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Contact: Glenn Augustine
(800) 343-7060 ext. 2718
gaugustine@iyi.org

To arrange interviews with IYI President and CEO Bill Stanczykiewicz, please contact Glenn Augustine at 800-343-7060 or gaugustine@iyi.org.

Increase in Indiana Child Poverty Nearly Doubles the U.S. Average Several Reasons Cited in Response to 2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book.

INDIANAPOLIS – Child poverty increased nearly twice as fast in Indiana than in the rest of the nation during the first half of this decade, and several reasons help explain why.

That's according to U.S. Census data reported in the 2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book, the latest annual state-by-state study on the well-being of America's children, just released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The rate of Indiana's child under the age of 18 living in poverty increased 21 percent, from 14 percent in 2000 to 17 percent in 2005. The nation, meanwhile, experienced a 12 percent rise in child poverty, from 17 percent of children under age 18 to 19 percent in 2005. The national child poverty rate had declined by 30 percent between 1996 and 2000.

There are several factors working together that contributed to the increase between 2000 and 2005, such as the state's economy, the number of children living in single-parent households and the increase in the number of immigrant households, said Bill Stanczykiewicz, president and CEO of the Indiana Youth Institute.

"Too many of Indiana's children are living in conditions that leave them vulnerable to falling behind their peers in physical, emotional and academic development," Stanczykiewicz said. "This report is a reminder for all Hoosiers to work together to reverse this trend and break the debilitating cycle of poverty that ensnares a growing percentage of Indiana kids."

Indiana's unemployment rate was below the national average for all of the 1990s, reaching a ten-year low of 2.9 percent in 1998 and holding steady for two more years. By 2003 it had risen to 5.3 percent and held there for two more years. In 2005, the national unemployment rate fell below the state rate and has remained there.

At the same time, the number of Hoosier children born into single-parent households rose by 12 percent, to 38.8 percent of all births in 2004.

Indiana also has experienced a 28 percent increase of children living in immigrant families since 2000, and the poverty rate for these children is 21 percent. In addition, more than 30 percent of these children live in linguistically isolated households, meaning their families must overcome language barriers to access resources and services available to them.

"While children who live in poverty face significant challenges to staying healthy and doing well in school, demographics need not be destiny," Stanczykiewicz said. "Providing children and families who live in poverty with the supports and hope that they need to become self-sufficient must remain a top priority for state government, business and community leaders."

In 2005, the federal government defined the poverty guideline as a family of four with a household income of \$19,350 or less. The current poverty guideline is \$20,650.

The 2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book ranks Indiana 31st in the nation, based on an assessment of ten measures of child well-being. Indiana improved on five of the 10 measures and experienced setbacks on five since 2000. The state ranked 32nd last year.

Another measure related to poverty is among the categories assessed in the data book. They include:

- **Higher share of children live in families without reliable employment**—Between 2000 and 2005, the percentage of children living in a family where no parent held year-round, full-time employment worsened by 19 percent, rising from 27 percent to 32 percent. Indiana's rate is still lower than the national average of 34 percent in 2005.
- **Teen death rate improves**—While the national teen death rate remained relatively unchanged from 2000 to 2004, Indiana's rate for ages 15-19 improved by 11 percent, from 76 to 68 deaths per 100,000. The three leading causes of teen death are accidental, suicide, and homicide, with suicide being the second leading cause of death in three of the past four years. The national rate went from 67 to 66 deaths per 100,000 between 2000 and 2004.
- **More than 14,000 Indiana children are in need of a permanent family connection**—In 2004, 14,383 children under age 18 in Indiana lived in foster care at some point during the year, a rate of 9 per 1,000 children. That year, 312 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 2007 Data Book Essay focuses on 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.

The Indiana Youth Institute promotes the healthy development of children and youth by serving the institutions and people of Indiana who work on their behalf.