



**Pennsylvania
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**PA Ranks 21st in Nation in New Study on Well-Being of Children
*Allegheny County's Child Welfare System Cited as Model***

(HARRISBURG), July 25, 2007 - Pennsylvania ranks 21st in the nation in a new state-by-state study on the well-being of America's children. *The 2007 National KIDS COUNT Data Book* - published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) - reveals that Pennsylvania improved on two of the 10 measures reflecting child well-being, experienced minor setbacks on six and saw no change on two since 2000.

The KIDS COUNT Data Book focuses this year's *Essay* on the need for all children in foster care to develop strong, lasting family connections. The data book essay sets an ambitious national goal to preserve, strengthen, rebuild, or find permanent families for every American child who is at risk of not having a permanent family.

In 2004, 31,373 children under age 18 in Pennsylvania lived in foster care at some point during the year, a rate of 11 per 1,000 children. In 2004, 1,025 children in PA 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.

"All children in Pennsylvania deserve a loving, nurturing and stable permanent family relationship so they can grow into loving, nurturing and stable adults," said Joan Benso, President and CEO of PA Partnerships for Children (PPC). "We applaud the work of the Annie E. Casey Foundation in bringing to light important children's issues that deserve national attention."

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation calls on child welfare systems across the country to provide more social and economic services and supports that can help strengthen families and enable them to address issues that sometimes put kids at risk for removal. If it becomes necessary to remove children, AECF urges that children be moved to appropriate placements that maintain family and community connections, avoid the use of shelters and congregate care, and keep siblings together. Lastly, AECF asks child welfare systems to pay special attention to the needs of those children who have historically been the least successfully served by child welfare: older youth and African American children.

The message in the report is timely considering the recent focus on the Department of Human Services in Philadelphia and the need for serious reform. But, all is not lost in Pennsylvania. The essay shines a light on one jurisdiction in Pennsylvania that has seen the benefits of prevention-focused investments - Allegheny County, where a focus on strengthening families has been at the core of a wide-ranging set of improvements.

Allegheny County's child welfare system has more than tripled spending on prevention and intervention services for families involved with the child welfare system over the past 10 years. The county has developed a network of more than 30 family-support centers and other family-centered prevention initiatives to help families find resources in their own neighborhoods. To strengthen families and help prevent out-of-home placement, families in Allegheny County are linked to community-based agencies that provide intensive in-home services.

Also in the 2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book, PA places in the top 10 in two categories nationally. The state's "idle teen rate" (youth neither working nor enrolled in school) of 7 percent in 2005 was the ninth lowest in the country. Furthermore, Pennsylvania's teen birth rate improved by 12 percent from 2000 to 2005 to 30 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19 in 2004 maintaining the rank of 10th from last year.

Also notable, Pennsylvania's child death rate decreased by 5 percent from 2000 to 2004 to 19 per 100,000 children.

But economic conditions worsen for Pennsylvania families. The share of children living in poverty increased by 13 percent in Pennsylvania between 2000 and 2005. Children living in poverty are more likely to have poor nutrition, chronic health problems, be less prepared for and have more difficulty in school.

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