

WHAT'S NEW WITH KIDS?

April 2009

Site of the Month

States' Improvement in Child Well-Being

William O'Hare and Vicki Lamb used 2000 to 2005 national KIDS COUNT data to create a state composite index of child well-being that is based on 10 child well-being indicators.* The indicators are used to track states' child well-being improvement. The findings are presented in a March 2009 working paper titled *Ranking States on Improvement in Child Well-Being Since 2000*.

The authors describe the criteria used by the Annie E. Casey Foundation for selecting the 10 indicators reported in their annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* and the construction of their composite index to assess improvement in child well-being. Overall, they find that between 2000 and 2005, child well-being in the nation improved by 5 percent and that 21 states showed improvement.

Nevada was ranked 8th in terms of improvement in child well-being from 2000 to 2005 (up 7 percent). This improvement was likely due to improvement in Nevada's high school dropout rate (improved by 38 percent), in percent of teens not attending school and not working (improved by 31 percent), and in teen birth rate (improved by 21 percent).** Even though Nevada ranked in the top 10 states on improvement in child well-being over 2000 to 2005, Nevada ranked 36th in child overall well-being, according to the national *KIDS COUNT Data Book 2008*. This is because the latter ranking reflects the level of child well-being in Nevada ranked against other states at a point in time.

Hare's and Lamb's working paper is available at: <http://www.aecf.org/~media/PublicationFiles/OHare%20%20Lamb%20March%202009%20Paper.pdf>.

*Low birthweight rate, infant mortality rate, child mortality rate, teen death rate, teen birth rate, high school dropout rate, teens not working or in school, underemployed parents, children living in poverty, and children in single-parent families.

**Annie E. Casey Foundation, *KIDS COUNT Data Book 2008*, p. 121.

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