

November 30, 2010
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Information:
Teresa Rupp, Executive Director
Office: (316) 682-1853
E-mail: trupp@childstart.org

Anne Maack, Director of Public Affairs
Office: (316) 682-1853
E-mail: amaack@childstart.org

New KIDS COUNT report shows challenges for Sedgwick County kids

WICHITA, KAN. – More than 16 percent of Sedgwick County children are growing up in poverty, according to the latest Kansas KIDS COUNT report released today by Child Start and Kansas Action for Children. The percentage of Sedgwick County children whose families fall below the federal poverty level (\$21,200 or less for a family of four) is higher than that of the state as a whole.

Services designed to support children in poverty are not able to reach all the children who qualify. According to the report, there are fewer than four Early Head Start slots available per 100 children (birth to age three) who qualify and fewer than 33 Head Start slots available per 100 children (three and four years of age) who qualify.

“Child Start received some stimulus funds to help us reach more children this year,” said Teresa Rupp, Executive Director of Child Start, the nonprofit organization that provides Head Start and Early Head Start services in Sedgwick County. “But, it’s not certain that those funds will remain available in the future.”

Other key findings in the new KIDS COUNT data:

- Although the trend rate of low birth weight babies is increasing in Sedgwick County, the trend rate for infant mortality is decreasing. This could speak to the availability and quality of health care for newborns.
- The percent of public schools in Sedgwick County that met Adequate Yearly Progress requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act is lower than the percentage for schools across the state and the trend over a five year period shows decline.

“It’s no secret that Kansas families are feeling the pain of the economy,” said Shannon Cotsoradis, president of Kansas Action for Children. “But, we’re fortunate. Legislators have done some tremendous work over the past decade to prevent some of the long-term effects that often go hand-in-hand with poverty. I’m talking about things like quality early childhood programs and affordable health coverage, which give parents a chance to keep their families healthy and strong even when times are tough. Those resources will remain critical this coming year if we want Kansas families to stay afloat during these difficult economic times.”

For 18 years, the Kansas KIDS COUNT project has provided a snapshot of how Kansas children are doing in the areas of education, health and economic stability. To download the full Kansas KIDS COUNT report or to view data for other counties, visit www.kac.org/kidscount.

Kansas KIDS COUNT is produced by Kansas Action for Children and funded, in part, by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The findings and conclusions presented are those of KAC and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Foundation. Data collection and analysis was provided by the Kansas Health Institute.