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

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NEWS RELEASE

Connecticut Maintains its Place as Third Best State in Nation for Child Well-Being

2007 National KIDS COUNT Data Book

For the second year in a row, Connecticut ranks third in the nation for child well-being according to the 2007 national *KIDS COUNT Data Book* produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Comparing data from 2000 and 2004/2005, the new report reveals that Connecticut improved on six of the 10 measures of child well-being and experienced setbacks on four.

Connecticut ranks within the top ten nationally on seven indicators. Overall, in 2004 Connecticut ranked within the ten best states with the lowest rates for the following indicators:

- Percent of teens not attending school and not working (ages 16-19),
- Teen deaths rate (ages 15-19)
- High school dropout rate,
- Child death rate (ages 1-14),
- Teen birth rate (ages 15-19),
- Percent of children living in poverty, and
- Infant mortality rate.

“Although these numbers provide an optimistic view of children in our state, the data also demonstrate the disparities that exist between upper- and lower-income children and that more work needs to be done to eradicate these differences,” said Jim Horan, Executive Director, Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), the producers of the Connecticut KIDS COUNT Data Book which provides town-level data each year to complement the national findings.

Mr. Horan’s statement arises from the fact that Connecticut moved from first to fifth place among the states for the percent of children living in poverty. In 2005, an estimated 100,201 Connecticut children under age 18 (12 percent) lived below the federal poverty level (income below \$19,806 for a family of four – two parents and two children), representing a nine percent increase compared to the child poverty rate in 2000.

In addition, the state’s ranking fell for the percent of children living in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment and those living in single-parent households. Again in 2005, 242,152 Connecticut children (29 percent) lived in families where no parent had full-time, year employment, up from 218,947 (26 percent) in 2000. Similarly, in 2005, 242,152 Connecticut children (29 percent) lived in single-parent families, up from 227,368 (27 percent) in 2000.

“In 2004, the Connecticut General Assembly took on the commitment to cut child poverty in half by 2014. These new numbers, released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, must be examined in light of this legislative commitment. Unfortunately, it doesn’t appear that much has changed in the short-term for low-income and poor children,” said Jude Carroll, Director of the Connecticut KIDS COUNT Project housed at CAHS.

The 2007 National Data Book essay highlights the need for all children in foster care to develop strong, lasting family connections. The essay also sets an ambitious national goal to preserve, strengthen, rebuild, or find permanent families for every American child who is at risk of not having one. In 2004, Over 8,200 Connecticut children are in need of a permanent family connection. That same year, 8,221 Connecticut children under age 18 lived in foster care at some point during the year, a rate of 10 per 1,000 children, the same as the national rate. In addition, a number of children aged out of Connecticut’s foster care system at age 18 without having a permanent family.

As is done every year, the National Data Book contains a number of recommendations related to permanency, this year’s essay topic. The recommendations reported include the following for states and local child welfare systems:

- Invest more in and intensify their efforts to strengthen families and prevent out-of-home placements;
- When removal is necessary, make placements that can reduce the trauma of separation for children and help facilitate family permanence;
- When children are placed, move promptly to simultaneously explore, identify, and support the strongest permanency options for children, beginning with reunification and, alternatively, kinship care, guardianship, or adoption; and
- Pay specific attention to kids who are most at risk of not growing up in a strong, permanent family: African-Americans and older youth.

The essay provides specifics for how states and locals can move beyond rhetoric to put the above recommendations into practice.

The KIDS COUNT Project is an initiative of the Baltimore-based Annie E. Casey Foundation. KIDS COUNT affiliates are located in each of the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories. The Connecticut KIDS COUNT Project of the Connecticut Association for Human Services uses data on the well-being of children in each of Connecticut’s 169 towns to inform public discussion on policies for children and families. The National KIDS COUNT Data Book focuses on state-level data and ranks the 50 states on a series of measures.

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MORE about CAHS: The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) is an independent statewide organization that works to reduce poverty and strengthen families and communities through advocacy supported by outreach, research, and education. CAHS seeks to ensure that all children and families have the resources and public policy support to become economically self-sufficient, and that those who cannot achieve self-sufficiency have access to basic needs, including nutrition, education, and health care.

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