

**Press Release**

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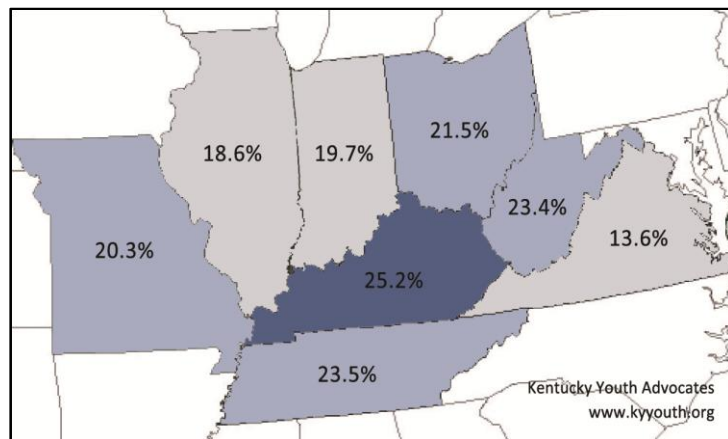
**Recession Drives Poverty Rates up Sharply in Kentucky**

One in Four Kentucky Children Living in Poverty

**Jeffersontown, KY** – Child poverty in Kentucky increased to 25.2 percent in the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) from 23.4 percent in the 2007 ACS. In Kentucky, over 250,000 children are poor, up from 228,000 in 2007, according to Census Bureau data released today. Poverty also rose sharply for the total population in Kentucky in 2009, highlighting the widespread impact of the recession. Total state-level poverty rose to 18.6 percent in 2009 from 17.3 percent in 2007. Over 770,000 Kentuckians lived in poverty in 2009. Kentucky ranks 49th in its state poverty rate compared to other states and the District of Columbia. Since 2007, median household income in Kentucky has also declined over \$1,500, from over \$41,600 in 2007 to around \$40,000 in 2009.

The jump in poverty comes amidst a recession that caused a dramatic decline in state revenues, threatening the public services that Kentucky's struggling families rely on. In response to this crisis, state policymakers have cut health care, education, and other key services, and more cuts likely lie ahead. A number of provisions in the

**Kentucky's 2009 child poverty rate greater than surrounding states**



American Reinvestment and Recovery Act that that have provided relief to many Kentuckians are set to expire this year unless Congress acts to extend them. For example, the TANF Emergency Job Fund which helped create over 10,000 jobs in Kentucky expires on September 30. Expansions to the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit also expire this year.

“The future of Kentucky relies on meeting the basic needs of families now,” said Terry Brooks, Executive Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. “For families hit hard by the

recession, federal work supports like SNAP benefits, free and reduced priced school meals, and KCHIP can determine whether a child sits in class healthy, well-nourished, and ready to learn. An absence of these critical tools can set off a wave of negative outcomes that affect children for years to come and only weaken Kentucky's economic outlook."

Job market recovery and state revenues tend to lag behind the recovery of national economic conditions. Kentucky's policymakers will continue to face tough decisions about how to balance the state's budget as mid-year gaps emerge and as federal recovery dollars run out. A balanced approach that includes a stable and predictable tax structure with a sustainable mix of revenue sources will allow Kentucky to avoid relying too heavily on harmful cuts to services crucial to families already struggling to get by.

"It is clear that now is the time to make the commitment to invest in Kentucky's children and build a stronger future for the Commonwealth," said Brooks. "Players at all levels of government have vital roles to prevent further increases in poverty. Congress can act to extend ARRA provisions like unemployment insurance and tax credits for middle and low-income households. State policymakers can implement a budget that strengthens support programs that are proven to work for children and families. Regional and community leaders can act to ensure families have access to work supports. All of these actions will ease hardship and strengthen Kentucky's future."

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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.*