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MEDIA RELEASE

**Kentucky child poverty remains a major problem;
Policies to support working poor families under threat**

(August 26, Louisville, KY): Data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau from two surveys (Current Population Survey and American Community Survey) suggest poverty among Kentucky children under 18 is on the rise. The American Community Survey data estimates that 23.7 percent of children under 18 in Kentucky lived in poverty in 2003. This represents an increase over estimates for the two previous years.

Data from the Current Population Survey, also released today, show that 17.6 percent of youth under 18 lived in poverty in the United States in 2003, up from 16.7 percent in 2002. Kentucky's 2003 rate of 18.1 percent remains higher than the national child poverty rate and warns of a difficult future for many Kentucky children.

Both the Current Population Survey and the American Community Survey obtain estimates by surveying a relatively small sample of people, and each has strengths and weaknesses in the methodology. For more information on the surveys, see the notes at the end of this release.

"The real message from these numbers is too many children in Kentucky live in poverty," said Tara Grieshop-Goodwin, KIDS COUNT Coordinator at Kentucky Youth Advocates. "The risks are real for Kentucky's children."

Studies show that children in poverty are more likely to die in infancy, be born at low birth weight, and have serious physical or mental disabilities. Poverty also puts kids at a disadvantage in the education arena; children in poverty are more likely to need special education services, fall behind their grade level, and drop out of high school.

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“The risks of child poverty to the state’s future are real too. As adults, these children are less likely to be successful and will face hardships raising the next generation of Kentuckians,” said Tara Grieshop-Goodwin.

State policies can support working poor families raising children, but many current programs are under attack. “Contrary to popular belief, most poor children live in families where one or both parents work but, for a variety of reasons, are unable to earn enough income to lift their family out of poverty. These families need more, not less, help making ends meet,” said Tara Grieshop-Goodwin. Last year the state cut the eligibility level for child care subsidies for working parents. The state also began requiring low-income parents to pay a monthly premium to access health insurance for their children last fall. Finally, without comprehensive tax reform, the state still requires families making just \$5500 per year to pay state income taxes.

Data Notes: The Current Population Survey has tracked poverty data since the 1940s and is generally accepted as the official source of national poverty data. The CPS collects more detailed information on income and work status, but the sample sizes in each state are small.

The American Community Survey is a more recent data source that will replace the detailed long-form Census survey data. The state sample sizes are larger than those for the CPS, and the ACS is emerging as the authoritative source for data at the state and county level. Experts recommend using this source for estimates of child poverty at the state and sub-state level.

2003 Poverty Thresholds: Less than \$14,824 for a single-parent, two-child family and less than \$18,660 for a two-parent, two-child family.

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