



NATIONAL REPORT: CONDITIONS IMPROVING FOR TEXAS TEENS

Austin, TX—Conditions for teens are looking brighter in Texas, as the teen death rate, teen birth rate, and percent of teens not attending school and not working have improved. This is according to the *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, a national state-by-state report released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The report is a precursor to the fall release of *The State of Texas Children 2008*, which will provide child well-being data for every county in Texas.

The teen death rate improved 13% between 2000 and 2005, with 66 deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19, ranking Texas 22nd best in the nation. The teen birth rate, highest in the country last year, dropped 10% from 2000 to 2005, to 62 births for every 1,000 teens ages 19, ranking Texas 49th. And the percent of teens not attending school and not working has improved 18%, moving from 11% of all teens ages 16-19 in 2000 to 9% in 2006—ranking Texas 36th.

The report measures how Texas ranks compared to the nation on 10 main indicators. Across these 10 measures, Texas ranks 37th out of 50—holding steady from last year's report. While indicators for teens have largely improved, the data tell a different story when it comes to child poverty, the percent of low-birthweight babies, and the infant mortality rate—all of which have worsened. Nearly one in four Texas children—over 1.5 million—lives in poverty—a 9% increase since 2000, ranking Texas 44th in the nation. Poverty is defined as a child living in a family of four making less than \$20,444 a year. The percent of low-birthweight babies worsened 12%—from 7.4 of every 1,000 live births in 2000 to 8.3 in 2005, ranking Texas 27th. Finally, the infant mortality rate increased 16% between 2000 and 2005, from 5.7 to 6.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, ranking Texas 21st. In contrast, the national rate stagnated.

“Although conditions have improved slightly for teens, Texas is still in the bottom third of the country when it comes to the well-being of our kids,” said Frances Deviney, Director of Texas KIDS COUNT. “We need to use the positive momentum with Texas teens to improve the lives of all Texas kids, particularly in the areas of infant health.”

Other Key Findings:

- Texas continues to have the highest rate of uninsured children in the nation.
- One in five Texas children does not have health coverage. Texas has had the highest rate in the nation for 10 of the past 11 years.
- In 2006, more than 8,000 Texas youth were in custody in juvenile justice facilities on a daily basis. Of these youth, 61% were in custody for non-violent offenses. The state's rate of detained and committed youth in custody was 136 per 100,000 ages 10-15 in 2006, compared to 125 per 100,000 youth nationwide.

KIDS COUNT is a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the U.S. and is distributed in Texas by the Texas KIDS COUNT Project, an initiative of the Center for Public Policy Priorities.