

## **News Release**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 3 a.m. June 12, 2008**

Media Contacts: GLCYD: Ann Gonyea ([amgonyea@glcyd.org](mailto:amgonyea@glcyd.org)) at 906-228-8919, ext. 15  
Kids Count in Michigan: Jane Zehnder-Merrell ([janez@michleagueforhumansvs.org](mailto:janez@michleagueforhumansvs.org)) or  
Judy Putnam ([jputnam@michleagueforhumansvs.org](mailto:jputnam@michleagueforhumansvs.org)) at (517) 487-5436 or (800) 837-  
5436 Michele Corey ([corey.michele@michiganschildren.org](mailto:corey.michele@michiganschildren.org)) (517) 485-3500 or  
(800) 330-8674

### **Michigan has high rate of youth in custody, new report finds** *State ranks 27<sup>th</sup> among all states for child well-being*

June 11, 2008

MARQUETTE – Michigan youth are more likely to be held in custody than youth in most other states and minorities are locked up at triple the rate of their white peers, the annual KIDS COUNT report released today found.

The state-by-state report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation ranked Michigan 27<sup>th</sup> among the states (with 1 being the best), based on 10 measures of child well-being. The rank was the same as last year, despite substantial improvements in the rates of high school dropouts, teen births, teen deaths, and idle teens.

This year's report also examines juvenile justice trends and ranked Michigan 33<sup>rd</sup> for the rate of youth in custody.

“These are sobering numbers. We know that many of those youths in custody would have been better served in our mental health, education and social services systems,” said Jane Zehnder-Merrell, senior research associate at the Michigan League for Human Services and director of the Kids Count in Michigan project. “This is evidence that we must step up prevention efforts to keep these children out of the juvenile justice system.”

Judge Michael Anderegg, who presides over Marquette County Probate Court, said the overall state findings on youth in custody are not indicative of what is seen locally. “For 2003 to 2006, out-of-home placement for delinquencies, abuse and neglect cases declined by 24 percent,” he noted. In 2003, 240 youths were removed from their homes. In 2006, that number dropped to 194.

Judge Anderegg noted the state numbers are influenced heavily by urban areas and pointed out that much of what is being done in cities to combat higher rates of youth in

## **News Release**

custody mirrors what is going on in many rural areas in the state, including Marquette County.

“We tend to work very hard to keep kids in the community,” he said. “For instance, we operate a foster care program within our system so we don’t have to send kids who are removed from their homes out of the area. We’re focused on trying to keep the kids in their community and I think we are doing a pretty good job.”

The rate of detained and committed youth in custody in Michigan was 137 youth, ages 10 to 15, per 100,000 youths. The national average was 125 youth per 100,000 youth. Michigan mirrored national statistics with the rate of minority youth in custody triple that of white youth.

In the rest of the report, Michigan received its worst ranking (37) in infant mortality rates, which improved only slightly – 4 percent – between 2000 and 2005. It also ranked 37<sup>th</sup> for the percent of children living in families where no parent has a fulltime, year-round job, which worsened by 13 percent.

Michigan’s most dramatic worsening trend was a 29 percent increase in the percent of children living in poverty – income below \$20,444 for a family of two adults and two children in 2006. Eighteen percent of children in Michigan live in poverty, placing Michigan 30<sup>th</sup> among the states.

“The issue of children living in poverty is very real for us, as it is for the rest of the state,” said Judy Watson Olson, president of Great Lakes Center for Youth Development, a nonprofit that works to strengthen U.P. youth-serving and nonprofit organizations in order to promote a healthy youth environment.

“As a community we will be challenged to support programs that are providing just the basic needs of youth and families,” she noted. “This is a wake-up call and in light of the economic outlook, it’s not going to get easier any time soon.”

Michigan received its best ranking, 13<sup>th</sup>, for the teen death rate, which showed an 11 percent improvement. There were 57 deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19 in the state, compared with a national rate of 65 deaths.

Other improvements included:

- A 20 percent decline in the rate of teen births, placing Michigan 14<sup>th</sup> among the states;
- A 40 percent decrease in the percent of teens who are high school dropouts (ages 16 to 19), moving Michigan to 15<sup>th</sup> among the states; and
- An 11 percent drop in the rate of teens not attending school and not working with Michigan ranking 27<sup>th</sup> on that measure.

## **News Release**

“Communities have been struggling with shrinking funds for prevention programs, particularly for maternal and infant health, where we are losing ground,” said Michele Corey, director of community advocacy at Michigan’s Children. “We must keep up the hard work of creating healthy environments for our children to flourish.”

*Kids Count in Michigan* is a collaboration of the Michigan League for Human Services, which researches and writes the report, and Michigan’s Children, which works with communities to bring attention to the report’s findings.

It is part of a national effort to measure the well-being of children at state and local levels. The state project is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation of Baltimore, The Skillman Foundation of Detroit, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, and the Michigan Association of United Ways.

###