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KENTUCKY TRAILS NATION ON PRENATAL CARE AND BIRTH OUTCOMES

JEFFERSONTOWN, Ky. – (May 1, 2007) – Newborn babies in Kentucky fare worse than the U.S. average, according to *The Right Start for America's Newborns: City and State Trends*, a new report released yesterday by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The percent of low-weight births (less than 5.5 pounds) continues to rise both in Kentucky and nationwide. Kentucky also did poorly on a related indicator – the percent of preterm births – with 14.4 percent of all births being preterm, compared to 12.5 percent for the entire United States. Preterm births are also on the rise across the United States. Louisville fared worse than the state and nation on both of these indicators, with 9.2 percent of births weighing less than 5.5 pounds and 16 percent of births being preterm (before 38 weeks gestation).

“Children born preterm or low-birth weight are more likely to experience developmental delays that can place them behind their peers before they even start school,” said KYA Deputy Director Lacey McNary.

For the first time, the report includes the Percent of Births to Foreign Born Mothers and Birth Outcomes by Race and Ethnicity at the national level. Other highlights from the report include:

- Babies born to White non-Hispanic mothers had better birth outcomes than those born to Hispanic mothers or Black non-Hispanic mothers on most indicators.

- Births to teen mothers are on the decline, with Louisville outpacing the U.S. average on this indicator. Likewise, repeat births to teen mothers are on the decline and Kentucky's rate of 18.7 percent in 2004 is better than that of the nation (19.8 percent).
- The percent of births to foreign-born mothers is increasing across the country, though these births represent a small portion of all births in Kentucky. Kentucky ranked 41st among American states with only six percent of births to foreign-born mothers in 2004, compared to 9.7 percent of births in Louisville and 24.2 percent of births nationwide.

“These data are strong predictors for how a child will do later in life, impacting overall development and the ability to start school ready. We also know that the maternal characteristics highlighted in *Right Start* are linked to educational and economic outcomes for children,” said Dr. Terry Brooks, Executive Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. Brooks went on to say, “we must work to address the racial disparities in access to health care that contribute to these troubling statistics.”

The Right Start for America's Newborns: City and State Trends, updated annually, highlights key trends in 8 indicators related to healthy birth outcomes from 1990 to 2004 for the fifty states and fifty largest U.S. cities. The report is available at www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/rightstart.jsp. The online format allows viewers to create custom reports such as state and city profiles, line graphs showing trends over time, color-coded U.S. maps, and ranking tables, all generated from *The Right Start* database. *The Right Start* is a joint project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT initiative and Child Trends, a research organization located in Washington, DC.

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