



NEWS RELEASE

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Nearly 100,000 Arizona Children Live Without Parents

*National KIDS COUNT report shows some improvement,
but leadership needed to strengthen families*

PHOENIX – Arizona ranks 36th in the nation on 10 indicators of child well-being according to the *2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore. Last year Arizona ranked 37th.

The Data Book shows that Arizona improved in 5 areas since 2000, but remains worse than the national average in 8 out of 10 indicators. The attached summary chart shows Arizona's statistics compared to the U.S. on these ten indicators and five additional indicators reported in the data book.

This year's *Data Book* puts a spotlight on children living in vulnerable families, including children being raised by their grandparents and children living in foster care. In 2004, more than 13,000 Arizona children lived in foster care at some point during the year; in 2005 more than 85,000 Arizona children were in the care of their grandparents. The combined total of 98,000 children is more than the total number of babies born in Arizona in 2005 and enough children to fill every seat of Diamondback's Chase Field – twice.

“If we turn our backs on these 100,000 children, they will cost us all an unspeakable toll in family suffering, tax dollars spent on emergencies, and a generation that is not prepared to lead us in the future,” said Dana Wolfe Naimark, President and CEO of Children's Action Alliance.

“The national data show us that Arizona is not alone in facing these tremendous challenges. Across the nation and across our state, many families are struggling with dangers such as poverty,

(more)

neighborhood crime, substance abuse, mental illness, and domestic violence.”

During the 2007 legislative session completed last month, state lawmakers addressed the needs of vulnerable children with modest budget appropriations to help older foster youth transition to independence, to give grandparents raising their grandkids some financial support, to sustain substance abuse treatment programs, and to increase the services Child Protective Services can provide to keep children safely in their own homes. The legislature also allocated a total of \$36 million in state funds over two years to replace federal funding to Arizona that was cut by Congress as part of the Deficit Reduction Act. These funds are critically needed for foster care and child support enforcement.

“The most up-to-date research around the country shows us that we will have a positive impact,” said Naimark, “with efforts to strengthen families before they fall into crisis and intensified efforts to help families get back on track and keep children and parents together when possible.”

Naimark noted that to make a real difference in the statistics for our future, we need updated federal financing policies for abused and neglected children and growing leadership and funding at the state level to sustain strong and safe lifelong families.

Mixed Results on Education

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* includes both good news and bad news for Arizona about educational outcomes. The percent of Arizona teens who are high school dropouts fell by half between 2000 and 2005 – from 18% down to 9%. On the other hand, 51% of 8th grade students scored below basic science levels and 36% scored below basic math levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Arizona is also among the worst in the nation for the percentage of 4th grade students who scored below basic science levels -- 47% in Arizona compared to 34% nationally. These distressing math and science scores come at a time when Arizona is competing with many other states to attract science and technology research and businesses for a strong 21st century economy.

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Children’s Action Alliance is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to promoting the well-being of all of Arizona’s children and their families through research, policy development, media campaigns and advocacy. www.azchildren.org

The KIDS COUNT Data Book with state-by-state rankings, supplemental data, and the essay, “Lifelong Family Connections: Supporting Permanence for Children in Foster Care,” is EMBARGOED until July 25, 3:00 a.m. EDT, but can be viewed online at www.kidscount.org/2007databook, beginning July 10. Please call 202-842-3600, extension 230 for the password.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization, whose primary mission is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today’s vulnerable children and families. www.aecf.org



Threats to Child Well-Being in Arizona

2007 KIDS COUNT

Ten Indicators in Overall Ranking	U.S. Rate	Arizona Rate	AZ Rank Prior Year	Arizona 2007 Rank
Overall Rank			37	36
Low birth-weight babies (2004)	8.1%	7.2%	17	16
Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) (2004)	6.8	6.7	20	25
Child death rate (deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14) (2004)	20	21	30	20
Teen death rate (deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19) (2004)	66	85	35	38
Teen birth rate (births per 1,000 females ages 15-19) (2004)	41	60	47	46
Teens who are high school dropouts (ages 16-19) (2005)	7%	9%	45	36
Teens not attending school and not working (ages 16-19) (2005)	8%	9%	34	31
Children living with parents without full-time, year-round employment (2005)	34%	35%	27	30
Children in poverty (2005)	19%	20%	34	36
Children in single parent families (2005)	32%	33%	29	37
Additional Select Indicators				
Children living with their grandparents (2005)	5%	5%	36	30 (#1 is lowest %)
Fourth grade students who scored below basic science level (2005)	34%	47%	*	42 of 44*
Eighth grade students who scored below basic science level (2005)	43%	51%	*	37 of 44*
Eighth grade students who scored below basic math level (2005)	32%	36%	*	36
Children in foster care at any point in year (per 1,000 children under 18) (2004)**	10%**	9%**	12**	14** (#1 is lowest %)

* Data not available for all states. Data also not available for all years.

** Data definition varies somewhat by state. For example, some states include children in juvenile justice system or kinship care as being in foster care.

Source: 2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland.