

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE  
UNTIL 3:00 a.m. EDT June 27, 2006

CONTACTS: Clay Wilkinson  
202-842-3600 x245  
[Kidscount@hagersharp.com](mailto:Kidscount@hagersharp.com)

Jane Boykin  
Mississippi Forum on Children & Families, Inc.  
601-355-4911  
[jane.boykin@mfcf.org](mailto:jane.boykin@mfcf.org)

### **Child Well-Being in Mississippi at a Glance 2006 KIDS COUNT Mississippi Fact Sheet**

Mississippi ranks last among all states in a new state-by-state study that reports the well-being of America's children. The 2006 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows that Mississippi improved in five out of 10 measures that reflect child well-being, experienced setbacks in four indicators and no change in one measure (infant mortality rate) since 2000. This year's report highlights the early childhood experiences of young children, including a special focus on children under age 6 who are in family-based child care.

#### **Mississippi in top three for children under age 6 in family-based care.**

In 2003, 97,000 Mississippi children under 6 years old were in family-based child care, which represents 39 percent of the state's children in this age group. This percentage is high compared to 27 percent of children nationwide in family-based care and places Mississippi among the top three states with the highest percentages.

#### **Decrease in high school dropout rate better than national average.**

While the nation overall experienced a 27-percent decrease in the high school dropout rate between 2000 and 2004, Mississippi did even better, with a 33-percent decrease over the same time period. Just over 10 percent of Mississippi teens ages 16-19 were high school dropouts in 2004, compared with 15 percent in 2000. The state ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in the country in this category, its best ranking out of the 10 indicators.

#### **Mississippi ranked last in nation for child poverty.**

Between 2000 and 2004, Mississippi experienced a 19-percent increase in the child poverty rate and ranks last in the nation on this indicator. In 2004, almost one in three children (31 percent) under 18 lived in poverty, much higher than the national rate of 18 percent. Mississippi was ranked 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation in this category in 2000.

#### **Teen birth rate down from 2000.**

Teens in Mississippi gave birth at a lower rate in 2003 compared to three years earlier, down 10 percent. In 2003, 36 per 1,000 teen girls ages 15-19 gave birth, down from 7 per 1,000 in 2000. Mississippi ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation in teen birth rate along with New Mexico and Texas.

#### **Infant mortality rate unchanged since 2000.**

Mississippi's infant mortality rate in 2000 was 10.7 per 1,000 births and remained the same in 2004, giving the state the worst ranking in the country in this category for both years. The national rate for 2003 stands at 6.9 per 1,000 births, also unchanged from three years earlier. In 2004 in Mississippi, 455 died before their first birthday.