

KIDS COUNT Releases Annual Data on Child Poverty

by Beenu Puri

On June 3, 2004, the Annie E. Casey Foundation released the 15th annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* that reports national trends in child well-being. The foundation reports the 10 indicators of child well-being have improved nationally in correlation to economic growth and significant expansion of public programs. Yet there still remains a wide disparity amongst states with the indicators. Though child poverty rates in each state are declining, the overall rate in America is among the highest in the developed world.

Among the 10 measures of child well-being, statistics showed overall the national rate of children in poverty declined 16 percent in 2000. The drop accumulated to a 24 percent improvement in child poverty between 1996 and 2001. Other trends included reduced teen birthrates; drop in rate of teen deaths by accident, homicide and suicide; and all-time national low for infant mortality rates.

The study warns that nearly 1 in 6 young adults, ages 18 to 24, are “disconnected,” meaning they are not working, have no degree beyond high school, and are not enrolled in school. The 2004 *KIDS COUNT Data Book’s* essay, “Moving Youth From Risk to Opportunity,” presents the disconnected youth of America and the critical need for support to help these young adults succeed. The subgroups of these individuals studied include: teens in foster care; teens involved in the juvenile justice system; teens who have already had children of their own; and teens who never finished high school. These subgroups combined, represent 3.8 million Americans who have been ignored and who have been failed by our public systems.

To view the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state-by-state rankings, supplemental data and the essay, “Move Youth From Risk to Opportunity,” please visit www.kidscount.org.