

DATA ADVOCACY AND POLICY SUCCESSES FOR CHILDREN:

Stories from State KIDS COUNT Grantees

July 2009

**The Annie E. Casey Foundation
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Using Data and Influence to Fight for Early Care and Education

State: **California**

Organization: **Children Now**

Contact Info:

<http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT/KIDSCOUNTStateNetwork.aspx#CA>

The *California Report Card* provides the most comprehensive and actionable snapshot of California children's well-being available. Relied upon by policymakers, advocates, the media and the general public, the annual publication includes (1) the latest data on the health and education issues affecting the state's children, (2) an overview of the key public policy and budgetary developments on those issues and (3) next steps needed to ensure all children have the opportunity to thrive. The *Report Card* is released annually, just before the Governor's budget and State of the State address. In this way, the *Report Card* functions as a critical advocacy tool, providing policymakers with a timely overview of the policy and budgetary actions needed by children. The *Report Card* has been instrumental in helping Children Now establish the children's agenda that will enable all children to reach their full potential.

In 2008, Children Now utilized the clear and compelling data and recommendations set forth in the *California Report Card* to brief legislators and their staffs, give testimonies to various policy committees, and generate the support that was needed to pass two pieces of early care and education legislation. As a result of these efforts, Children Now was instrumental in achieving these substantial policy victories for children: [AB 2759](#) increases the efficiency of the preschool system by consolidating Department of Education funding – creating the largest state preschool program in the nation; [SB 1629](#) establishes an early learning quality improvement advisory committee, the first step in creating an early care and education system that encourages providers to improve the quality of the programs that serve 1.7 million of California's young children.

Related Links

2009 Report Card highlighting policy progress made in 2008:

http://publications.childrennow.org/publications/invest/reportcard_2009.cfm

2008 Report Card highlighting Early Childhood Education recommendations:

http://publications.childrennow.org/publications/invest/reportcard_2008.cfm

AB 2759 and SB 1629 bill information, fact sheets, press releases and media coverage:

<http://www.preschoolcalifornia.org/preschool-momentum/preschool-reform-package.html>

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell's Press Release:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr08/yr08rel138.asp>

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's Press Release: <http://gov.ca.gov/press-release/10631/>

Data, Research and Hawaii's Homeless Children

State: **Hawaii**

Organization: **Center on the Family**

Contact Info:

<http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT/KIDSCOUNTStateNetwork.aspx#HI>

In the past, homelessness in Hawaii was an issue largely ignored by policymakers and the general public. Despite the pleas of advocates and service providers, funds for the homeless remained static and waiting lists for beds and shelter grew longer. Hawaii Kids Count partnered with the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) to use valid and reliable data to present a compelling narrative about the people without homes. In 2006, the Center on the Family published the inaugural issue of the Homeless Service Utilization Report and brought attention to the fact that approximately one-fourth of the homeless population was composed of families with children and one-third of the individuals in shelters were children 17 years and younger. That report and subsequent annual reports received widespread media coverage and editorials calling for action in support of the homeless, particularly children.

The Hawaii Kids Count Coordinator and a representative from the HPHA were invited to share the report at a national Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conference. Following the conference, HUD published a document entitled Demonstrating the Use of Homeless Data at the Local Level—Nine Case Studies, which included an overview of Hawaii's data system and Homeless Service Utilization Report. HUD also presented Brian Johnson from the HPHA Homeless Programs with the 2007 Outstanding HMIS Achievement Award for using HMIS data for public policy and funding decisions. Since 2006, there has been a significant increase in facilities and funds for the homeless. Compared to the previous 10 years in which there was no change, Hawaii's inventory of shelter units and bed spaces doubled from 2006 to the present. Moreover, the state appropriation for homeless shelters and programs grew from \$6 million in 2006 to more than \$14 million today. Although Hawaii KIDS COUNT cannot claim credit for all of these significant achievements, they contributed to these victories by providing the cogent data that helped to change minds and hearts—that led to the political will and actions in support of the homeless.

Related Links

Latest Homeless Service Utilization Report:

<http://www.uhfamily.hawaii.edu/publications/brochures/HomelessServiceUtilization2008.pdf>

[Newspaper Articles-Hawaii \(PDF\)](#)

Educating Policy-Makers with Data: Expanding Health Care and Economic Security

State: **Maine**

Organization: **Maine Children's Alliance**

Contact Info:

<http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT/KIDSCOUNTStateNetwork.aspx#ME>

Health Care Expansion:

We have lots of data that made a difference for health care expansions at the state and federal level and early childhood data that Senator Snowe has used for 12 years to support her various issues.

From 1994 to 1997, the Maine Children's Alliance continuously highlighted the number and percent of kids without health insurance to our state and national representatives. On the state level our advocacy efforts finally worked to get an expansion passed in the legislature, but that effort was vetoed by the Governor. At the same time, our data was used by our US Senators to encourage their co sponsorship of the bill that became the State Children's Health Program (SCHIP) and was again used from 2005 to 2008 to reauthorize SCHIP.

Related Links

Issue Paper: Child Health Care Access Project: Who are the Uninsured in Maine?

http://www.mainechildrensalliance.org/am/publish/article_67.shtml

Maine Children's Alliance Website:

http://mekids.org/am/publish/cat_index_2.shtml

[Health Insurance Brief \(PDF\)](#)

Child Care:

In 2005 Senator Snowe used Maine Children's Alliance data and a memo they prepared for her about unmet need to support an amendment to the TANF reauthorization due in 2005. She added \$6 billion amendment for child care on the basis of the data and some information they supplied about why that was a good idea. Maine Children's Alliance continued working with the Senator and with their national colleagues at Voices. The amendment passed with the support of 78 Senators but failed as it was an amendment to the TANF reauthorization that year. In addition, the same information has been used consistently to support refundable tax credit as both a child tax and child care tax credit up to the current stimulus bill passed in February 2009.

Related Links

Maine Children's Alliance Website:

http://mekids.org/am/publish/cat_index_2.shtml

[Unmet Child Care Needs Memo \(PDF\)](#)

Learning from Experience: The Importance of Data Collection and Health Care

State: **Oregon**

Organization: **Children First of Oregon**

Contact Info:

<http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT/KIDSCOUNTStateNetwork.aspx#OR>

Following the defeat of the Healthy Kids Plan in 2007 - an effort to expand health care coverage to every child in Oregon, led by Children First of Oregon began. Advocates regrouped in late fall to discuss strategies to expand coverage during a short, interim session. They quickly decided to focus their efforts on moving Oregon away from using a 6-month enrollment for the Oregon Health Plan to a 12-month continuous enrollment cycle. The change could be made by either the Legislature or the Governor, and would increase coverage for nearly 20,000 children over two years.

To support this effort, and to hit the ground running at the beginning of the short 2008 legislative session, Children First for Oregon produced a two-page policy brief entitled: Keep it Simple: Cover More Eligible Kids and Keep them Covered. They used data from Oregon's current coverage situation, and, most importantly, Washington State's experience moving from 12-month continuous enrollment to 6-month enrollment and back again. Their experience helped vividly illustrate how a small rule change can dramatically impact enrollment in public coverage programs, and helped make the case for Oregon.

Legislators ran out of time to address the issue during the emergency, month-long legislative session in February, but the media coverage we received and the education that resulted from the Policy Brief convinced the Governor to commit to making the change in his State for the State address a few weeks after the legislature convened. That change has now gone into effect, along with a larger health coverage expansion. The change to the enrollment cycle is expected to lead to nearly 20,000 already eligible, but un-enrolled Oregon kids receiving – and maintaining- health care coverage.

Related Links

[Policy Brief: Keep it Simple: Cover More Eligible Kids and Keep them Covered \(PDF\)](#)

Using Data to Improve the Economic Security of Texas Low-Income Families

State: **Texas**

Organization: **The Center for Public Policy Priorities**

Contact Info:

<http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT/KIDSCOUNTStateNetwork.aspx#TX>

In 2007, the Center for Public Policy Priorities produced the Family Budget Estimator (FBE), which provides a realistic picture of how much it costs Texas families in different areas of the state to meet their basic needs, such as housing, food, child care, and health care. The FBE includes budgets across eight different family types in each of Texas's 27 metropolitan areas (25 MSAs and 2 Metropolitan Divisions).

Travis County Health and Human Services (i.e., Austin metro area) invited us to present FBE and Texas KIDS COUNT data (e.g., poverty, median income), to the Travis County Commissioners Court to support the need for an increase in emergency cash assistance and human services support (frozen for the past 10 years) for county residents facing short-term housing, food, and other crises. Our presentation was so favorably received, in fact, that we provided follow-up information to the Court to help them make their final funding decisions (see pp. 28 & 72 of their 2008 Community Impact Report for our direct influence).

Travis County implemented significant increases to the emergency financial assistance benefit limits and policy on January 1, 2009. Changes included raising the maximum amount of rent/mortgage, food vouchers, utilities and prescription assistance available to each household. The Court allocated approximately 400,000 additional dollars into emergency assistance from the Travis County general revenue budget.

In addition, basic needs organizations, such as food banks, also have used the FBE and Kids Count data to further bolster the public's understanding of the need for their services and the importance of legislation to continue supporting their work (e.g., federal Farm Bill). Many advocacy groups have used the data to increase awareness on issues around poverty (e.g., Texas Impact, Community Action Network). Unions in both in Houston and along the Texas-Mexico border region have used the data to negotiate with employers for living wages. Based upon these and other responses to and uses of the data, it is clear that the FBE and Texas KIDS COUNT data sets are critical tools being used across the state to improve the economic security of Texas families.

Related Links:

TX Family Budget Estimator

<http://www.cppp.org/fbe/>

Travis County Community Impact Report

http://www.co.travis.tx.us/health_human_services/research_planning/publications/2009/community_impact_2008/community%20impact%20report%202008.pdf

Making the Case for All-Day Kindergarten with Data

State: **Utah**

Organization: **Voices for Utah Children**

Contact Info:

<http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT/KIDSCOUNTStateNetwork.aspx#UT>

After the 2006 Legislative Session where all-day kindergarten failed to pass, Voices for Utah Children began working with various organizations and key politicians to plan for the 2007 session. Towards that end, they applied for and received a policy grant from the Anne E. Casey Foundation to research the issue. Key for them was being able to have the data to make the case for the effectiveness for all-day kindergarten for at-risk children. They presented their findings to the governor's office and to the United Way. The Governor put all-day kindergarten in his budget which was released before the end of the year and the Young Leaders of the United Way chose all-day kindergarten as their issue to work on during the 2007 session

The issue brief on all-day kindergarten was used extensively during the 2007 legislature to successfully pass a bill to provide financial support to Title I schools for all-day kindergarten statewide. Voices for Utah Children advocates used the publication as well as a Young Leaders Group at the United Way. The solid research based information was crucial to getting the votes from conservative legislators who did not see the need for "babysitting" for kindergartners.

Related Links:

All-Day Kindergarten: Understanding the Issues and Proposed Solutions:

http://www.utahchildren.org/documents/adkissuebriefpdf_000.pdf

Open-ended responses from principals and teachers on what they would say to their legislator about all-day kindergarten:

<http://www.utahchildren.org/documents/openendedsurveyresponses.pdf>

Having the Knowledge, Tools and Data to Advocate for Poverty Reduction

State: **Vermont**

Organization: **Voices for Vermont's Children**

Contact Info

<http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT/KIDSCOUNTStateNetwork.aspx#VT>

Voices for Vermont's Children were asked in early 2007, by the Chair of Vermont's Senate Health and Welfare Committee, to present to his committee on the well-being of Vermont children. They developed a fact sheet using their VT KIDS COUNT data base that focused on child and family economic indicators. In addition to presenting the fact sheet, they took the opportunity to talk about potential policy solutions. Based on what they learned at the Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT conference the previous fall about the poverty reduction work in Great Britain and in Connecticut, they urged the committee to consider a poverty reduction strategy in Vermont. These efforts culminated in the creation of a Child Poverty Council whose goal is to cut child poverty in half in ten years. There is much work to be done but without the data and the ability to tie data to policy solutions this council would not exist.

Related Links

Read about S177, which established the Child Poverty County in Vermont:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/legdoc.cfm?URL=/docs/2008/acts/ACT068.htm>

Read more about child poverty in Vermont:

<http://voicesforvermontschildren.createsend4.com/T/ViewEmail/r/300F65FA84F3AF33/0D4CC205AF841AF02540EF23F30FEDED>

Vermont Child Poverty Council 2007-2008 Legislative Session:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/workgroups/ChildPoverty/>

[Child Poverty Council Report \(PDF\)](#)

[Work Support in Vermont \(PDF\)](#)

Providing Data to Move Agenda Forward

State: **Washington**

Organization: **University of Washington Human Services Policy Center**

Contact Info:

<http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT/KIDSCOUNTStateNetwork.aspx#WA>

Over the past eighteen months, the Human Services Policy Center has learned a great deal about how to enhance data collection and analysis in Washington state, and about the underutilized data resources available to enhance public policy. They are taking this knowledge to support the Washington KIDS COUNT P-20 Project. The project's goals are to:

- Develop key indicators for student outcomes and educational investments across the different educational levels;
- Employ indicators in policy analyses tuned to a P-20 framework, with specific attention to its seams and discontinuities; and
- Stimulate improved state and regional data collection among key policy stakeholders in Washington state.

These efforts have led to the production of two policy reports that they hope will improve efforts to use data for advocacy purposes. Planned for release in 2009 and 2010, these reports will address (1) funding levels and disparities in early learning, K-12, and postsecondary settings; and (2) adolescent engagement in student learning.

Related Links

Access brief project description and advisory group information:

<http://www.hspc.org/topics/p-20/>

**Data to Target Issues and Inform Policy for Action:
Child and Teen Death and Early Childhood Education**

State: **Kansas**

Organization: **Kansas Action for Children**

Contact Info:

<http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT/KIDSCOUNTStateNetwork.aspx#KS>

Child and Teen Safety:

The child death and teen death rate indicators reported in the national KIDS COUNT Data Book prompted Kansas Action for Children's effort to improve child and teen safety in Kansas. For example, in the 2003 KIDS COUNT Data Book they ranked 33rd in the child death rate and 37th in the teen death rate. This led them to focus on auto passenger safety since accidents contribute to these indicators. They used the KIDS COUNT data and rankings frequently in their targeted communications strategy around these issues. Their efforts to improve child and teen safety over the past 3 to 4 years resulted in significant improvements in laws covering the use of booster seats, seat belt use by teenagers, and passage of graduated driver's license legislation.

Related Links

Read Legislative Briefs, Access Videos, Maps and Additional Information

<http://www.kac.org/kac2.aspx?pgID=912>

Early Care and Education:

Kansas Action for Children's early childhood work has resulted in increased funding for programs such as Smart Start, Early Head Start, child care assistance, pre-k, and an early childhood block grant. Kansas Action for Children took their knowledge of data based advocacy and communications to Mexico City where they showed practitioners and advocates how to use data to educate policymakers and opinion leaders and how to advance an agenda to increase funding for early childhood programs. The tools they used included briefs on the 2000 Census, a series of seven large postcards sent weekly to legislators and over 35,000 leaders in targeted communities, television ads, and a report on the underinvestment in early childhood.

Related Links

2000 Census Brief

http://www.kac.org/PDF/Census_Report_2.pdf

Promoting School Readiness for Low Income Children Report

<http://www.kac.org/PDF/MKCLower-Income.pdf>

Early Learning Investments in Kansas

<http://www.kac.org/PDF/Untapped%20Potential.pdf>

Children's Initiative Fund

<http://kac.org/kac2.aspx?pgID=937>

Parents as Teachers

<http://www.kac.org/kac.aspx?pgID=939>