



Center for Public Policy Priorities

900 Lydia Street, Austin, Texas 78702

PH: 512.320.0222 FAX: 512.320.0227 www.cppp.org

NEWS RELEASE

A Tale of Two Regions: Rural and Urban Kids Face Similar Challenges

Children who live in rural and urban Texas often share the same kinds of problems, barriers, and disconnections, according to the *City and Rural KIDS COUNT Data Book*, just released by the Center for Public Policy Priorities and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Based on U.S. Census data, the report tracks and monitors child well-being in rural and urban communities in Texas and throughout the nation. It reports statistics on rural Texas as a whole and on the state's six largest cities individually.

"It's common for people to think of poverty as a primarily urban problem," said Dayna Finet, Texas KIDS COUNT director and senior research associate at the Center for Public Policy Priorities. "But 48 of the 50 poorest counties in the U.S. are rural counties. While poverty creates hardship for all children and families, geographical isolation and limited access to services can exaggerate its impact in rural communities," she said.

Texas has a larger rural child population than any other state. To put this in perspective, more kids live in rural Texas than in 20 other states combined.

The *Data Book* reports that the share of rural children living in poverty (25%) is comparable to three of the state's largest cities—Dallas (26%), Houston (26%) and San Antonio (25%). It exceeded the child poverty rate for the cities of Austin (17%) and Fort Worth (22%), and is lower than child poverty in El Paso (30%).

A slightly higher proportion of rural Texas children (31%) live in low-income working families than in four of the state's major cities-- Dallas (29%), El Paso (30%), Houston (29%) and San Antonio (28%). A larger share of rural children live in these families than in Austin (20%) and Fort Worth (26%). The report defines low-income families as those making less than twice the federal poverty level.

Data from the KIDS COUNT report also show that rural children in Texas are more likely to have at least one parent working full-time and year-round than children in Texas' largest cities, and that they're less likely to be living in families headed by single parents (although nearly one-quarter of rural Texas children live in single-parent homes). About 4 in 10 rural Texas children live in low-income working families that spend more than one-third of their incomes on housing.

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Texas KIDS COUNT is a project of the Center for Public Policy Priorities, a Texas think tank that studies policies affecting low- and moderate-income Texans. Texas KIDS COUNT belongs to the national network of KIDS COUNT affiliates sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.