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Roadblocks to recovery: KIDS COUNT report suggests policy changes might hinder working families in Kansas

TOPEKA – Kansas families recovering from the recession could face challenges when it comes to accessing financial assistance programs.

The 2012 Kansas KIDS COUNT report, released today by Kansas Action for Children, shows that more children are enrolled in Medicaid and participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

However, the report also shows that fewer kids are benefitting from the Temporary Assistance for Families Program (TAF) and the Kansas Child Care Assistance Program – programs the state can influence the most.

“Several policy changes that took effect Nov. 1 might be making it harder for families to utilize TAF and child care subsidies,” said Shannon Cotsoradis, president and CEO of Kansas Action for Children. “Both of these programs strengthen the Kansas economy and allow more parents to enter and remain in the work force.”

In 2011, the average monthly enrollment in Medicaid was 208,315 children. That’s a significant increase from 2007, when the average monthly enrollment was 159,368. Medicaid provides health care coverage for low-income children.

For SNAP, the average monthly enrollment was 136,110 children in 2011. In 2007, the average monthly enrollment was 87,489. SNAP, commonly known as food stamps, helps families pay for groceries and puts dollars into local economies.

Those numbers starkly contrast with the numbers for TAF and child care assistance. In 2011, only 25,981 children directly benefitted from TAF and 19,735 kids received child care assistance. In 2007, the numbers were 26,633 and 21,025, respectively.

Meanwhile, child poverty continues to climb. In 2011, about 21 percent of Kansas children lived in poverty, up from about 18 percent in 2007.

MORE



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In addition to the data about Medicaid, SNAP, TAF, child care subsidies and poverty, Kansas Action for Children's annual KIDS COUNT report measures county-by-county how kids are doing across 20 additional indicators of health, education and economic success.

This year's KIDS COUNT report shows that Kansas has improved in several areas:

- 46,345 Kansas children (6.43 percent) don't have health insurance (2011). That's a decrease from 59,783 (8.24 percent) in 2010.
- The on-time immunization rate has increased to 72.00 percent.
- The infant mortality rate has shown a notable decrease from 7.01 to 6.26 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

Kansas has room for improvement in some areas:

- There are only 6.64 slots available in federally funded Early Head Start programs for every 100 eligible children.
- 48.68 percent of all Kansas schoolchildren receive free or reduced price lunch (2012), an increase from 39.84 percent in 2008.
- Despite some progress, only 49.81 percent of elementary schools offer pre-kindergarten or a 4-year-old at-risk program.

KIDS COUNT data is available for every Kansas county. To download your county's fact sheet, visit 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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