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2011 KIDS COUNT Data Book Shows Kansas Losing Ground: Nearly 1 in 5 Children Living in Poverty

Kansas is 19th in the nation in a state-by-state study on the well-being of America's children, its lowest ranking since 2004. The 2011 KIDS COUNT Data Book, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, shows that the recession has hit Kansas kids hard, leaving nearly one in five children living in poverty.

"Children who grow up in poverty are less likely to succeed in school and later on in life," said Shannon Cotsoradis, president and CEO of Kansas Action for Children. "We're falling behind. These trying times demand investments in children that ensure a strong workforce in the future and protect our Kansas way of life."

According to the 2011 Data Book, the number of Kansas children living in poverty has increased dramatically. In just one year, Kansas dropped from 18th to 23rd place nationwide on this indicator. In 2009, more than 121,000 children in Kansas were living below the federal poverty line (\$21,756 for a family of two adults and two children). Reducing child poverty is one of five "measurable goals" that Gov. Sam Brownback has said that he will pursue as part of his "Roadmap for Kansas."

"If Governor Brownback and other policymakers are serious about reducing child poverty, we must protect crucial supports for children so they can grow up healthy and prosperous," Cotsoradis said. "Policymakers need to keep the promise they made to our youngest children when they established the Children's Initiatives Fund and dedicated its resources to investments in quality early childhood programs such as Early Head Start and newborn screening."

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Key findings in this year's Data Book:

- Childhood poverty: 18 percent of children in Kansas are living in poverty – nearly one in five (data from 2009). In 2000, the rate was 12 percent. Kansas' rank on this indicator is 23rd overall, dropping seven spots from 18th in last year's Data Book.
- Infant mortality: The infant mortality rate in Kansas was 7.9 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2007 (the most recent year in which data is available for all 50 states), ranking Kansas 40th in the nation.
- Top 10 rankings: Kansas ranks among the top 10 for three indicators: Percent of teens not in school and not high school graduates (9th in the nation); percent of teens not attending school and not working (8th); and percent of children living in families in which no parent has full-time, year-round employment (8th).

For more detailed information about how Kansas ranks on child well-being, visit the online KIDS COUNT Data Center. The Data Center contains hundreds of measures of child well-being. To access information about Kansas, go to <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/ks>.

This fall, the 2011 Kansas KIDS COUNT report will be released, which compares data by county.