

PRESS RELEASE

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New 2004 National Kids Count Data Book Shows Disturbing Trends in Well-Being of New Mexico's Children

Participation in Medicaid Program Holds Hope for Improvement in Health Outcomes of Infants and Children

Albuquerque -- The 2004 National Kids Count Data Book, released today, shows New Mexico dropping from 46th to 48th place in state rankings of child well-being. "This year's abysmal ranking, like those of years' past, is a direct result of our state's systematic under-investment in children, particularly those in vulnerable, low income families," says Kelly O'Donnell, Research Director for New Mexico Voices for Children. "Last year's small gains were sadly, but not surprisingly, short-lived. New Mexico's policymakers have failed New Mexico's children."

New Mexico Ranks Below National Average On 9 Out Of 10 Key Indicators Of Child Well-Being

- Teen birth rate: 48th
- Percent of children living in families in which no parent has full-time, year-round employment: 50th
- Percent of children living in poverty: 50th
- Percent of children in families headed by a single parent: 49th

New Mexico's Higher Than Average Rank On Infant Mortality Shows Positive Impact Of Medicaid Program

New Mexico got a better-than-average score on infant mortality, ranking 20th in the nation with a rate of 6.4 deaths per 1,000 live births, slightly lower than the national rate of 6.8 deaths per 1,000 live births. O'Donnell credits the high rate of Medicaid participation by New Mexico's pregnant women for the above-average score. Pregnant women with income below 185% of the federal poverty level (annual income below \$16,500 for a single woman) are covered under New Mexico's Medicaid program. Without Medicaid many of these women would go without necessary prenatal care and the infant mortality rate would likely be much higher.

More ...

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Recent Cuts to Medicaid Funding Likely to Increase Already High Number of Uninsured New Mexican Children

According to the 2004 national data book, New Mexico ranks 47th in the percent of children that lack health insurance. Sixteen percent of New Mexico children (over 80,000 children) are uninsured. Most uninsured children are low income. Recent reductions in state Medicaid funding are expected to increase the percent of New Mexico children that lack health insurance.

Over 40% of New Mexico's insured children receive their insurance through Medicaid, because their parents lack access to private coverage. The federal government pays roughly three quarters of New Mexico's Medicaid costs, yet this year's state budget failed to fully fund the program.

"Given our state's huge gap in children's health insurance and the large federal Medicaid subsidies we qualify for, New Mexico lawmakers shouldn't hesitate to fully fund the program. In failing to do so, they fail our state's children," says Kay Monaco, executive director of New Mexico Voices for Children.

Further evidence of inadequate access to healthcare and health insurance for New Mexico children is provided by our state's 49th-place ranking in the percent of 2 year olds that are fully immunized. Only 68% of New Mexico 2 year olds have all the recommended immunizations, compared to a national average of 79%.

New Mexico's Rate of Disconnected Youth Exceeds National Rate

This year's data book also highlights the issue of "disconnected youth" -- young people, ages 18 to 24, who are not working, have no degree beyond high school, and are not enrolled in school. Disconnected youth face a particularly tough transition to successful adulthood **[say what this means and why it's significant]**. In New Mexico, 18% of youth, roughly 30,000 young people, are "disconnected."

- New Mexico's rate of disconnected youth exceeds the national rate (15%) by 20%.
- New Mexico ranks 39th among states in the percent of disconnected youth.
- New Mexico ranks 45th among states in the percent of disconnected youth living in poverty.

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