress for children,” states Jim Koppel, Executive Director of Children’s Defense Fund-Minnesota.

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

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.

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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