



555 West Washington Ave, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53703

www.wccf.org
608-284-0580
608-284-0583

For immediate release

Contact: Bob Jacobson, 608-284-0580, ext. 303
Martha Cranley, 608-284-0580, ext. 321

2009 Kids Count Shows Wisconsin Focuses on Importance of Data-Driven Policies to Address Poverty and Other Key Children's Issues

Child advocates in Wisconsin are urging policy makers to take advantage of the wealth of data available to inform their decisions on key issues related to child and family well-being. The *2009 Kids Count Data Book* focuses on the importance of basing policy decisions on quantitative evidence regarding which strategies effectively improve outcomes for kids. The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF), the state's premier child advocacy agency, notes that this is the soundest approach to finding systemic solutions to the biggest challenges facing the Wisconsin's most vulnerable children and families children and families.

Each year, *Kids Count* publishes state-by-state data on several indicators of child well-being. While Wisconsin fared better than most states, with an overall ranking of 10th highest in the country, several disturbing trends were also apparent. Wisconsin's 2007 child poverty rate of 14% was higher than the 12% reported in 2000. The Vision 2020 Campaign, a collaborative project led by WCCF, the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association, and the Wisconsin Head Start Association, has set a goal of eliminating child poverty in the state by the year 2020. Vision 2020 is focused primarily on improving the well-being of Wisconsin children living in poverty by addressing four key areas: family-supporting wages; health care access; quality early care and education; and safe, affordable housing.

"It is clear that kids and families have taken a hit in this economy," said WCCF Acting Executive Director Jim Moeser. "But it's important that we look at the data behind this trend so we can make the best policy decisions and most productive public investments to turn it around."

This year's *Kids Count* ranked Wisconsin 10th overall in its composite of ten indicators of child well-being. The state improved in six of the ten measures since 2000, including infant and child mortality rates, and continues to boast one of the lowest high school dropout rates in the country. However, Wisconsin's results have declined in four other key areas (see fact sheet). In addition to child poverty, the state also now has a higher percentage of kids living in families without stable, full-time employment compared to 2000.

"Policy makers should not lose sight of the solutions even in tough times," said Moeser. "In fact, tough times should be an even greater incentive to make sure kids and families have access to the supports they need to thrive and to prepare for a healthy future."