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NEW REPORT: TEENS DOING BETTER IN TEXAS; COMPARED TO NATION, TEXAS TEENS ENGAGING IN MORE RISKY BEHAVIORS

Austin, TX—While conditions for teens have improved in Texas, teens statewide are significantly more likely to have sex, drink alcohol, drive drunk, or ride with a drunk driver than teens in other states, according to data compiled in *The State of Texas Children 2006*. The report, released today by the Austin-based Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP), examines the status of children across all of Texas' 254 counties.

"As a whole, Texas' teens are doing better—teen violent death is down, juvenile violent crimes have decreased, teen births have declined, and fewer students are dropping out of school compared to just a few years ago," said Frances Deviney, Texas KIDS COUNT Director. "Yet when it comes to risky behaviors, Texas teens are among the nation's worst."

A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey found that while nationwide fewer youth are drinking alcohol or having sex, Texas teens are the exception:

- 52.5% of Texas youth had sexual intercourse vs. 46.8% of youth nationwide
- 29.6% of Texas youth engaged in "episodic heavy drinking," vs. 25.5% nationwide
- 15.4% of Texas youth drove a car under the influence of alcohol vs. 9.9% nationwide
- 37% of Texas youth rode with someone who had been drinking vs. 28.5% nationwide

In Other Areas, Conditions Improving for Texas Teens

According to *The State of Texas Children 2006*, in Texas:

- The rate of teen violent death declined by 17% from 2000 to 2004, and 40% from 1990 to 2004.
- Juvenile violent crime is down 10% since 2000, and down 43% since 1996.
- From 2000 to 2004, the teen birth rate declined by 17%.
- The dropout rate declined by 40% from 2000 to 2005 and 64% since 1996.

The report examined outcomes for children of all ages, finding that child poverty is up for the fourth straight year statewide and that Texas continues to have the highest rates of uninsured children in the nation. Other categories examined include: the child death rate (lowest state level in 16 years), infant mortality (rising in many counties but falling along the border), children receiving food stamps (a 60% increase statewide from 2003 to 2006) and children in foster care (a 30% increase statewide from 2001 to 2005).

The Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization and the Texas home to KIDS COUNT, a national and state-by-state effort to track the well-being of children.