Missouri Continues to Show Improvements in Education

_Slight gains seen in Family and Community and Health Indicators; Economic Well-Being continues to trend down_

KANSAS CITY — According to the just-released 2013 _KIDS COUNT_® Data Book produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, gradual improvement has been seen in the state of Missouri regarding the well-being of children.

Improvements in fourth grade reading proficiency, eighth grade math proficiency, the number of children attending preschool and high school students not graduating on time helped to move Missouri from a ranking of 24 among other states to 21 in the area of education.

However, the overall child well-being ranking of 27 brings the state down one notch from last year’s ranking of 26, showing that there is still a lot of work to be done to improve the quality of life for Missouri’s children.

The latest data shows that 306,000 Missouri children are living in poverty, while 446,000 children have parents who lack secure employment. Another risk factor for poverty shows 444,000 children living in households with a high housing cost burden. The impact of the recession is still being felt by families across the state of Missouri.

In the health domain, the numbers for children without health insurance has remained steady since 2008 with current numbers at 95,000. Child and teen deaths per 100,000 improved since 2005, a well as teens who abuse alcohol and drugs. The health indicator that has worsened since 2005 is the number of low-birthweight babies. Current statistics reveal 6,286 babies born in 2010 met this criteria.

Missouri has seen a jump from 32% to 35% of children living in single-parent families, as well as an increase from 5% to 9% of children living in high-poverty areas. The Family and Community domain ranking improved due to better numbers of children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma (from 13% to 11%) and teen births per 1,000 (jumping from 42 to 37).

This new data shows that a strong commitment to Missouri’s children is imperative to improving all areas of child well-being.

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Partnership for Children is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, multi-issue advocacy organization committed to improving the lives of children and youth. Partnership for Children produces the annual _KIDS COUNT_ in Missouri report, which documents the status of children in Missouri and provides county-by-county indicators of child well-being.