



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

McAllen, Texas—Texas KIDS COUNT, a project of the Austin-based Center for Public Policy Priorities, today released two reports detailing the well-being of Hidalgo County and border-area children and comparing them to other Texas children. Texas KIDS COUNT Director Dr. Frances Deviney unveiled the reports at a lunch event at South Texas College.

“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. In contrast, Hidalgo County’s child population grew by a dramatic 21 percent to more than 244,000.
- **Immigrant Families:** Over half of Hidalgo County 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 (\$30,153 in Hidalgo County, \$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.
- **Poverty despite Work:** Although child poverty rates have improved recently across Texas’ border counties, they have gotten worse in Hidalgo County (34 percent in 2000 to 44 percent in 2007) and are twice as high as the rest of the state (Border = 44 percent; Non-border = 21 percent).

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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; 39 percent of Hidalgo County births to women with inadequate care.
- Although educational attainment increases likelihood of prenatal care, it does not eliminate regional disparities. Of the Hidalgo County babies born to mothers with less than a high school degree, 52 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 16 percent in Hidalgo County, 15 percent for non-border counties.
- Child birthweight and age at death impact infant mortality: one of every four Hidalgo County 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 (57 percent in Hidalgo County, 63 percent in non-border counties).
- Teen pregnancy is a significant challenge for border communities. Of the more than 2700 births to Hidalgo County teens, one in four 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 Hidalgo County children is projected to be uninsured by 2010.

- **Medicaid:** As of April 2009, 359,391 border children (more than 128,000 in Hidalgo County) 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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