

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL: July 25, 2007

EMBARGOED MATERIALS AVAILABLE: July 10, 2007

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California Slips to 19th of 50 States

In New National Study of Children's Well-Being

World's 5th Largest Economy Investing Too Little in Its Future

OAKLAND, CA - California stacks up poorly against other states in supporting its children, according to the new Data Book released today by Children Now and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The comparative, state-by-state look provided in the report provides a new, strong focus on the underperformance of California's service to its children and future.

Particularly alarming are the state's scores against key measures of education and health. According to the report, while the national average is 34% for 4th graders scoring below basic science level, it's 50% in California. In terms of health, the number of underweight babies increased from 6.2 per 1,000 in 2000 to 6.7 per 1,000 in four short years. This rapid increase in underweight births can translate into larger numbers of children with substantial health problems in the future. These data support Governor Schwarzenegger and the legislature's focus on providing all children with health coverage as well as the need to hold the administration accountable for claiming 2008 "the year of education reform."

"In the two most basic supports for children - education and health - California is way behind the rest of the nation," said Children Now's president Ted Lempert. "Vis-à-vis what other states have been able to accomplish for their children, our state's performance becomes even more unacceptable."

The 18th annual Data Book also highlights disturbing year-over-year growth in California's teen death rate versus declines across the rest of the country. "It appears homicides are driving that rate increase," said Corey Newhouse, a senior policy associate at Children Now.

Overall, California ranks 19th out of the 50 states, slipping one position from last year. The complete report can be downloaded for free at www.aecf.org.

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Children Now is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization working to raise children's well-being to the top of the national policy agenda. The organization focuses on ensuring quality health care, a solid education and a positive media environment for all children. Children Now's strategic approach creates awareness of children's needs, develops effective policy solutions and engages those who can make change happen.