



## **Report: State economy impacting kids**

*Michigan also has high infant mortality rate*

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Michigan's shaky economic status led to a lower nationwide ranking in the 2010 Kids Count report, which provides an overall rank based on 10 measures of child well-being and recently was released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

According to the report, Michigan fell to No. 30 among the 50 states, the state's worst ranking in more than a decade. Michigan ranked 27th for child well-being in the previous four reports.

In this year's report, Michigan was among the 10 worst states when it comes to lack of secure parental employment, ranking 44th, with No. 1 being the the best.

In 2008, 31 percent of Michigan children lived in families where no adult had full-time, year-round employment, compared with 27 percent of children nationally.

The report stated 19 percent of Michigan children live in poverty as of 2008, which is up from 14 percent in 2000 and places the state above the national average.

Between 2007 and 2008, the percentage did not change. The report ranks Michigan No. 32 for child poverty.

A family of two adults and two children were considered poor if their income in 2008 fell below \$21,834.

Huron County's percentage of children in poverty — 18 percent —aligns with the state. This is an increase from 15.5 percent in 2003.

Jane Zehnder-Merrell, Kids Count in Michigan director and a senior research associate at the Michigan League for Human Services, said the state experienced a sharp increase in job losses in late 2008 and through 2009, which was not fully reflected in the Kids Count report. The full impact will be more evident in the 2011 report, she added.

**“I am sure no one is terribly surprised by the data in this report,” said Becky Gettel, Huron County Great Start Collaborative director.**

**“There is an obvious link between Michigan’s struggling economy and the well-being of children and people of all ages. This report is very telling and should be paid attention to. Last year, Michigan lawmakers reduced and in some cases eliminated funding to programs that are essential to improving the lives of children and adults in our state, which only contributes further to our problems as evidenced by this report.”**

**Gettel said Huron County’s Kids Count data is similar to that of the state’s. She said this shows work needs to be done to help ensure all children grow up healthy and ready for school success.**

**“The Huron County Great Start Collaborative is a group of parents and concerned citizens who have come together to create and implement a plan to address these obvious needs in our local community,” she said.**

Also in the 2010 Kids Count report, Michigan was 40th in the country for infant mortality, with nearly eight deaths per 1,000 live births, compared with a national rate of 6.7 deaths per 1,000 births.

In Huron County, the infant mortality rate has remained steady from 2003 to 2007, according to the report. There were two infant deaths each in 2006 and 2007. This is a rate of six deaths per 1,000 live births, the report stated.

“This report reconfirms the urgency to work to improve the survival rates of babies in Michigan,” said Amy Zaagman, executive director of the Michigan Council on Maternal and Child Health. “We simply cannot accept a ranking of No. 40 out of 50.”

Despite the poor ranking, Michigan has showed a small improvement in infant mortality rates between 2000 and 2007. In addition, the report covered infant deaths in 2007. The 2008 data, not included in this report, shows Michigan improving to 7.4 deaths per 1,000 births.

Since then, however, more budget cuts have hit hard at programs aimed at reducing infant mortality. Family, maternal and child health programs included in the Michigan Department of Community Health budget have fallen from \$60 million in 2002 to \$30 million this fiscal year.

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