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**CONTACT:**

Christie Appelhanz  
Kansas Action for Children  
785-232-0550  
[christie@kac.org](mailto:christie@kac.org)

Kansas Action for Children Inc.  
720 SW Jackson | Suite 201  
Topeka, KS 66603

P 785-232-0550 | F 785-232-0699  
[kac@kac.org](mailto:kac@kac.org) | [www.kac.org](http://www.kac.org)

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**Kansas KIDS COUNT report shows recession's effect on children**

TOPEKA – Kansas children are feeling the full impact of the recession, according to the latest Kansas KIDS COUNT report.

The report, released today by Kansas Action for Children, measures county-by-county how kids are doing across 25 indicators of health, education and economic success.

According to the data, nearly one in five Kansas children is living in poverty and more than 47 percent of public schoolchildren are participating in the free or reduced school lunch program.

“Children who live in poverty face hardships that can hinder future success,” said Shannon Cotsoradis, president and CEO of Kansas Action for Children. “This issue isn’t going away, and we need to protect programs and services that help to lift families out of poverty.”

New to this year’s report are statistics about Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program enrollment. Nearly 200,000 poor children rely on Medicaid for health care coverage and 40,000 rely on CHIP, which provides health care coverage for children whose families are climbing out of poverty but are not yet able to afford private insurance.

“The number of children who rely on Medicaid and CHIP for health insurance has steadily increased over the past five years, as can be expected when childhood poverty is increasing,” said Cotsoradis. “We should continue on a course that allows more children to receive health insurance through these vital programs.”

The data showed progress for Kansas in several areas:

- The on-time immunization rate for children reached a five-year high of 70 percent.

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- Fifth-graders continue to show strong rates of reading proficiency (87.29 percent).
- Youth tobacco use and youth binge drinking continue to decrease statewide.

Kansas has room for improvement in some areas:

- Only 7 percent of eligible children receive Early Head Start services and only 49 percent of eligible children receive Head Start services.
- One-quarter of Kansas children live in families in which no parent has full-time employment.
- Fewer public schools met Adequate Yearly Progress requirements.

In August, KAC and the Annie E. Casey Foundation released the national KIDS COUNT Data Book, which showed Kansas ranked 19th in a state-by-state study on the well-being of America's children, its lowest ranking since 2004. To find data for each county, visit [www.kac.org/kidscount](http://www.kac.org/kidscount). For additional information, the online KIDS COUNT Data Center contains hundreds of measures of child well-being and allows users to create maps and graphs of the data at the national, state and county levels. Visit <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/ks>.

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