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New online data center offers expanded information:

## **Latest *KIDS COUNT Data* shows good news, bad news for Kansas kids**

Kansas ranks 13th in the nation in a new state-by-state study on the well-being of America's children. The state's ranking climbed from the 18<sup>th</sup> spot in the previous year. According to the 2009 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, Kansas improved – over the past eight years - on four of the 10 measures affecting child well-being, experienced four setbacks, and saw no change on two indicators.

Among the key findings in Kansas:

- **Child and teen deaths reduced in Kansas.** Since 2000, the child death rate (ages 1-14) in Kansas has improved by 16% and the teen death rate (ages 15-19) has seen a 19% improvement. Legislation passed in recent years, including a booster seat law and teen seat belt law, have contributed to the lives saved. The Legislature's action in 2009 to strengthen the state's drivers licensing system for teens stands to further improve the teen death rate in Kansas.
- **More Kansas children living in poverty.** The rate of childhood poverty in Kansas has increased by 25% since 2000. At that time, 12% of the state's children were growing up in poverty. The most recent data shows that 15% - nearly 100,000 Kansas children – are living in poverty. This increase underscores the need for Kansas to continue investing in programs - like early childhood education, child care and college savings – that help combat some of the challenges for children growing up in low-income households.
- **Infant mortality rate remains above national average.** The state's infant mortality rate improved slightly – from a rate of 7.1 deaths per 1,000 live births to a rate of 7.4. However, the infant mortality rate in Kansas has worsened since 2000 when the state had a rate of 6.8 and the rate remains above the national rate of 6.7. Kansas can take steps to improve the infant mortality rate, starting with increased access to prenatal care. Additionally, the Governor's Child Health Advisory Committee has appointed a panel to come up with recommendations for improving the state's infant mortality rate. Gary Brunk, president and CEO of Kansas Action for Children serves on that panel.

- **Kansas ranks in top 10 in four categories.** Nationally, Kansas ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest in its percentage of high school dropouts, 4<sup>th</sup> in percentage of secure parental employment, 7<sup>th</sup> in percentage of idle teens, and 7<sup>th</sup> in percentage of children living in single-parent families.

“The good news is that we’re seeing the results of the Legislature’s work over the past decade. There’s a definite correlation between the policies they’ve passed and the improvements showing up in the KIDS COUNT data,” said Shannon Cotsoradis, executive vice president and COO of Kansas Action for Children. “The bad news is that we still have a ways to go. More Kansas kids living in poverty poses a serious threat to our future economy. We need to keep looking for ways to make sure that our next generation is healthy, educated and economically stable.”

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* – in its 20<sup>th</sup> year – is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. New to the project this year is an expanded online data center. The data center contains comprehensive information about the well-being of children on national, state, county, and city levels. To access the online information for Kansas, visit <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/ks>.

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