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UNTIL 3:00 a.m. EDT July 25, 2007

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Child Well-Being in Virginia at a Glance
2007 KIDS COUNT Virginia Fact Sheet

Virginia ranks 14th in the nation in a new state-by-state study on the well-being of America's children. The 2007 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* reveals that Virginia improved on four of the 10 measures reflecting child well-being, experienced setbacks on four and saw no change on two since 2000. The 2007 Essay discusses the need for all children in foster care to develop strong, lasting family connections. The Essay also sets an ambitious national goal, similar to first lady Anne Holton's For Keeps initiative, to preserve, strengthen, rebuild, or find permanent families for every child who is at risk of not having one.

Over 8,900 Virginia children are involved in the foster care system.

In 2004, 8,905 children under age 18 in Virginia lived in foster care at some point during the year, a rate of 5 per 1,000 children. That year, 586 children in the state aged out of the system without having a permanent family. Nationwide, 10 children per 1,000 under age 18 lived in foster care with 22,718 leaving the system at age 18 without a stable family environment.

The number of children in immigrant families has increased.

In five years, the number of children in immigrant families increased by 25%. In 2005, there were 294,000 children in immigrant families. Although these children represent only 16% of all children in Virginia, the additional 58,000 children in immigrant families represent 71% of the *overall increase* in Virginia children.

The infant mortality rate and percent low-birthweight babies have worsened.

Virginia's infant mortality rate grew by 9 percent between 2000 and 2004, while remaining relatively unchanged at the national level. The percent of low-birthweight babies increased from 7.9% of all births to 8.3% of all births. Virginia ranked 31st among states on infant mortality and 30th among states on low-birthweight babies. (A rank of 1 is best.)

Virginia ranks well on economic indicators but not all families are economically secure.

Compared nationally, Virginia ranked 6th in the nation for securely employed parents, yet 28%, almost 1 in 3 children, lived in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment. Virginia had the 8th lowest percentage of children living in poverty, yet the number of children living in poverty was larger in 2005 (238,000) than in 2000 (219,000).

The teen birth rate and the high school dropout rate have improved.

The teen birth rate dropped to 35 births per 1,000 girls ages 15-19, a 15% decrease from 2000. Only 6 percent of teens ages 16-19 did not graduate or get a GED in 2005, compared to 9 percent in 2000.