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A collaborative project of
**MICHIGAN LEAGUE FOR
HUMAN SERVICES**
and
MICHIGAN S'CHILDREN

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The *Kids Count in Michigan Data Book 2004* with profiles for all 83 counties and the City of Detroit includes rankings and trends plus a focus on young children can

be viewed online at: <http://www.milhs.org/information/default.asp?NavPageID=27455>

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Report Shows Young Children in Michigan At Risk

Little or no progress was made in improving maternal and infant health in Michigan between 1995 and 2002, according to the latest Kids Count data book. This year's report, with a focus on young children, also found higher risk for the state's youngest children on several measures of child well-being.

Our state public policy and budget decisions do not reflect the overwhelming scientific evidence of the importance of the earliest years," said Jane Zehnder-Merrell, senior research associate at the Michigan League for Human Services. State and local services are being cut or curtailed to young children. As a result, too many children reach kindergarten already behind. "

The state's young children were more likely to be poor and have their health compromised by asthma or lead poisoning, according to the report. One of five young children under the age of five in Michigan lived in poverty in 2003. Young children were twice as likely to be hospitalized for asthma as children, ages five to nine, and the state's asthma hospitalization rate for young children is double the *Healthy People 2010* target. (*Healthy People 2010* articulates a set of health objectives with specific targets for national, state and local efforts to increase the years and quality of life and eliminate health disparities among population groups.)

Despite the increase in testing rates since 1998, only 19 percent of one and two-year-olds were tested for lead in 2003. Children in the first three years are most

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vulnerable to lead s' devastation because of the active development and growth of the central nervous system at that time.

These health outcomes suggest a lack of access to preventive health care, according to Zehnder-Merrell. Intensive state efforts to cut costs must not result in depriving vital preventive health care for children, she asserted.

Lack of access to health care was also reflected in the relatively low rates for well-child visits for Medicaid-enrolled children in the first 15 months of life and ages three through six. Michigan rates were below the national averages, according to the report. Twelve of the eighteen health plans serving Medicaid-enrolled children, ages three through six, had rates below the national average, and four were in the lowest performance category. Roughly 750,000 children in the state depend on Medicaid to access health care.

Infants were almost twice as likely to be victims of abuse or neglect as children, ages 5-9. Young children under the age of five represented 80 percent of the Michigan fatalities resulting from maltreatment in 2002.

The report also shows that roughly 170,000 children under age 18 resided in families investigated for abuse or neglect in 2003 —at a rate of 66 per 1,000 children under the age of 18. This rate represented a 23 percent increase over the rate of 54 per 1,000 in fiscal year 1995. The rate of confirmed victims (10 children per 1,000) climbed by over one-quarter over the same period, up from 8 in fiscal year 1995. Children were 17 percent more likely to end up in out-of-home care for abuse or neglect over the trend period.

Lack of prevention services to the state s' most vulnerable children may explain some of the substantial increase in the rates of child abuse and neglect, said Michele Corey, community advocacy director for Michigan s' Children. Community collaboratives for coordinating human services and county infant death review teams have experienced reduced or zero funding to support their efforts. ”

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State budget shortfalls have also affected other services to young children. Young children in low-income families that depend on the state child care subsidy have few options for care, according to the report. The subsidy payment is based on hourly use rather than the standard weekly rate charged by almost all licensed providers. Subsidy payments are also pegged to a 1996 market rate survey that lags the cost of living by eight years.

Although young children suffer from the highest risks to their well-being, there is good news for Michigan teens. Among the five areas of child well-being examined in this year's data book, the biggest improvement in Michigan over the trend period occurred among teens. Both the rate of births to teens, ages 15-17, and the rate of injury deaths among teens, ages 15-19, dropped by roughly one-third. In 2000-2002, 20 of every 1,000 high school-aged female students gave birth compared to 30 in 1990-92. The percent of high school dropouts declined by 40 percent with roughly 4 percent or 17,000 youth leaving school without a high school diploma.

This year the annual data book, which features profiles of child well-being for the state, its 83 counties and Detroit will be available on the web at www.milhs.org as well as in hardcopy from the Michigan League for Human Services.

Kids Count in Michigan, a collaborative project of the Michigan League for Human Services and Michigan's Children, regularly collects and publishes information about child well-being as a basis for public policy development and community action. The project is part of a broad national effort to improve conditions for children and their families. Funding for the project is provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Detroit-based Skillman Foundation, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, and United Ways.

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