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A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD ADVOCATES

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Safety Net Failing a Growing Number of Wisconsin Children *2006 Kids Count reports: WCCF Reacts*

Madison - A new report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows that the number of children living in extreme poverty nearly **doubled** between 2000 to 2004. The 2006 Kids Count data book reports that by 2004, 84,000 children in the state lived in families with incomes less than 50 percent of the federal poverty rate, earning no more than \$7,835 per year (for a family of three).

“Clearly, the number of families living at the lowest income levels has a ripple effect on many different areas in our communities, including schools, health care systems and the quality of life that children in the poorest households have. Connecting resources to these families, including employment, job skill development, health care coverage and economic supports is important to try to stabilize families’ circumstances and mitigate the effect that poverty has on children,” said Charity Eleson, executive director of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families.

Research shows children living in extreme poverty very often do not have basic needs met. For these children, the importance of nutritional programs, ready access to health care, quality early care and education and a safe place to live are most important.

Even Wisconsin’s most basic safety net program – W2—is falling short on helping people out of poverty. A 2006 report by Chapin Hall, that followed 1,075 families who applied for assistance in 1999, indicates that despite significant reductions in Wisconsin’s welfare caseload, W2 has done little to improve the economic security of families who participated.

“State policymakers must prioritize systems that make a difference for children in the long term. Early care and education and well-funded K-12 for children and education and training opportunities for their parents are essential to eliminating poverty,” Eleson said. “In addition, it is essential that Wisconsin maintain its commitment to programs like BadgerCare and Wisconsin Shares and consider expanding supports that would, for example, ensure that all children in the state have health care coverage.”

Other findings from the 2006 report include:

- * Female headed families receiving child support is 45 percent, well above the national average of 35 percent. This relatively modest success is threatened with recent Congressional budget cuts to enforcement.
- * More than two thirds (66 percent) of Wisconsin children under the age of six have all their parents in the workforce, well above the national average of 59 percent.
- * Rates of births to teens dropped 11 percent from 35 percent to 31 percent, a rate still considerably lower than the national rate of 42 percent.
- * One in three children under the age of six is cared for in a family based child care setting outside their home; nationally 27 percent receive care in family based care.
- * More children are living in families where no parent has a full-time, year-round job. From 2000 to 2004 the rate increased by 11 percent from 27 to 30 percent.
- * Children living in single parent families continues to be lower than the national average; 28 percent versus 31 percent.

The full Kids Count Report is available online at: www.aecf.org

The Annie E Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization, whose primary mission is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. Wisconsin Council on Children and Families is a private, non-profit, non-partisan organization celebrating its 125th year of raising voices to make every kid count

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