



Center for Public Policy Priorities

900 Lydia Street, Austin, Texas 78702

PH: 512.320.0222 FAX: 512.320.0227 www.cppp.org

NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE:
Until 2 a.m. CST June 27, 2006

CONTACT: Lynsey Kluever, Comm. Director
kluever@cppp.org, 512-320-0222 X112

NATIONAL REPORT: POVERTY ON THE RISE IN TEXAS

Austin, TX— The percentage of kids living in poverty in Texas has increased by 5 percent since 2000. With this increase in poverty comes an increase in infant mortality, low-birthweight babies, and the percentage of babies who are not immunized, according to the KIDS COUNT Data Book, a national report released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This national report is a precursor to the fall release of the Texas KIDS COUNT report that will provide data on child well-being for every county in the state.

Key Texas findings from the national report on child well-being include:

- From 2000 to 2004 (the most recent data available), the percentage of children living in poverty in Texas increased from 22% to 23% and remains well above the national average of 18%.
 - To be considered living in poverty in 2004, a family of 3 would have to make less than \$15,219 per year.
 - 1 in 10 children live in extreme poverty (50% of the poverty level), a 10% increase since 2000.
 - 1 in 2 children live in low-income families (200% of the poverty level), a 9% increase since 2000.
- In 2004, only 75% of two-year-olds in Texas were immunized, down from 78% in 2003. Only Nevada had a lower percentage of immunized children (71%).
- The percentage of low-birthweight babies increased 7% from 2000 to 2003. Texas' ranked 22nd on this indicator.
- Texas' infant mortality rate increased 16% from 2000 to 2003, causing its national ranking to fall from 9th to 22nd for this indicator.

“Texas needs to get serious about fighting poverty and its siblings—low birthweight, high infant mortality, and low immunization,” said Frances Deviney, the director of the Texas KIDS COUNT. “How can we continue to believe Texas is the greatest state in the country to live when we can't take care of the most fragile among us?”

There are some bright spots in the report, however, particularly when it comes to school performance:

- Fewer of Texas' 4th grade students scored in the below basic category in both reading and math than the national average. In fact, 87% of 4th graders scored at or above the basic math level compared to the national average of 79%, ranking Texas 6th in the country.
- Texas' 8th graders ranked 20th in the country with 28% of students scoring below the basic math level in 2005—four percentage points better than the national average.

For more information or to access the embargoed KIDS COUNT Data Book, please contact Lynsey Kluever at 512-320-0222, X112 or kluever@cppp.org.

###

KIDS COUNT is a national initiative funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the well-being of children across the 50 states. Each state runs its own KIDS COUNT program. Texas' is run through the Center for Public Policy Priorities, a nonprofit, nonpartisan Austin think tank.