



Indiana Exceeds National Average for Holding Juvenile Defenders National Data Book shows mixed results in indicators of child well being

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana saw a dip in its teen birth and teen death rates, while changes in the rates of child poverty, low-birthweight babies and juveniles detained or committed in state facilities exceed national rates.

That's according to U.S. Census data reported in the 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book, the latest annual state-by-state study on the well-being of America's children, just released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In 2006, Indiana ranked sixth among the 50 states and the District of Columbia with 183 per 100,000 youth ages 10-15 detained and committed for juvenile offenses, exceeding the national rate of 125 per 100,000 youth. In addition, 74 percent of those in custody in Indiana committed nonviolent offenses, which ranked 13th in the nation.

National research indicates many nonviolent offenders are convicted of misdemeanors, probation violations or other offenses that had been handled in schools before many districts instituted "zero tolerance" policies in the 1990s.

"The data book provides research that the state can examine in an effort to determine why Indiana has higher rates of juvenile offenders in detention than other states," said Bill Stanczykiewicz, president and CEO of the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI). "In addition, IYI can offer those interested in this issue research on how community-based programs can have a positive effect on at-risk youth and their communities."

In 2005, IYI released the report, "Juvenile Justice: What Works in Indiana," that reviewed national literature on best practices and profiled four community-based efforts in Indiana that were reducing juvenile detention costs and recidivism.

"Since that time, we've seen other collaborative community programs comprising parents, schools, the courts, law enforcement and social services reach out to at-risk youth and provide a comprehensive approach that helps these kids get their lives back on track," Stanczykiewicz said.

Both nationally and in Indiana three youths of color are in juvenile detention or confinement for every one white youth. That is one issue being looked at by Indiana's Commission on Disproportionality, which will make recommendations to the state late this fall.

The 2008 Kids Count Data Books includes an essay on juvenile justice. The research cited in the essay reveals that children who remain in contact with the juvenile justice system achieve less educationally, work less and for lower wages, fail more frequently to form enduring families, experience chronic health problems and are more likely to be imprisoned again over the course of their lifetimes.

The essay looks at the cost savings and rehabilitation successes realized by initiatives taking place across the country. Many of the programs are part of the Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), which has sites in the District of Columbia and more than half the states, including Indiana (Marion County).

The 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book ranks Indiana 34th in the nation, based on an assessment of ten measures of child well-being. Indiana ranked 31st last year. Among the measures are:

- **Poverty**—The percentage of Indiana children living in poverty rose one percentage point from 2005 to 2006, increasing from 17 to 18 percent. The national average is also 18 percent, down from 19 percent in 2005. In addition, the percentage of children living in families where no parent held year-round, full-time employment worsened by 18.5 percent, rising from 27 percent to 32 percent from 2000 to 2006. Indiana's percentage is still lower than the nation's, which is 33 percent.
- **Infant mortality**—While the national rate stayed the same, 6.9 deaths per 1,000 babies, Indiana's rate worsened from 7.8 in 2000 to 8.0 in 2005.
- **Percentage of children living in single-parent families**—Rose in Indiana from 29 percent in 2000 to 32 percent in 2006. The national average is also 32 percent, up from 31 percent in 2005.
- **Low birth weight babies**—Increased from 7.4 percent in 2000 to 8.3 percent in 2005, slightly above the national average of 8.2 percent.
- **Death rates**—The teen death rate (ages 15-19) dropped from 76 per 100,000 teens in 2000 to 64 per 100,000 in 2005. The child death rate held steady at 25 deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14. The teen rate dropped three times more than the national average while the child death rate remains higher than the national average of 20 deaths per 100,000 children.
- **Teen Birth Rate**—Dropped from 49 per 1,000 teens in 2000 to 43 per 1,000 teens in 2005, but it is still above the national rate of 40 per 1,000 teens.
- **Children not in school and not working**—Remained unchanged at 8 percent, matching the national average.

The Indiana Youth Institute promotes the healthy development of children and youth by serving the institutions and people of Indiana who work on their behalf.