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**DATA SHOW MANY OF COLORADO'S KIDS FACE CHALLENGES,  
WHILE OVERALL POPULATION TRENDS SHOW STATE PROSPERING**

**Nearly One in Three Students Don't Graduate High School,  
180,000 Children Lack Health Insurance, According to Report Released Today**

Nearly one in three students in Colorado will not graduate from high school and about 14 percent, or 180,000 children, lack health insurance, according to the *2007 KidsCount in Colorado* report, the annual statewide report on child well-being released today by the Colorado Children's Campaign. At the same time, adults fare well, with Colorado ranked third in the nation in 2005 with more than one-third of people 25 years and over having completed a bachelor's degree and 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation with a median family income of over \$62,000.

"While Colorado prospers on many levels, including the education level and income of the overall state population, many of our children are not getting their basic needs met," said Megan Ferland, President, Colorado Children's Campaign. "When we look at trends including poverty, access to health care, and quality education there are significant needs for improvement."

The *KidsCount in Colorado* report is an annual county-by-county, data-based compilation of a variety of factors impacting child well-being. The report is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which releases a national KidsCount report each year with state child well-being rankings.

"The status of our children is really a reflection on the status of our state as a whole," said Governor Bill Ritter, Jr. "That is why KidsCount is so important. It tells us, in real numbers, where we are succeeding and where we can do better for our children."

Among the facts and trends in the *2007 KidsCount in Colorado* report:

### Health

- In Colorado, nearly 180,000 children under 19, or 14 percent, lack health insurance. Nationally, 12 percent of children are uninsured.
- Colorado's uninsured children cost local, state and federal governments and the private sector an estimated \$79 million annually. This cost-shifting includes an estimated \$50 million paid by the private sector and \$29 million paid by the government.

- In 2005, Colorado's childhood immunization rate reached 83 percent, up from 77 percent in 2004. In 2005, Colorado moved up to 16<sup>th</sup> in state childhood immunization rankings, up from 44<sup>th</sup> place the year before and 50<sup>th</sup> place in 2002 and 2003.
- Colorado continues to lag in the percent of mothers who received prenatal care in the first trimester. In 2005 in Colorado, the rate of mothers who received prenatal care was 79 percent, compared to 84 percent nationally.
- Colorado continues to lag in the nation in low birth weight babies. In 2005, nine percent of babies born in Colorado weighed less than five pounds, eight ounces, which is slightly worse than the national rate of just under eight percent.
- The percent of women smoking during pregnancy in Colorado decreased four points between 1995 and 2005, from 12 percent to eight percent of births.

### Early Childhood Care and Education

- The percentage of kindergarteners enrolled in full-day programs in Colorado has doubled since 2001, from 14 to 28 percent. However, Colorado continues to lag far behind the national rate, which was 65 percent in 2003. In addition, the state's range of participation rates across counties varies from 10 counties with zero percent of kids in full-day kindergarten programs to seven counties with 100 percent full-day kindergarten participation.

Results of empirical research on the effects of full- versus half-day kindergarten reveal that children who attend full-day kindergarten show significantly stronger academic gains in reading and math over the course of the kindergarten year than their counterparts in half-day programs.

- In the most recent National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) state rankings report, Colorado ranked 40<sup>th</sup> overall out of the 50 states for child care standards and oversight systems, ranking 44<sup>th</sup> for standards and 17<sup>th</sup> for oversight. Included in the state's reported weaknesses: staff-to-child ratios, group size requirements and minimal educational requirements of child care center directors and teachers. Neither child care center directors nor teachers are required to have an associate's or bachelor's degree or higher, and teachers are not required to have a high school diploma or GED.

- **K-12 Education**

Nearly one in three students do not graduate from high school in Colorado. In 2005, the high school graduation rate for public school students was 70 percent.

- Standardized test score results, as measured by the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) are low, especially for poor and minority students. Fewer than half (45 percent) of 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored proficient or advanced on the 2006 math CSAP. The problem is even more pronounced for minority students, with 29 percent of Native Americans, 22 percent of black, and 22 percent of Hispanic students scoring advanced on the test.

- Both the number and rate of English language learners enrolled in Colorado public schools have increased over the past five years. The percentage of public school students characterized as English language learners was 12.8 percent in 2005, an increase from 8.4 percent in 2000, with the number of students nearly doubling from 60,852 in 2000 to 114,857 in 2005. In some communities including Denver and Eagle counties, more than one-third of students are designated as English language learners.
- The need for public school capital construction in the state is estimated to be between \$5.7 billion and \$10 billion, according to a 2004 study by the Donnell-Kay Foundation.

“There are places where we are doing well, including the dramatic improvement on childhood immunization rates,” said Lieutenant Governor Barbara O’Brien. “There are also places, including our low high school graduation and full-day kindergarten rates, where we could do much better. Solid data tells us where we stand – now it is on all of us to move to where we want to be.”

According to the *2007 KidsCount in Colorado* report, among the most significant trends in Colorado is the steady increase in population, including child population. In 2005, Colorado was home to approximately 4.7 million people, nearly 1.2 million of which were children. Over the past 10 years, total population has grown by more than 900,000 people, which is nearly the population of Denver and Colorado Springs combined. During this same time, the total child population increased by 200,000 (or more than twice the size of Boulder) and the under 5 population increased by almost 68,000.

According to projections by the Colorado State Demographer, the population will continue to grow. The forecast for 2015 is a total population of 5.7 million, including 1.4 million children.

“While population trends are not positive or negative in and of themselves, as Colorado’s child population continues to grow, the challenges of ensuring their access to quality health care and education will become even tougher to address,” said Ferland. “It is time for us to come together to find the most effective strategies to help kids succeed.”

For more information about the KidsCount report, children’s issues and the Colorado Children’s Campaign, please visit [www.coloradokids.org](http://www.coloradokids.org) or call (303) 839-1580.

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**The Colorado Children’s Campaign works to create hope and opportunity in Colorado – more than one million children at a time. The Campaign is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization focusing on expanding access to quality health care, P-16 education and early childhood experiences. For more information, please visit [www.coloradokids.org](http://www.coloradokids.org).**