



Michigan League FOR Human Services

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Contact: Judy Putnam at (517) 487-5436

Kurt Metzger at (313) 887-6511

Huge disparity in poverty among state's schools and communities

New Census release gives fresh information for mid-size areas

New community-level data show huge disparities in poverty and income among Michigan communities and school districts, according to three-year average data released today from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The report gives the first update since 2000 of poverty and income data for communities and counties with populations between 20,000 and 65,000. The data cover 2005-2007. Areas with population of 65,000 or more have had annual releases on poverty and income information for those years.

“These are upsetting statistics considering we think the economy and poverty rates are going to get worse before they get better,” said Sharon Parks, president and CEO of the Michigan League for Human Services. “Many school districts and communities are already dealing with deep, deep poverty as evidenced by this new data release.”

Demographer Kurt Metzger, director of the newly established Detroit Area Community Indicators System, said that though that the new information was compiled differently than previous surveys, it still shows broad trends of falling income in all areas of the state – urban and rural; central cities and suburbs – with more people living on earnings considered low-income or poverty level.

“The fact that incomes are going down relative to where they were seven years ago is another indication that people are experiencing more and more distress,” he said. “It’s also another indication of the effect that our one-state depression is having on households throughout Michigan.”

The report can be found at www.census.gov. Click on American FactFinder on the left, then “get data” under American Community Survey and look for the three-year estimates for 2005-2007.

Among the findings:

- There’s a wide range of child poverty rates for the 130 school districts covered in the release; 19 districts had a poverty rate of 5 percent or less while 19 districts had a rate of 25 percent or more of poverty;

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1115 SOUTH PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE • SUITE 202 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48912

517.487.5436/PHONE • 517.371.4546/FAX • WWW.MILHS.ORG

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- Some high-poverty districts are located in the same or in bordering counties as districts with very low rates.
- The child poverty rate is 18.9 percent statewide but it topped 40 percent in Jackson, Flint, Detroit, Saginaw and Hamtramck.
- The lowest median household income was in Hamtramck (\$23,689), which was only one-fifth the highest income reported in Bloomfield Township (\$119,233).
- Michigan has the worst child poverty rate in the Midwest, ranking No. 35 out of 50 states and the District of Columbia, with No. 1 the lowest poverty rate. (Others are Ohio, 34; Indiana, 28; Illinois, 24; Wisconsin, 15; and Minnesota, 8.)
- Out of 64 counties in the report, median household income ranged from \$30,947 in Roscommon to \$73,237 in Livingston.

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The Michigan League for Human Services is a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group for low-income citizens. It has more than 1,500 members from labor, business, faith-based organizations, human services professions and concerned citizens.

The Detroit Area Community Indicators System is a new, nonprofit data information group that is compiling Detroit area neighborhood-level information on the economy, health, safety, education and basic human needs. It is funded by the Kresge Foundation and the Skillman Foundation.