



## TEXAS KIDS COUNT REPORTS HIGHLIGHT HEALTH, WELL-BEING OF EL PASO AND BORDER-AREA CHILDREN COMPARED TO OTHER TEXAS CHILDREN

El Paso, Texas—Texas KIDS COUNT, a project of the Austin-based Center for Public Policy Priorities, today released two reports detailing the well-being of El Paso and border-area children and comparing them to other Texas children. Texas KIDS COUNT Director Dr. Frances Deviney unveiled the reports at a breakfast event at La Fe Cultural & Technology Center.

“Texas border counties show the state’s promise, but also the eventual cost of current policy choices. If historic inequities persist, we can expect a less-healthy, less-educated, poor population in greater need of social services but with fewer resources to provide them. On the other hand, implementing the right policies now will fortify the physical, social, emotional and educational development of border children, yielding better-prepared, more competitive workers, increased private and public resources, and a better life for all Texans.” Deviney said.

Deviney presented two reports at today’s event, “Texas KIDS COUNT: Our Border, Our Future”:

- Children and Families Living on the Texas-Mexico Border
- Infant Health & Health Care Access in Texas’ Border Counties

### Children and Families Living on the Texas-Mexico Border

- **Child Population:** From 2000 to 2007, child population along the border grew 12 percent, versus nine percent statewide. El Paso’s child population remained stagnant with only one percent growth.
- **Immigrant Families:** One in three El Paso children live in immigrant families, compared to one in five children across the border counties and one in nine across Texas.
- **Median Income:** The median income in border counties remains substantially lower than even the rural non-border counties, and the purchasing power of border families fell between 2000 and 2007 (\$35,116 in El Paso, \$50,958 in Texas’ other urban counties).
- **Unemployment:** As of February 2009, Starr County had the state’s highest unemployment rate (16.9 percent) followed closely by Maverick (16.4 percent), Zavala (15.6 percent) and Presidio (15.1 percent) Counties. Cameron and Hidalgo Counties retain the highest unemployment rates in Texas’ urban areas at 9.3 and 9.6 percent, respectively. El Paso’s unemployment rate is 8.2 percent.
- **Poverty despite Work:** Although child poverty rates have improved recently in Texas’ border counties, they remain the highest in Texas and the United States. More than one of every three El Paso children lives in poverty.

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## Infant Health & Health Care Access in Texas' Border Counties

- **Infant Health along the Border**
  - One in seven Texas babies is born along the border.
  - Women in the border region may lack needed prenatal care; 43 percent of El Paso births to women with inadequate care.
  - Although educational attainment increases likelihood of prenatal care, it does not eliminate regional disparities. Of the El Paso babies born to mothers with less than a high school degree, 55 percent did not receive adequate prenatal care (vs. 49 percent for non-border counties). If the mother had a graduate degree, that percentage dropped to 25 percent in El Paso, 15 percent for non-border counties.
  - Child birthweight and age at death impact infant mortality: 35 percent of El Paso infant deaths were to very small babies (< 1500g) in the first month of life.
- **Risk Factors Associated with Infant Health**
  - Preterm deliveries account for the largest percentage of low birthweight births along the border (60 percent in El Paso, 63 percent in non-border counties).
  - Teen pregnancy is a significant challenge for border communities. Of the more than 2300 births to El Paso teens, one in five were to teens who were already mothers.
- **Health Care Access:** Texas' rate of uninsured children has been the worst in the country for nine of the last 10 years, with the highest concentrations along the border. Health insurance is critical for connecting children to medical homes and preventative care. One in four El Paso is projected to be uninsured by 2010.
  - **Medicaid:** As of April 2009, 359,391 border children (nearly 88,000 in El Paso) relied on Medicaid. Although population and poverty rates increased in recent years, Medicaid enrollment in border counties plateaued in recent years, likely due to a lack of coordinated outreach and the recent eligibility system breakdown.
  - The border region lacks adequate numbers of medical providers, with many border counties classified as Health Professional Shortage Areas.

More information, including online versions of the reports, can be found at <http://www.cppp.org/kidscount/borderreport>.

*The Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) is a non-profit, non-partisan policy institute dedicated to improving the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans. You can learn more about CPPP at <http://www.cppp.org>.*

*CPPP is home to the Texas KIDS COUNT project. You can learn more at <http://www.cppp.org/kidscount>.*

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