

Overview

What is the layout of the 2000 Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book?

As in previous books, this year's report has been designed to measure child well-being through categories of indicators reflecting critical issues for children from prenatal through adolescent stages of development. This year's Data Book maintains the same basic format as previous books, including demographic data, state-to-nation comparisons and selected trend data for the state as a whole. In addition, a new category has been included entitled "Early Care and Education" to reflect the importance of quality early childhood education.

While indicators are arranged in the various domains of child well-being, such an arrangement does not illustrate the significant connection among many of these outcomes. For example, the depth and duration of family and child poverty significantly affect the likelihood of low birth-weight infants, child deaths, child neglect, juvenile arrests and high school dropouts.

What is different about this year's Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book?

Some new tables have been included in this year's edition, as a result of primary research conducted by the Center for Business and Economic Research, to allow for a more comprehensive look at the lives of Nevada's children. These welcome additions include the following:

- ◆ Type of child care by age of child
- ◆ Primary types of child care by region
- ◆ Percentage of weekly child-care expenses by type of provider
- ◆ Percentage of children who were read to by parents/guardians
- ◆ Percentage of dental-examination visits in the past 12 months by age of child
- ◆ Percentage of children with health-care conditions

The title of the indicator previously referred to as "Teen Violent Death" has been changed to "Teen Deaths by Accidents, Homicide and Suicide." The reference information (significance, risk factors and impact) has been vastly revised and updated in this year's edition.

How are the primary indicators organized?

The primary indicators are organized into five descriptive areas as follows:

Definition: A description of what the indicator is and what it measures

Significance: The relationship of the indicator to child and family well-being

Risk Factors: A discussion of dangers that could place children in harm's way

Impact: A context for understanding how the indicator affects children and society

Related Tables: Most recent data for each indicator are presented; and, where applicable, data for the state as a whole are also presented

How were the data indicators selected? Why are some included and others not included?

The measures included in this Data Book were chosen through careful examination of the available data with input from the Nevada KIDS COUNT Advisory Data Subcommittee. Although there are potentially scores of possible indicators, we have worked to select a relatively small group of benchmarks to represent the health and well-being of Nevada's children. We use a number of principles to guide our choice of indicators, including whether the individual indicators are:

- ◆ relevant and easily understandable by those who plan, manage, deliver, use and pay for children's services;
- ◆ based on substantial research that connects them to child well-being;
- ◆ measured regularly so that they can be updated to demonstrate trends over time;
- ◆ representative of large segments of the population;
- ◆ backed up by accurate, reliable and valid data sources; and
- ◆ based on data available at the county level.

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In selecting the data to be included, limitations were encountered. Some information is not available annually at the county level. For example, statistics relating to immunizations are one of many for which we were unable to access current, locality-specific information. The Nevada KIDS COUNT Advisory Council Data Subcommittee will continue to address these issues. To date, the subcommittee has developed a data matrix for initial and future data-collection efforts. For example, programmatic data, such as the number of children in special education programs, may be used in a future Data Book, if they represent the best indicator of a child well-being measure. The importance of county-level data cannot be overstated as a tool for local decision-makers in identifying key areas of concern for children. With the extraordinary growth of Clark County, city- and regional-level data will surely be necessary. Readers are urged to refer to the text and the tables for a complete explanation of most of the indicators. Supplementary information is provided in the General Information section of this Data Book. These sources remain the final authority regarding the quality and meaning of the data.

Why isn't current-year information for every indicator available in the data book?

The simple answer is that current-year data are not available when the book is produced. Many of our data sources need several months after the year ends to make sure the information reported is accurate and includes data collected late in the year. Then, the information must be compiled and disseminated. An additional challenge is that Decennial Census data, now ten years old, provide the most reliable data source for some indicators such as the number of families in poverty, teens not in school and not working and children in single-parent families.

Why is the information presented in varying ways?

Some data are presented as actual, raw numbers, some are percentages and some are rates per 1,000 or 100,000. The numbers represent individuals. The percentages and rates also represent individuals, but have the advantage of allowing for comparisons among areas with populations of different sizes. In this publication, indicators are expressed as raw numbers (for example, 22), as percents (22%) or rates (22 per 1,000). Rates are used to allow comparisons across communities; whereas, percentages would be misleading due to small populations. Caution should be used when drawing conclusions from percentages and rates that are based on small numbers.

How can this information be used to make a difference in the lives of Nevada's children?

These data can be used by private citizens to:

- ◆ find out about the needs in the community and volunteer in specific areas to help children
- ◆ contact elected officials about children in the local community

These data can be used by business people to:

- ◆ determine what issues in the community affect employees, future employees and their families

These data can be used by teachers to:

- ◆ serve as a basis for classroom discussions about civic responsibility, problem solving and community service

These data can be used by parents to:

- ◆ learn about the issues that affect their child as well as their neighbor's
- ◆ present concerns at parent-teacher conferences

These data can be used by elected officials to:

- ◆ analyze the effectiveness of current policies
- ◆ help allocate funding and other resources

These data can be used by educators and social service providers to:

- ◆ determine program needs
- ◆ design programs to address community issues and concerns

This report represents the ongoing effort of the Nevada KIDS COUNT project to inform public policy-makers and spur community action with the most current and available information available. We hope you will join us in this endeavor by using the information to make a difference in the lives of the state's children and their families.