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EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
Until 12:01 AM EDT
August 17, 2011

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

Wisconsin ranks 12th overall in key measures of child health and well-being, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2011 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* released today.

The *Data Book* highlights changes and trends that took place between 2000 and 2008 in a variety of indicators of child well-being, including these:

- Wisconsin showed improvement on child deaths, teen deaths, teen births, high school drop outs, and percentage of babies born at low birth weight.
- There was a dramatic 42% increase in children living in poverty in Wisconsin, from 12 percent in 2000 to 17 percent in 2009, an increase of 59,000 children. This is more than double the average increase nationally.
- The percentage of children whose parents lacked secure employment and the percentage of teens neither employed nor in school both worsened. Because of changes in how the Census Bureau asked these questions, comparisons cannot be made back to 2000 on these measures; however, both of these indicators worsened between 2008 and 2009.

Particularly troubling is the percentage of children whose parents lack secure employment, which increased from 22 percent in 2008 to 27 percent in 2009.

"The recession's impact on child poverty has been considerable," said Ken Taylor, executive director of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. "We've been fortunate that Wisconsin has traditionally had a strong network of supports in place to help families weather the storm. You can see that in our relatively stable numbers on many indicators of well-being in spite of the economic toll the recession has taken. Our fear is that Wisconsin's recent disinvestment in that support network will have a significant negative effect on children over time. We need to sustain our efforts to prevent kids from falling through the cracks as we struggle to emerge from the recession."

According to data in the 22nd annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, the economic and social gains for children that occurred across the 1990s stalled, even before the economic downturn began. This year's *Data Book* reports an eighteen percent increase in the U.S. child poverty rate between 2000 and 2009; 2.5 million more American children are living below the federal poverty line (\$21,756 for a family of two adults and two children), effectively wiping out the gains made on this important measure in the late 1990s.

In an ongoing effort to track the impact of the recession, there are two new indicators in this year's data set -- the number of children impacted by foreclosure and households with at least one unemployed parent. In Wisconsin, 59,000 children have been impacted by foreclosure since 2007.

In 2010, an estimated 129,000, or 10 percent of children in this state, lived in households where there was at least one parent, was unemployed at the time the data were collected.

“Kids pay the price when their parents are unemployed or underemployed. And kids pay the price when that results in unstable housing, whether it means foreclosure on their house or eviction from an apartment they rent,” Taylor said. “While the economy continues to idle and families continue to struggle due to dynamics beyond their control, it’s crucial that we invest in children and families, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it is the fiscally responsible way to create economic growth in the short and long term.”

The *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 Wisconsin KIDS COUNT data, visit <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/wi> or http://www.wccf.org/kidcount_data.php

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The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) works to ensure that every child in our state can grow up in a just and nurturing family and community. For over 130 years, we have been an independent voice calling for positive change. For more information on our work, please visit our web site, www.wccf.org.