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***2010 KIDS COUNT Data Book Shows Stalling of Child Well-Being Measures  
Pre-Dated Economic Downturn,  
Calls for Timely, Reliable Data to Capture Great Recession, State Budget Crises' Effect on Children***

Baltimore, Md., July 27, 2010 – Improvements in child well-being that began in the late 1990s stalled in the years that pre-dated the Great Recession. The 21<sup>st</sup> 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: low-birthweight babies, children in poverty, 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.

“It is important to note that the data in this year's *Data Book* do not reflect the current period of economic recession at the national level,” said Laura Beavers, coordinator of the national KIDS COUNT project. “The economic indicators in our 2010 report come from the 2008 American Community Survey, which reflects information for the 12 months prior to the survey date. The economic downturn effects were not felt by most U.S. families until the end of 2008 and into late 2009, with unemployment peaking in late 2009.”

“There is good news that more teens in 2008 across all five of the largest racial and ethnic group were either in school or had obtained a high school diploma or General Education Diploma compared with teens in 2000,” noted Beavers. “The bad news is that we see that the rate of children living in poverty moved from 17 percent in 2000 to 18 percent in 2008 – this is an increase of at least 1 million more children. Experts project the child poverty rate to climb to above 20 percent when the Census Bureau releases more up-to-date statistics later this year.”

*The Data Book* also provides a first look at state-level teen birth rates for 2007 and shows that after more than a decade of steady decline, the teen birth rate is on the rise. Although still below the rate in 2000, the teen birth rate increased from 40 to 43 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19 between 2005 and 2007. State rates vary dramatically from a low of 20 births per 1,000 in New Hampshire to a high of 72 per 1,000 in Mississippi.

Looking across all well-being indicators, 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.

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 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 Casey Foundation recommends four simple and relatively inexpensive steps that the federal government can take to improve the collection of data on our nation's children. These include:

- **Expanding the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH):** This survey was last conducted in 2007 and is not scheduled again until 2011. As a result, it has not been possible to fully gauge the effects of the severe economic downturn on children. Casey supports the expansion and enhancement of the NSCH, allowing greater frequency of data collection and a broader range of child well-being indicators.
- **Adopting a Supplemental Poverty Measure:** The lack of a modern poverty measure has created a serious gap in the knowledge about how children are faring. The current poverty measure is based on spending patterns typical of the 1950s and doesn't capture non-cash benefits such as food stamps and child care. The Census Bureau has announced that a supplemental poverty measure will be released in the fall of 2011 that will include an assessment of both family income and expenses, providing more accurate data to guide policy decisions.
- **Increasing the Sample Size of the American Community Survey (ACS):** The ACS could be an even more valuable tool to gauge child well-being measures if the sample size were increased to provide more precise data for urban neighborhoods and sparsely populated rural communities. The Casey Foundation supports an increase in the sample size of this survey that is the primary source of community-level data in the country.
- **Addressing Problems in the Vital Records System:** Over the past few years, significant gaps and delays in compiling key data on health have occurred. This has resulted from years of underinvestment at the National Center for Health, Statistics and difficulty implementing recent changes to birth and death certificates. To rectify these lags, Congress should make a one-time appropriation of \$30 million to help states transition to the new forms, modernize the Vital Statistics system, and then provide additional funds to support this key data stream.

*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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