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A collaborative project of
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HUMAN SERVICES
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MICHIGAN'S CHILDREN

The *Kids Count in Michigan Data Book 2007* with profiles for all 83 counties and the City of Detroit includes rankings and trends plus a focus on healthy children and youth can be viewed online pre-release at: <http://www.milhs.org/information/default.asp?NavPageID=50096>

Coverage is EMBARGOED until 2:00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 4, 2007

Michigan Makes Limited Progress on Healthy People 2010 Targets for Children and Youth

Unless Michigan acts more decisively in the next few years, the state will fail to meet many national standards for healthy children, families and neighborhoods. Fewer Michigan teens are binge drinking and smoking but more children are overweight and exercising too little, the 2007 Kids Count in Michigan report concludes.

The report examines 18 wide-ranging health goals for children and teens that are set by the Healthy People (HP) 2010, a national initiative to advance health and well-being. Michigan is making progress, but it is not fast enough to meet the goals in many areas, and minority children and youth are further behind in meeting most of the targets.

Being healthy is about much more than just making sure a child gets adequate medical care. The health of our children reflects the conditions in which they live in our communities, such as housing, and the resources in their families and neighborhoods, said Jane Zehnder-Merrell, senior research associate at the Michigan League for Human Services and project director.

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The report includes detailed profiles of child well-being for the state, each of its 83 counties, and the city of Detroit.

According to the report, Michigan achieved the HP 2010 targets for three indicators by 2005: immunization for toddlers, teen pregnancy and physical fights among high school students.

The state rate for fully immunized toddlers reached the HP 2010 target of 80 percent by 2002. In 2005, the state pregnancy rate of 28 per 1,000 teens, ages 15-17, was well below the HP 2010 target of 43 per 1,000, and the 30 percent of Michigan high school students who reported having been involved in a physical fight in the previous 12 months fell below the target of 32 percent.

This good news didn't hold true for everybody, said Michele Corey, Community Advocacy Director at Michigan's Children, a partner in the project.

These achievements mask substantial disparities by race. Rates on these measures are much worse for African American children who are three times more likely to live in poverty than white children. Unless we change our strategies dramatically, African American children will not meet the target goals by 2010. ”

Striking racial disparities persisted on most of the indicators with African American children having roughly triple the rates of infant mortality, and double the death rates for young children and early elementary children, hospitalizations for asthma among young children, and low-birthweight babies. An overarching goal of the Healthy People 2010 is eliminating disparities in health outcomes, according to the report.

Four areas where the state experienced worsening rates included low-birthweight infants, child abuse or neglect, overweight high school students, and a companion problem of too few youth exercising vigorously on a regular basis. The roughly 11,000 Michigan babies born weighing less than five and one-half pounds in

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2005 suffer from elevated risk of developmental delay, chronic health problems, and even death. The 2005 state rate of 8 percent of low-birthweight babies remains well above the HP target of 5 percent.

These trends are particularly troubling as these childhood conditions elevate the risk of latter physical or emotional health problems as these children and youth become adults, noted Zehnder-Merrell.

The most dramatic improvements reflected declines in substance abuse among teens. Binge drinking among Michigan high school students dropped by 23 percent, and tobacco use by 22 percent between 2000 and 2005. In 2005, 23 percent of high school students reported using tobacco during the previous 30 days, compared with 30 percent in 2001. The rate of students who reported consuming five or more alcoholic drinks within a couple of hours dropped from 29 percent to 23 percent over the same period. However, in order to meet the Healthy People 2010 target of 11 percent of high school students binge drinking, Michigan's 2005 rate would have to drop by half in the last five years of the decade.

Kids Count in Michigan, a collaborative project of the Michigan League for Human Services and Michigan's Children, regularly collects and publishes information about child well-being as a basis for public policy development and community action. The project is part of a broad national effort to improve conditions for children and their families. Funding for the project is provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Detroit-based Skillman Foundation, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, and local United Ways. The annual data book is available from the Michigan League for Human Services and on the web at www.milhs.org

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