



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

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**NATIONAL 2011 KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK REVEALS
IMPACT OF THE RECESSION ON ILLINOIS CHILDREN**
Gains of the 1990s Lost in Recession

(CHICAGO, Aug. 17, 2011) The recession has hit Illinois children and their families hard, according to new, national data: unemployment and foreclosures remain high, and child poverty continues to increase.

Key findings of this year's 2011 KIDS COUNT *Data Book* include these figures, specific to Illinois:

- Nearly 390,000 children had at least one unemployed parent in 2009.
- The number of children in poverty increased from 525,000 in 2007 to more than 590,000 in 2009.
- 225,000 children were impacted by home foreclosures between 2007 and 2009.

“The effects of poverty, unemployment and foreclosures on children’s lives go far beyond these current, and devastating, economic times,” said Kathy Ryg, president, Voices for Illinois Children. “They can last a lifetime. It’s critical that we do everything we can to support families now, so that children have every opportunity to achieve success in school today and in the workforce tomorrow.”

The 22nd annual KIDS COUNT Data Book was released Wednesday by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which tracks national statistics on the well-being of children and families. With Casey support, Voices for Illinois Children does likewise through a state-specific KIDS COUNT report each winter.

According to the new national report, the economic and social gains for children that occurred across the 1990s stalled even before the economic downturn began. In fact, the U.S. child poverty rate rose from 17 percent in 2000 to 20 percent in 2009. This increase means that 2.5 million more American children are living below the federal poverty line (\$21,756 for a family of two adults and two children in 2009) – effectively wiping-out earlier gains on this important measure.

Throughout much of the past decade, Illinois made significant policy strides in providing quality early learning opportunities and expanding health insurance coverage for children, to name a few areas of positive investments. During the state budget crisis, however, funds for critical, research-based programs to advance children’s education, health, and well-being have been cut substantially – hurting not only kids and families, but our state’s economic stability.

“Large numbers of Illinois children live in families that continue to face deep economic insecurity,” Ryg said. “Programs that both help children and assist the state’s economic recovery efforts include income supports, child care assistance, and health care for children and families. We don’t want to further jeopardize Illinois’ economic recovery by withholding the kinds of supports that will help kids grow into healthy, well-educated, productive adults.”

In addition to the 10 key measures tracked in the *Data Book*, the KIDS COUNT Data Center (<http://datacenter.kidscount.org>) provides easy, online access to the latest data on hundreds of indicators of children's well-being. These are arranged by state, county, city, and school district.

The report serves as a comprehensive source of information for policymakers, advocates, members of the news media, and others concerned with addressing the needs of children, families, and communities. By visiting the Data Center, users can download the complete *Data Book*, and create interactive maps and graphs. Visit the new mobile site being launched in conjunction with this year's *Data Book* from your smartphone, such as the Droid, BlackBerry, or iPhone.

The national KIDS COUNT *Data Book* with state-by-state rankings and supplemental data launches at 12:01 a.m. EDT, August 17, 2011 at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>. For interactive Illinois KIDS COUNT data, visit http://voices4kids.org/library/KC_datacenter.html. And for the entire 2011 Illinois KIDS COUNT report – “Great at Eight: Investing in the Whole Child from Birth to Eight” – visit http://www.voices4kids.org/library/KC11_great_at_eight.html.

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Voices for Illinois Children is a champion for the full development of every child in the state, working with families, communities and policymakers on child-related issues. For more than 20 years, Voices has united community leaders and people who care passionately about children into a statewide network. Voices educates opinion leaders and policymakers about issues facing children and families.