



PRESS RELEASE

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National KIDS COUNT report: New Mexico shows slight improvement in national ranking

ALBUQUERQUE—Despite the fact that our child poverty rate was unchanged, New Mexico's ranking in the national KIDS COUNT Data Book improved slightly, moving up to 47th this year from 48th in 2006. Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi are the three states that ranked worse than New Mexico this year.

The KIDS COUNT Data Book, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, ranks the 50 states based on ten indicators of child well-being, which include rates of child poverty, infant mortality and high school drop-outs. While the child death rate has shown improvement nationally, it got 40 percent worse in New Mexico between the years 2000 and 2004, the most recent years for which comparative data is available. In 2004, there were 28 deaths per 100,000 New Mexico children aged one to 14. Nationally, that number was 20 deaths per 100,000.

The percentage of children living in poverty showed no change in New Mexico between the years 2000 and 2005, while child poverty got about 13 percent worse nationally. There was also no change in the percentage of teens who are not attending school or working, while that percentage improved on the national level. New Mexico also has a higher-than-national-average of children without health insurance.

“We hope that some of the successes we had in the 2007 legislative session – such as a statewide increase in the minimum wage, a state-level earned income tax credit, and budget expansions for childcare and Medicaid – will help improve these numbers,” said NM Voices for Children's Executive Director Eric Griego.

There is some good news. Great improvement was shown in the percentage of teens who are staying in high school, which mirrors a national trend. New Mexico's infant mortality rates are still lower than the national average, giving the state a ranking of 20th in this indicator. And the state showed improvement in the percentage of low-birth weight babies, ranking 26th this year, well above last year's ranking of 33rd for this indicator.

In addition to the ten indicators, the KIDS COUNT Data Book focuses on a different area of child well-being every year. This year the focus is on foster children and their critical need for lifelong families. New Mexico's rate of children in foster care was slightly lower than the national average in

2004, with eight children in the child welfare system out of every 1,000, compared to ten out of 1,000 nationally.

The 2007 Kids Count Data Book is available online at: <http://www.kidscount.org/sld/databook.jsp>

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