



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **2008 NM KIDS COUNT Data Book: Poverty Measure Severely Outdated Basic Family Budgets offer a more realistic definition of poverty for NM families**

ALBUQUERQUE—The federal government’s measurement of poverty, or the FPL, is startlingly incompatible with the real income necessary to maintain a family at the bare minimum. Most advocates agree that the cost of keeping a family afloat at the bare minimum is nearly twice the official FPL. That’s also the conclusion of the 2008 New Mexico KIDS COUNT data book, to be released today at a press conference.

The data book reveals that the formula for determining the FPL, which often determines eligibility for work support programs, has not been changed in nearly half a century. “The numbers just don’t apply anymore. Fifty years ago, a family living in poverty spent about one-third of their income on food—these days, food is about one-seventh of a budget, and housing, and health and child care are also significant expenses in a family’s budget,” says Lisa Adams-Shafer, Program Director of NM KIDS COUNT. “Times have changed, and how we measure poverty needs to change as well.”

The KIDS COUNT book also includes poverty data for each by county. Statistics provide information about the number and percentage of children living below poverty, enrolled in Medicaid and S-CHIP, and receiving free or reduced lunches at their schools within each county.

The data book illuminates how a more accurate measure of the FPL would affect New Mexico families and children. The Basic Family Budget, developed by the Economic Policy Institute, measures the cost of living in New Mexico’s major cities—breaking an annual budget down according to single or dual parent families and the amount of children in each household. “The FPL doesn’t take a lot of factors into account,” says Lisa Adams-Shafer.

The 2008 NM KIDS COUNT data book was released Monday, Feb. 9 at a press conference at the Capitol. The book is available online at [http://www.nmvoices.org/kidscount\\_publications.html](http://www.nmvoices.org/kidscount_publications.html)

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New Mexico Voices for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.  
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