



NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL REPORT: TEXAS HAS THE WORST TEEN BIRTH RATE IN THE COUNTRY

Austin, TX—Texas has the highest teen birth rate in the nation (63 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19) according to the *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, a national state-by-state report released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This report is a precursor to the fall release of *The State of Texas Children 2007*, which will provide child well-being data for every county in Texas.

Despite improving by 9 percent between 2000 and 2004, Texas has the nation's worst birth rate, with more than 51,000 births to Texas teens (or 63 births per 1,000 teens). Nationally, there are 41 births for every 1,000 teens.

"Although Texas' teen birth rate has gone down in recent years, we obviously need to do much more," said Frances Deviney, Director of Texas KIDS COUNT. "If the University of Texas football team were at the bottom or near the bottom of the national rankings every year, there would be a public outcry. Our high teen birth rate represents a true crisis that demands immediate and serious attention. Babies born to teen mothers are more likely to live in poverty, drop out of school, have a child while in their teens, and rely on public assistance."

Other Key Findings (full comparisons can be made at <http://www.kidscount.org/sld/databook.jsp>).

Texas has the 7th worst child poverty rate in the nation.

One in four Texas children lived in poverty in 2005 (a 14 percent increase since 2000), ranking Texas 44th in the nation. The national child poverty rate also worsened, increasing from 17 percent in 2000 to 19 percent in 2005.

Texas' infant mortality rate increased by 11%.

The infant mortality rate in Texas increased by 11 percent from 5.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 6.3 deaths in 2004. Texas' rate is still better than the national average, which improved slightly from 6.9 deaths per 1,000 live births to 6.8 deaths in those years.

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 nine of the past ten years.

More than 34,000 Texas children are in need of a permanent family connection.

In 2004, 34,041 Texas children under age 18 (or 5 in 1,000) lived in foster care at some point during the year. Of those children, 325 aged out of the system without having a permanent family. Nationwide, 10 children per 1,000 under age 18 lived in foster care in 2004. Nearly 23,000 left the system at age 18 without a stable family.

Texas has improved in some areas since 2000.

Texas saw declines in both the child and teen death rates (4% and 13% respectively), an 18% decline in the percent of teens not attending school and not working.

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.