



Center for Public Policy Priorities

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NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL REPORT: CONDITIONS IMPROVING FOR TEXAS TEENS

Austin, TX— Although Texas still ranks in the bottom quarter of child well-being nationwide, the good news is that conditions are improving for Texas' teens, 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 for every county in the state.

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

- Texas' dropout rate declined by 36 percent from 2000 to 2003
- The percent of Texas teens not attending school or working declined by 9 percent from 2000 to 2003, and
- Texas' teen birth rate is down by 7 percent from 2000 to 2002

"Teens are faring better in Texas," said Frances Deviney, the director of the KIDS COUNT program in Texas. "The data reveal the value of investment in teens with programs such as alternative education for at-risk students. However, it's important to note that conditions for Texas' younger children are much bleaker."

According to the KIDS COUNT Data Book:

- Nearly 1 in 4 Texas children (over 1.4 million) live in poverty (2003)
- 21 percent of Texas' children do not have health insurance, placing Texas last in the nation for childhood health coverage (2002)
- 22 percent of Texas' 2-year-olds are not immunized (2003), and
- 2,368 Texas infants died before their first birthday in 2002, a 12 percent increase from 2000

"Texas needs to better invest in its children, particularly when it comes to health care," Deviney said. "The recent increase in funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program is a move in the right direction. Unfortunately, this increase does not erase the extensive cuts to CHIP eligibility in recent years, meaning we may see some of these numbers become even worse before they get better."

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.

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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.