



The Independent Voice for Kentucky's Children

KENTUCKY
YOUTH
ADVOCATES

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**NEW REPORT INDICATES STATE MOVING IN RIGHT DIRECTION;
WORK REMAINS ON IMPROVING CHILD WELL-BEING**

Louisville, KY – Kentucky Youth Advocates releases its 17th annual Kentucky KIDS COUNT Data Book today. The book provides state and county-level data to measure and improve child well-being. Among the 47 indicators related to family and community, health, economic well-being, education, and safety, Kentucky showed more improvement than decline on the indicators studied.

“The findings are encouraging; Kentucky must log steady improvement if we hope to compete with other states,” said Terry Brooks, Executive Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. “Yet we can’t ignore major areas where child well-being is getting worse in Kentucky, such as poverty, child maltreatment, and child deaths.”

“Increased participation in programs such as KCHIP, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and WIC is both good and bad,” stated Tara Grieshop-Goodwin, Deputy Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. “We’re glad to see families who need these supports are able to receive them, yet increased need, as reflected in the poverty rate, is an obvious concern.”

Key points from the new KIDS COUNT report include:

- High school students graduating increased from 79 percent in 2000 to 83 percent in 2006, with 115 school districts following this statewide trend.
- More than 1 in 4 pregnant women in Kentucky smoked in 2005, yet rates exceeded 1 in 3 pregnant women in 52 counties.
- Screenings for lead poisoning in children under 6 decreased from 2000 to 2006, with rates as low as 1 percent in 21 counties.
- The percent of obligated child support that was collected increased by 8 percentage points from FY 2000 to 2007.

The new report also features the addition of state and/or county-level data by race on more than half the indicators, with some important findings for policy and community action. All children need a healthy start in life, yet lack of access to health care among pregnant women of color contributes to less access to early and regular prenatal care. Juvenile justice data also highlights disparities in treatment of youth. When youth commit similar offenses, African-American youth are more likely to be formally charged and incarcerated.

“This closer look at the data by race reveals the true impact of systemic barriers that severely limit opportunities for success for youth of color. If we hope to improve outcomes for kids in Kentucky, we have to ensure all kids have a fair chance,” said Grieshop-Goodwin.

“The General Assembly faces key opportunities to strengthen both child and parental well-being in the upcoming session,” remarked Brooks. “A state refundable EITC would allow 350,000 Kentucky working families to keep more of their earned money for daily needs and

asset building. And Kentucky can increase the numbers of children receiving Medicaid and KCHIP who have access to dental services by offering loan forgiveness to dental providers who serve this population.”

The Kentucky KIDS COUNT project is part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s national effort to track child well-being. KYA produces the annual county data book in collaboration with the University of Louisville’s Urban Studies Institute.

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***Kentucky Youth Advocates** is a non-partisan, non-profit, children's advocacy organization. KYA represents a voice for Kentucky's most precious asset – its youth. We believe that Kentucky's youth deserve the opportunities and resources necessary to ensure their productive development and health.*