

Overview of KIDS COUNT

WHAT is KIDS COUNT?

KIDS COUNT is a well-known, well-respected project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Its purpose is to track the well-being of children at both the national and the state levels. All 50 states have a KIDS COUNT project, allowing for state-by-state comparisons of child well-being indicators.

In Nevada, the primary activities of the KIDS COUNT project are to:

- ❖ collect, analyze, and distribute the best available data measuring the educational, social, economic, and physical well-being of children and youth in Nevada;
- ❖ educate and inform decision-makers, citizens, service providers, providers of funding, and community partners regarding data, policy, and resource analysis;
- ❖ provide linkages with community efforts to reach decision-makers with information concerning relevant issues for children and youth.

WHAT is the *Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2004*?

This report represents the ongoing effort of the Nevada KIDS COUNT project to provide a profile of the children and youth in our state.

WHAT is the Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER)?

The Center for Business and Economic Research, established in 1975, aids businesses and agencies in achieving the fullest expression of economic potential by providing academic expertise in data collection, business-conditions analysis, and research projects which assist the development and diversification of the Nevada economy. CBER serves Nevadans by

making presentations for conferences, task forces, symposiums, and meetings of Nevada organizations. The work of CBER is rather evenly split between data collection and analysis, market analysis, business-conditions analysis, financial feasibility studies, and econometric modeling. CBER's staff publishes many reports and conducts both basic and applied research. CBER's relationship with KIDS COUNT began in 1996 when it began providing data for the *Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book*. Since 2000, CBER has been publishing the *Data Book*.

WHAT is the layout of the *Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2004*?

This year's *Data Book* is similar to past years' books. We provide indicators reflecting critical elements of child and youth well-being. The indicators are organized as follows:

- ❖ **Nevada:** Most recent state data for each indicator
- ❖ **Counties:** Most recent county data where applicable
- ❖ **Significant Factors:** Summaries of current research
- ❖ **Definition:** A description of what the indicator is and what it measures
- ❖ **Map:** Rates or percentages are presented for each county

WHAT are the additions to the *Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2004*?

New in the Health Conditions and Health-Care section are findings from the 2003 *Oral Health Survey*, an oral-needs assessment of third graders in Nevada. Also, we present data on disabilities which were compiled from the 2000 Census. The Education section features a short presentation on the *No Child Left Behind* program and data on Head Start programs.

Overview of KIDS COUNT Continued

HOW were the data indicators selected?

Nevada KIDS COUNT presents 10 indicators identified and used by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in its state-by-state assessment. The Foundation believes: “. . . (1) They reflect a wide range of factors affecting the well-being of children (such as health, adequacy of income, and educational attainment). (2) They reflect experiences across a range of developmental stages—from birth through early adulthood. (3) They permit legitimate comparisons because they are consistent across states and over time.” (See *KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2003* by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, p. 35.)

The 10 indicators are:

- ❖ percent low-birthweight babies
- ❖ infant mortality rate
- ❖ child death rate
- ❖ rate of teen deaths by accident, homicide, and suicide
- ❖ teen birth rate
- ❖ percent of teens who are high school dropouts
- ❖ percent of teens not attending school and not working
- ❖ percent of children living in families where no parent has full-time year-round employment
- ❖ percent of children in poverty
- ❖ percent of families with children headed by a single parent

In recent years, Nevada KIDS COUNT added additional indicators based on recommendations by *Data Book* users. Practical considerations guided the selection process of the additional indicators, including whether the individual indicators were:

- ❖ relevant
- ❖ substantially researched
- ❖ regularly measured
- ❖ representative of selected segments of children and youth
- ❖ available at the county level
- ❖ verifiable with reliable data sources

Additionally, feedback about the *Data Book* was solicited from participants at conferences which Nevada KIDS COUNT held in Elko and Winnemucca. Fernando Serrano, a member of the Advisory Council, was instrumental in organizing the meetings. The main events were the unveiling of the *Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2003* and presentations by Professors R. Keith Schwer and Mary Riddel on the national and local economic forecasts which emphasized the importance of healthy economies on the well-being of children. Nevada KIDS COUNT thanks President Paul Killpatrick of Great Basin Community College (GBCC) and the Winnemucca Convention Center for hosting the conferences. We also thank Danny Gonzales of GBCC for making college-related arrangements to ensure a smoothly run conference.

The conference held in Las Vegas featured the unveiling of the *Data Book* and presentations by Professor Larry Ashley on the treatment of adolescent drug abuse and by Jeff Hardcastle on population estimates and projections used in the *Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Books*.

Overview of KIDS COUNT Continued

WHAT are the limitations of the data?

The atypical population distribution in Nevada counties with very small populations may create a serious “rare event” problem. Multiple-year averages stabilize and improve the usefulness of these data. Still, even when averaged, caution should be used when drawing conclusions from rates or percentages based on small numbers.

Because rates based on small denominators are likely to be statistically unreliable, rates were not calculated for counties with small denominators. The designation, NM = Not Meaningful, is noted in the maps; and raw data are provided as applicable in the County Data section. Also, the sum of the county data may not equal the state total due to rounding and/or missing county-reference data.

Many of our data providers need time to compile and disseminate accurate information. Therefore, current-year data were sometimes not available when this report was produced.

This year’s *Data Book* and last year’s are easily accessed on-line at:

<http://kidscount.unlv.edu>

WHERE did Nevada improve or worsen?

Columns two and three in the adjacent table illustrate that over the past year five indicators showed improvement and three worsened. The most noticeable change was the increase in the high school dropout rate, from 5.0 to 6.3 percent, a 26 percent increase.

Comparison of Child Well-Being Indicators in Nevada: 2003 and 2004 *Data Books*

| Indicator | Nevada 2004 Data Book | Nevada 2003 Data Book | Comparison | | 2003 National Data Book |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|----------|------------------------------|
| | Rate or Percent | Rate or Percent | Improved | Worsened | National Rate or Percent* |
| Percent low-birthweight babies | 7.4% (2000-02) | 7.5% (1999-01) | X | | 7.6% (2000) |
| Infant mortality rate | 6.0 (2000-02) | 6.2 (1999-01) | X | | 6.9 (2000) |
| Child death rate | 21.0 (2000-02) | 23.0 (1999-01) | X | | 22 (2000) |
| Children in poverty | 13.6% (2000) | 13.5% (1999) | | X | 17% (1999) |
| Teen birth rate | 29.9 (2000-02) | 33.2 (1999-01) | X | | 27 (2000) |
| Teen violent death rate | 51.8 (2000-02) | 51.3 (1999-01) | | X | 51 (2000) |
| Dropout rate | 6.3% (2001-02) | 5.0% (2000-01) | | X | 9.0% (1999-01) |
| Juvenile violent crime arrest rate | 242.4 (2000-02) | 258.9 (1999-01) | X | | NA |

Note: NA = Not Applicable.

*Measures used to calculate the national rates or percentages may differ from those used in calculating the state’s. For example, the Annie E. Casey Foundation reports high school dropout data from the Current Population Survey; whereas, Nevada KIDS COUNT reports data provided by the Nevada Department of Education. Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2004, *Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2004*; and Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003, *KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2003*.