

A Publication of the Every Child Matters Education Fund, Washington, DC

# **GEOGRAPHY MATTERS**

## CHILD WELL-BEING IN THE STATES

April 2008



**EVERY CHILD** *matters*  
education fund



April 2008

Dear Reader,

We all know the life chances of children are vastly improved when they are the top priority of supportive families and communities. Most American children live in such secure environments and sail into young adulthood physically and emotionally healthy, becoming productive members of society.

But while all states provide a basic network of social programs to assist vulnerable children and families, children do much better in some states than in others. As the sorry numbers in this report show, there exists a huge gap among states on a wide variety of child well-being indicators. The state they live in should not adversely influence the life and death of children—but it does. Such inequalities affect all Americans, rich and poor alike, and weaken both our economy and our democracy.

To spotlight the need for smart national investments in all of our children, the Every Child Matters Education Fund is conducting a non-partisan public education campaign during the 2008 election. Our goal is to win new investments in health, education, and social programs and to make homeland security a reality for children and families – no matter where they live.

Please join us in insisting that all officeholders provide the leadership necessary to ensure that every child matters.

**Michael R. Petit**  
President

P.S. To download a copy of this report, to forward it to a friend or to forward it to the presidential candidates or to your congressional representatives, visit [www.everychildmatters.org](http://www.everychildmatters.org)

## Are the Life Chances of U.S. Children Influenced by the State They Live in?

Americans love their children and grandchildren. But many are unaware that a widening 'national investment gap' in health and social programs is contributing to a wide 'child well-being gap' among the states. How wide? In a comparison of states using ten indicators of child well-being, children in the lowest ranking state are:

- Twice as likely to die in their first year as children in the highest ranking state.
- Three times more likely to die between the ages of 1-14.
- Nearly three times more likely to die between the ages of 15-19.
- Three times more likely to be born to a teenage mother.
- Five times more likely to have mothers who received late or no prenatal care.
- Three times more likely to live in poverty.
- Five times more likely to be uninsured.
- Eight times more likely to be incarcerated.
- Thirteen times more likely to die from abuse and neglect.
- Less likely to be protected if abused or neglected: the top state spends 12 times more to address child abuse and neglect than the bottom state.

These vast differences between states reveal sharply reduced life-chances and opportunities for millions of children. In states with the best outcomes a child is more likely to receive medical attention when ill, to be protected from further assaults if sexually abused, to be treated for a mental illness rather than incarcerated, and to receive the special help needed to finish high school.

## How this Report is Organized

This report shows just how wide the gaps are among the states on critical indicators of child well-being. First, it looks at commonly recognized measurements of child well-being, mostly from official government sources, such as poverty and fatality indicators. It shows how the top state compares to the bottom state for each indicator, and how the top 10 states and bottom 10 states compare. Various other displays of this data can be found at [www.everychildmatters.org](http://www.everychildmatters.org). Also on the website are the Administration's proposed 2009 budget cuts in children's services. All the material from this report can be reprinted and distributed copyright free. Please acknowledge the Every Child Matters Education Fund.

We appreciate how different states measure and report these data differently and might have more up to date information. We have tried to use the most recent data for surveys done of all 50 states using a standard methodology and common reporting source.

## Child Well-Being Indicators – Top States vs. Bottom States

### Comparison of Top and Bottom State for Each Indicator

| Indicator   | Top State   | Bottom State                  | % Higher – Bottom vs Top |
|---|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Infant Deaths per 1,000 Births                          | Montana <b>4.5</b> Vermont <b>4.5</b>                             | Louisiana <b>10.5</b>         | 133%                     |
| Deaths per 100K Aged 1-14                               | Rhode Island <b>11</b>  | South Dakota <b>39</b>        | 254%                     |
| Deaths per 100K Aged 15-19                              | Hawaii <b>40</b>  | Alaska <b>111</b>             | 177%                     |
| Births to Mothers aged 15-19 per 1,000                  | New Hampshire <b>18</b>   | Texas <b>63</b>               | 250%                     |
| % of Births to Women Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care | Vermont <b>1.5%</b><br>Rhode Island <b>1.5%</b>                   | New Mexico <b>8.3%</b>        | 453%                     |
| % of Children in Poverty                                | Maryland <b>10%</b><br>New Hampshire <b>10%</b>                   | Mississippi <b>30%</b>        | 200%                     |
| % of Uninsured Children                                 | Rhode Island <b>4.2%</b>  | Texas <b>21.2%</b>            | 403%                     |
| Incarceration rate per 100,000 juveniles                | Vermont <b>72.4</b>   | Wyoming <b>606.1</b>          | 737%                     |
| Child Abuse Fatalities per 100K                         | Delaware, Idaho, Vermont, North Dakota <b>0</b> /Maine <b>0.4</b> | Oklahoma <b>4.8</b>           | 1233%*                   |
| Per Capita Child Welfare Expenditures                   | Rhode Island <b>\$180.32</b>                                      | South Carolina <b>\$14.74</b> | 8%**                     |

\* Comparison is to Maine, not to the states with zero child abuse fatalities.

\*\* South Carolina spends just 8% (one-twelfth) what Rhode Island spends.

### Comparison of Top 10 versus Bottom 10 States – Infant Mortality

| Chart 1A               |  |                                  | Chart 1B                 |  |                                  |
|------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
|                        | Number of Deaths of Infants per 1,000 Births | % More Compared to the Top State |                          | Number of Deaths of Infants per 1,000 Births | % More Compared to the Top State |
| <b>1</b> Montana       | 4.5  | --                               | <b>50</b> Louisiana      | 10.5   | 133%                             |
| <b>1</b> Vermont       | 4.5  | --                               | <b>49</b> Mississippi    | 9.8  | 117%                             |
| <b>3</b> Minnesota     | 4.7  | 4%                               | <b>48</b> South Carolina | 9.3  | 106%                             |
| <b>4</b> Massachusetts | 4.8  | 6%                               | <b>46</b> Wyoming        | 8.8  | 95%                              |
| <b>5</b> Iowa          | 5.1  | 13%                              | <b>46</b> North Carolina | 8.8  | 95%                              |
| <b>6</b> California    | 5.2  | 15%                              | <b>45</b> Alabama        | 8.7  | 93%                              |
| <b>6</b> Utah          | 5.2  | 15%                              | <b>43</b> Tennessee      | 8.6  | 91%                              |
| <b>8</b> Rhode Island  | 5.3  | 18%                              | <b>43</b> Delaware       | 8.6  | 91%                              |
| <b>9</b> Connecticut   | 5.5  | 22%                              | <b>42</b> Georgia        | 8.5  | 88%                              |
| <b>9</b> Oregon        | 5.5  | 22%                              | <b>41</b> Maryland       | 8.4  | 86%                              |
| <b>9</b> Washington    | 5.5  | 22%                              |                          |  |                                  |
| Median Top 11 States   | 5.2  | 15%                              | Median Bottom 10 States  | 8.8  | 94%                              |

**Children born in the bottom 10 states are 70% more likely to die before their first birthday than children in the top 10.**

**In Louisiana, the infant mortality rate is more than twice as high than in Montana and Vermont.**

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, 2004, National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 55, No. 1 (September 29, 2006), Table 10.

Child Deaths 1-14

| Chart 2A             |                                     |                                  | Chart 2B                |                                     |                                  |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                      | Number of Deaths per 100K Aged 1-14 | % More Compared to the Top State |                         | Number of Deaths per 100K Aged 1-14 | % More Compared to the Top State |
| 1 Rhode Island       | 11                                  | --                               | 50 South Dakota         | 39                                  | 254%                             |
| 2 Massachusetts      | 12                                  | 9%                               | 49 Alaska               | 35                                  | 218%                             |
| 2 Vermont            | 12                                  | 9%                               | 47 Louisiana            | 34                                  | 209%                             |
| 4 Connecticut        | 14                                  | 27%                              | 47 Arkansas             | 34                                  | 209%                             |
| 4 New Jersey         | 14                                  | 27%                              | 45 Mississippi          | 31                                  | 181%                             |
| 6 New Hampshire      | 16                                  | 45%                              | 45 Montana              | 31                                  | 181%                             |
| 6 New York           | 16                                  | 45%                              | 44 Delaware             | 29                                  | 163%                             |
| 6 Washington         | 16                                  | 45%                              | 41 West Virginia        | 28                                  | 154%                             |
| 9 California         | 17                                  | 54%                              | 41 New Mexico           | 28                                  | 154%                             |
| 9 Colorado           | 17                                  | 54%                              | 41 Alabama              | 28                                  | 154%                             |
| 9 Wisconsin          | 17                                  | 54%                              |                         |                                     |                                  |
| Median Top 11 States | 16                                  | 45%                              | Median Bottom 10 States | 31                                  | 181%                             |

**A child in the bottom 10 states is twice as likely to die by the age of fourteen as a child in the top 10.**

**In South Dakota, the child mortality rate is 3.5 times higher than in Rhode Island.**

Source: *Death Statistics: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), 2004, Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the Multiple Causes of Death Public Use Files for 2004 CD-Rom.*

Teen Deaths 15-19

| Chart 3A             |                                      |                                  | Chart 3B                |                                      |                                  |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                      | Number of Deaths per 100K Aged 15-19 | % More Compared to the Top State |                         | Number of Deaths per 100K Aged 15-19 | % More Compared to the Top State |
| 1 Hawaii             | 40                                   | --                               | 50 Alaska               | 111                                  | 177%                             |
| 2 Connecticut        | 43                                   | 7%                               | 49 Montana              | 104                                  | 160%                             |
| 3 Iowa               | 45                                   | 12%                              | 48 Mississippi          | 102                                  | 155%                             |
| 4 Massachusetts      | 46                                   | 15%                              | 47 Alabama              | 99                                   | 147%                             |
| 4 New Hampshire      | 46                                   | 15%                              | 45 Tennessee            | 96                                   | 140%                             |
| 6 New York           | 47                                   | 17%                              | 45 Louisiana            | 96                                   | 140%                             |
| 7 New Jersey         | 49                                   | 22%                              | 44 Kentucky             | 95                                   | 137%                             |
| 8 Utah               | 50                                   | 25%                              | 43 West Virginia        | 94                                   | 135%                             |
| 8 Vermont            | 50                                   | 25%                              | 42 Arkansas             | 93                                   | 132%                             |
| 10 Minnesota         | 52                                   | 30%                              | 40 Oklahoma             | 88                                   | 120%                             |
|                      |                                      |                                  | 40 New Mexico           | 88                                   | 120%                             |
| Median Top 10 States | 46.5                                 | 17%                              | Median Bottom 11 States | 96                                   | 140%                             |

**Teens in the bottom 10 states are more than twice as likely to die between 15-19 as those in the top 10.**

**In Alaska, the teen death rate is more than 2.5 times higher than in Hawaii.**

Source: *United States Department of Health and Human Services (US DHHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Office of Epidemiology Analysis and Health Promotion, 2004, Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the Multiple Causes of Death Public Use Files for 2004 CD-Rom.*

Births to Teen Mothers

Chart 4A

|                      | Rate of Births to Mothers 15-19 per 1,000 Total | % Higher Compared to the Top State |
|----------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 1 New Hampshire      | 18  | --                                 |
| 2 Vermont            | 21  | 17%                                |
| 3 Massachusetts      | 22  | 22%                                |
| 4 Connecticut        | 24  | 33%                                |
| 4 Maine              | 24  | 33%                                |
| 4 New Jersey         | 24  | 33%                                |
| 7 Minnesota          | 27  | 50%                                |
| 7 New York           | 27  | 50%                                |
| 7 North Dakota       | 27  | 50%                                |
| 10 Pennsylvania      | 30  | 67%                                |
| 10 Wisconsin         | 30  | 67%                                |
| Median Top 11 States | 24  | 42%                                |

Chart 4B

|                         | Rate of Births to Mothers 15-19 per 1,000 Total | % Higher Compared to the Top State |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 50 Texas                | 63  | 250%                               |
| 49 Mississippi          | 62  | 244%                               |
| 48 New Mexico           | 61  | 239%                               |
| 46 Arkansas             | 60  | 233%                               |
| 46 Arizona              | 60  | 233%                               |
| 44 Oklahoma             | 56  | 211%                               |
| 44 Louisiana            | 56  | 211%                               |
| 43 Georgia              | 53  | 194%                               |
| 40 Tennessee            | 52  | 189%                               |
| 40 South Carolina       | 52  | 189%                               |
| 40 Alabama              | 52  | 189%                               |
| Median Bottom 11 States | 56  | 211%                               |

Teens in the bottom 10 states give birth at a rate twice as high as those in the top 10.

In Texas, the teen birth rate is 3.5 times that of New Hampshire.

Source: Population Reference Bureau and Child Trends analysis of 1990-2003 Natality Data Set CD Series 21, numbers 2-9, 11-12, 14-16 (SETS versions), and 16H (ASCII version), National Center for Health Statistics.

Births to Women Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care\*

Chart 5A

|                      | % of Births to Women Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care | % Higher Compared to the Top State |
|----------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 1 Rhode Island       | 1.5%  | --                                 |
| 1 Vermont            | 1.5%  | --                                 |
| 3 Maine              | 1.6%  | 6%                                 |
| 4 Connecticut        | 1.9%  | 26%                                |
| 5 West Virginia      | 2.1%  | 40%                                |
| 6 Iowa               | 2.2%  | 46%                                |
| 6 Massachusetts      | 2.2%  | 46%                                |
| 8 Minnesota          | 2.3%  | 53%                                |
| 8 Missouri           | 2.3%  | 53%                                |
| 10 Ohio              | 2.4%  | 60%                                |
| Median Top 10 States | 2.2%  | 46%                                |

Chart 5B

|                         | % of Births to Women Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care | % Higher Compared to the Top State |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 41 New Mexico           | 8.3%  | 453%                               |
| 40 Arizona              | 7.5%  | 400%                               |
| 39 Nevada               | 7.3%  | 386%                               |
| 37 Oklahoma             | 4.7%  | 213%                               |
| 37 New Jersey           | 4.7%  | 213%                               |
| 33 Utah                 | 4.5%  | 200%                               |
| 33 Texas                | 4.5%  | 200%                               |
| 33 Colorado             | 4.5%  | 200%                               |
| 33 Alaska               | 4.5%  | 200%                               |
| 32 Arkansas             | 4.4%  | 193%                               |
| Median Bottom 10 States | 4.6%  | 207%                               |

Women in the bottom 10 states are more than twice as likely to receive inadequate prenatal care as women in the top 10 states.

In New Mexico, women are more than 5 times as likely to receive inadequate prenatal care than women in Rhode Island or Vermont.

Source: Population Reference Bureau and Child Trends analysis of 1990-2003 Natality Data Set CD Series 21, numbers 2-9, 11-12, 14-16 (SETS versions), and 16H (ASCII version), National Center for Health Statistics. \*Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, New Hampshire, New York,

## Geography Matters – Child Well-Being in the States

*Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington do not provide comparable data.*

### Child Poverty

| Chart 6A             |                          |                                    | Chart 6B                |                          |                                    |
|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
|                      | % of Children in Poverty | % Higher Compared to the Top State |                         | % of Children in Poverty | % Higher Compared to the Top State |
| 1 Maryland           | 10%                      | --                                 | 50 Mississippi          | 30%                      | 200%                               |
| 1 New Hampshire      | 10%                      | --                                 | 49 Louisiana            | 28%                      | 180%                               |
| 3 Connecticut        | 11%                      | 10%                                | 48 New Mexico           | 26%                      | 160%                               |
| 3 Hawaii             | 11%                      | 10%                                | 47 West Virginia        | 25%                      | 150%                               |
| 5 Massachusetts      | 12%                      | 20%                                | 44 Texas                | 24%                      | 140%                               |
| 5 Minnesota          | 12%                      | 20%                                | 44 Oklahoma             | 24%                      | 140%                               |
| 5 New Jersey         | 12%                      | 20%                                | 44 Arkansas             | 24%                      | 130%                               |
| 5 Utah               | 12%                      | 20%                                | 41 Tennessee            | 23%                      | 130%                               |
| 5 Virginia           | 12%                      | 20%                                | 41 Kentucky             | 23%                      | 130%                               |
| 5 Wyoming            | 12%                      | 20%                                | 41 Alabama              | 23%                      | 130%                               |
| Median Top 10 States | 12%                      | 20%                                | Median Bottom 10 States | 24%                      | 140%                               |

**A child living in the bottom 10 states is twice as likely to live in poverty as a child in the top 10.**

**In Mississippi, the child poverty rate is 3 times greater than in Maryland or New Hampshire.**

*Source: US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2004 through 2006, % Living in Poverty 0-17.*

### Uninsured Children

| Chart 7A             |                         |                                    | Chart 7B                |                         |                                    |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
|                      | % of Uninsured Children | % Higher Compared to the Top State |                         | % of Uninsured Children | % Higher Compared to the Top State |
| 1 Rhode Island       | 4.2%                    | --                                 | 50 Texas                | 21.2%                   | 403%                               |
| 2 Michigan           | 4.7%                    | 12%                                | 48 Florida              | 18.9%                   | 348%                               |
| 3 Wisconsin          | 4.9%                    | 16%                                | 48 Mississippi          | 18.9%                   | 347%                               |
| 4 Ohio               | 5.6%                    | 34%                                | 47 Nevada               | 18.8%                   | 346%                               |
| 5 Connecticut        | 6.0%                    | 42%                                | 46 New Mexico           | 17.9%                   | 324%                               |
| 6 Iowa               | 6.2%                    | 47%                                | 45 Arizona              | 17.0%                   | 304%                               |
| 7 Maine              | 6.3%                    | 49%                                | 44 Louisiana            | 15.9%                   | 278%                               |
| 8 Hawaii             | 6.4%                    | 51%                                | 43 Utah                 | 15.0%                   | 255%                               |
| 8 Tennessee          | 6.4%                    | 52%                                | 41 Montana              | 14.6%                   | 247%                               |
| 10 Washington        | 6.9%                    | 64%                                | 41 Colorado             | 14.6%                   | 245%                               |
| Median Top 10 States | 6.1%                    | 47%                                | Median Bottom 10 States | 17.5%                   | 314%                               |

**Children in the bottom 10 states are 2.8 times as likely to be uninsured as children in the top 10.**

**In Texas, a child is 5 times as likely to be uninsured as a child in Rhode Island.**

*Source: US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2004 through 2006, % Uninsured Aged 0-17.*

Juvenile Incarceration

Chart 8A

|                      | Custody rate per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–upper age | % Higher Compared to the Top State |
|----------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 Vermont            | 72.4   | --                                 |
| 2 Hawaii             | 96.7   | 33%                                |
| 3 New Hampshire      | 150.0  | 107%                               |
| 4 Mississippi        | 152.1  | 110%                               |
| 5 Maine              | 153.1  | 111%                               |
| 6 North Carolina     | 168.8  | 133%                               |
| 7 Maryland           | 181.2  | 150%                               |
| 8 Kentucky           | 184.9  | 155%                               |
| 9 New Jersey         | 198.9  | 174%                               |
| 10 Connecticut       | 210.4  | 190%                               |
| Median Top 10 States | 161.0  | 133%                               |

Chart 8B

|                         | Custody rate per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–upper age | % Higher Compared to the Top State |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 50 Wyoming              | 606.1  | 737%                               |
| 49 South Dakota         | 564.4  | 679%                               |
| 48 Florida              | 451.8  | 523%                               |
| 47 Indiana              | 415.4  | 473%                               |
| 46 California           | 392.3  | 441%                               |
| 45 Louisiana            | 386.8  | 434%                               |
| 44 Alaska               | 369.5  | 410%                               |
| 43 Delaware             | 364.4  | 403%                               |
| 42 Nevada               | 361.8  | 399%                               |
| 41 Alabama              | 350.8  | 384%                               |
| Median Bottom 10 States | 389.6  | 438%                               |

Juveniles in the bottom 10 states are more than twice as likely to be incarcerated as juveniles in the top 10.

In Wyoming, the juvenile incarceration rate is more than 8 times Vermont’s.

Source: Snyder, Howard N., and Sickmund, Melissa. 2006. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Child Abuse Fatalities\*

Chart 9A

|                      | Number of Child Abuse Fatalities per 100K | % More Compared to the Top State |
|----------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 Delaware           | 0.0                                       | --                               |
| 1 Idaho              | 0.0                                       | --                               |
| 1 North Dakota       | 0.0                                       | --                               |
| 1 Vermont            | 0.0                                       | --                               |
| 5 Maine **           | 0.4                                       | --                               |
| 6 Massachusetts      | 0.6                                       | 53%                              |
| 7 Washington         | 0.6                                       | 70%                              |
| 8 New Hampshire      | 0.7                                       | 83%                              |
| 9 Hawaii             | 0.7                                       | 86%                              |
| 10 Kansas            | 0.9                                       | 147%                             |
| Median Top 10 States | 0.46                                      | 83%                              |

Chart 9B

|                         | Number of Child Abuse Fatalities per 100K | % More Compared to the Top State |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 48 Oklahoma             | 4.8                                       | 1233%                            |
| 47 West Virginia        | 4.2                                       | 1061%                            |
| 46 Georgia              | 3.2                                       | 794%                             |
| 45 Texas                | 3.1                                       | 764%                             |
| 44 Missouri             | 3.0                                       | 747%                             |
| 43 Ohio                 | 3.0                                       | 736%                             |
| 42 Kentucky             | 3.0                                       | 722%                             |
| 41 Florida              | 2.9                                       | 700%                             |
| 40 Nevada               | 2.7                                       | 661%                             |
| 39 Arkansas             | 2.5                                       | 600%                             |
| Median Bottom 10 States | 3.03                                      | 742%                             |

Children in the bottom 10 states are 6.7 times more likely to die from abuse and neglect as children in the top states.

In Oklahoma, children are 13 times more likely to die from abuse or neglect as those in Maine.

Source: US Department of Health and Human Service, "Child Maltreatment 2005". \*Michigan and North Carolina do not provide comparable data. \*\*Since it is not mathematically possible to compare percentages to zero, the comparison to the top state is with Maine since it is the

state with the lowest rate of child abuse fatalities among those state which experience at least one fatality.

Child Welfare Expenditures

| Chart 10A            |                                       |   | Chart 10B               |                                       |   |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
|                      | Per Capita Child Welfare Expenditures | % of Expenditures Compared to the Top State |                         | Per Capita Child Welfare Expenditures | % of Expenditures Compared to the Top State |
| 1 Rhode Island       | \$180.32                              | --  | 50 South Carolina       | \$14.74                               | 8%  |
| 2 Alaska             | \$129.97                              | 72%   | 49 Indiana              | \$24.82                               | 13%   |
| 3 Vermont            | \$125.90                              | 69%   | 48 Mississippi          | \$28.44                               | 15%   |
| 4 Pennsylvania       | \$116.14                              | 64%   | 47 Virginia             | \$30.61                               | 17%   |
| 5 Iowa               | \$109.97                              | 61%   | 46 North Carolina       | \$30.81                               | 17%   |
| 6 New York           | \$107.15                              | 59%   | 45 Maine                | \$32.50                               | 18%   |
| 7 Massachusetts      | \$102.36                              | 56%   | 44 Nevada               | \$33.99                               | 18%   |
| 8 Connecticut        | \$99.84                               | 55%   | 43 Arkansas             | \$35.93                               | 19%   |
| 9 Illinois           | \$97.79                               | 54%   | 42 Texas                | \$36.68                               | 20%   |
| 10 Nebraska          | \$95.03                               | 52%   | 41 Idaho                | \$42.51                               | 23%   |
| Median Top 10 States | \$108.56                              | 59%   | Median Bottom 10 States | \$31.66                               | 18%   |

The top 10 states fund programs meant to treat or prevent child abuse and neglect at 3 times the level per capita than the bottom 10 states.

Rhode Island funds its child welfare program at 12 times the level per capita as South Carolina.

Source: Child Welfare League of America (2004).

What Explains the Vast Differences in Child Well-being Among the States?

There is no one reason but rather some combination of these elements:

- **Poverty** – The bottom states generally have much higher poverty rates – highly correlated with poor outcomes – than the top states.
- **Race** – The bottom states generally have much higher proportions of minority children – who are much more likely to live in poverty.
- **Education** – The bottom states generally have much lower levels of educational attainment, which is highly correlated with poor outcomes.
- **Political Culture** – The bottom states generally have a narrower view of the role of government in addressing social issues. Are states unable to invest in children because they are too poor? Or are they poor because they fail to invest?
- **Taxes** – The bottom states generally tax themselves at much lower rates, leaving themselves without the revenue needed to make adequate investments in children. As seen in the 50-state comparison table on page 10, there is a close correlation between state tax burdens and child well-being.
- **Weak Federal Policy** – Federal initiatives to address the well-documented needs of children across the country—health care, child abuse, poverty—have been scant. Historically, federal initiatives in social programs have improved the lives of millions of children.

- **Declining Federal Investments** – Federal investments in children, historically structured in a way meant to level differences between states, have declined sharply as a percentage of the federal budget in recent years—and they are projected to decline more sharply in the decade ahead.

## What Will It Take to Close the Child Well-Being Gap among States?

Closing the disparities in child well-being among the states is achievable. Targeted investment strategies over a decade and longer will be required, strategies whose chances of success are greater if they are jointly arrived at between state and federal lawmakers. But as necessary as joint partnership is, it cannot rely solely on voluntary cooperation—the lives of too many children are at stake. Global competitiveness, erasing historical inequalities, and better care for an aging population will be the principal benefits from closing the gap.

This begs important questions: Are Maine children, for example, Maine children first? Or are they American children first? Does every child in the U.S. deserve an equal opportunity to succeed? Is there a floor below which no American child should fall which trumps an accident of geography—i.e., living in a state with poor outcomes for its most vulnerable children? Or does it remain politically acceptable to permit vast differences in life chances for children as evidenced by the numbers in this brief?

## Making Child Well-being a Priority

Abundant research confirms that millions of American children are in trouble—no medical insurance, living in poverty, alone after school, abused or neglected, a parent in prison, no early learning opportunity. As this brief shows, these problems are much worse in some states than others. These disparities deserve greater political and media attention. To this end, we propose:

- Congressional hearings to consider the arguments in this brief. If Congress determines them to be valid, they should develop a strategy for addressing them.
- Policy positions on children’s issues should be put forward by the presidential candidates.
- The new administration in 2009, led by the Department of Health and Human Services, should convene a national conference to examine the disparities in child well-being among the states and make recommendations for closing this gap to the new president.
- The national associations that represent state and local governments—mayors, governors, legislatures, counties—should place differences in child well-being on their policy agendas for review and action.
- The private sector--corporations, professional associations, and foundations--should consider the issue for review and action.
- Scholars and the press should conduct a deeper review of the issue.

## What’s Being Debated about Children in Washington DC?

In February, the Bush Administration presented to Congress a budget which makes significant cutbacks in the federal government’s investments in children and families. Overall, the budget makes cuts totaling \$2.8 billion in discretionary programs that benefit children. If enacted, children’s programs would suffer

cuts in almost every area. For more information about these cuts, go to <http://www.everychildmatters.org>.

## Questions to Ask Candidates for Office

### Health Care for Children

Over 8 million children have no health insurance in the United States. Uninsured children are four times as likely to delay medical care and twice as likely to go without eyeglasses or medicines. Some will lose their hearing because a preventable infection was not treated. Many will not be immunized against easily preventable communicable disease. Simple health problems will become major ones.

***How do you propose to ensure that children grow up healthy and have access to comprehensive health care?***

### Child Abuse Prevention

Nearly 3 million children nationwide each year are reported abused and neglected. The problem claims the lives of thousands, ruins the lives of millions, and costs taxpayers more than \$20 billion annually for child protection and foster care alone. Child abuse also causes another hundred billion to be spent on related issues of crime, prisons, mental health, special education, medical care, and drug abuse.

***What are your plans to keep all children safe from violence in their homes, schools, and communities?***

### Afterschool Programs

Over one-fourth of America's children are left alone every day after school. On school days, the hours from 3-6 PM are peak hours for kids to smoke, drink, do drugs, and have sex, innocent kids to become crime victims, 16 and 17 year olds to be in a car crash, and teens to commit crimes.

***What is your position on how to keep children safe and supervised in the late afternoon and early evening hours?***

### Pre Kindergarten Education

Millions of children lack access to early learning opportunities. Nearly 50 percent of all kindergarten teachers report that at least half of their students come to school with problems that hinder their success.

***What is your position on early learning and care, including preparing children for kindergarten?***

### Child Poverty

Almost 13 million American children live in poverty. Poverty places children at higher risk for a wide range of problems, including factors that may impair brain development and affect social and emotional development.

***What would you do to help families with children become economically self-sufficient and able to provide for their family's needs?***

### Children with Parents in Prison

Millions of children across the country have a parent in prison. These children are at increased risk for poor academic achievement, drug abuse, early pregnancy, juvenile delinquency – and imprisonment.

***How would you address the special needs of these children?***

Rankings for All 50 States on 10 Child Well-Being Indicators

|                | Infant Mortality | Child Death 1-14 | Teen Deaths 15-19 | Births to Teen Mothers | Late/No Prenatal Care | Child Poverty | Uninsured Children | Juvenile Incarceration | Child Abuse Deaths | Child Welfare Expenditures | Total Tax Burden* | Overall Rank** |                |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Alabama        | 45               | 41               | 47                | 40                     | 25                    | 41            | 15                 | 41                     | 35                 | 26                         | 49                | 40             | Alabama        |
| Alaska         | 25               | 49               | 50                | 25                     | 33                    | 16            | 31                 | 44                     | 23                 | 2                          | 48                | 31             | Alaska         |
| Arizona        | 25               | 20               | 38                | 46                     | 40                    | 36            | 45                 | 26                     | 17                 | 32                         | 25                | 41             | Arizona        |
| Arkansas       | 40               | 47               | 42                | 46                     | 32                    | 44            | 23                 | 13                     | 39                 | 43                         | 32                | 44             | Arkansas       |
| California     | 6                | 9                | 16                | 25                     | 11                    | 30            | 35                 | 46                     | 22                 | 12                         | 8                 | 18             | California     |
| Colorado       | 20               | 9                | 33                | 33                     | 33                    | 21            | 41                 | 38                     | 25                 | 15                         | 23                | 27             | Colorado       |
| Connecticut    | 9                | 4                | 2                 | 4                      | 4                     | 3             | 5                  | 10                     | 13                 | 8                          | 1                 | 3              | Connecticut    |
| Delaware       | 43               | 44               | 31                | 33                     | 24                    | 21            | 33                 | 43                     | 1                  | 28                         | 26                | 30             | Delaware       |
| Florida        | 28               | 27               | 25                | 30                     | NA                    | 24            | 48                 | 48                     | 41                 | 35                         | 12                | 39             | Florida        |
| Georgia        | 42               | 29               | 28                | 43                     | 28                    | 36            | 35                 | 24                     | 46                 | 38                         | 28                | 38             | Georgia        |
| Hawaii         | 15               | 20               | 1                 | 20                     | 25                    | 3             | 8                  | 2                      | 9                  | 21                         | 16                | 6              | Hawaii         |
| Idaho          | 19               | 36               | 28                | 25                     | NA                    | 16            | 37                 | 27                     | 1                  | 41                         | 42                | 25             | Idaho          |
| Illinois       | 31               | 14               | 20                | 28                     | 13                    | 24            | 25                 | 11                     | 32                 | 9                          | 14                | 17             | Illinois       |
| Indiana        | 37               | 32               | 28                | 33                     | 28                    | 30            | 16                 | 47                     | 27                 | 49                         | 30                | 35             | Indiana        |
| Iowa           | 5                | 20               | 3                 | 13                     | 6                     | 13            | 6                  | 30                     | 15                 | 5                          | 33                | 7              | Iowa           |
| Kansas         | 29               | 36               | 13                | 29                     | 11                    | 21            | 12                 | 37                     | 10                 | 16                         | 27                | 20             | Kansas         |
| Kentucky       | 27               | 32               | 44                | 37                     | NA                    | 41            | 26                 | 8                      | 42                 | 13                         | 34                | 33             | Kentucky       |
| Louisiana      | 50               | 47               | 45                | 44                     | 16                    | 49            | 44                 | 45                     | 28                 | 39                         | 44                | 50             | Louisiana      |
| Maine          | 15               | 27               | 18                | 4                      | 3                     | 30            | 7                  | 5                      | 5                  | 45                         | 10                | 10             | Maine          |
| Maryland       | 41               | 20               | 25                | 13                     | 27                    | 1             | 27                 | 7                      | 30                 | 19                         | 15                | 19             | Maryland       |
| Massachusetts  | 4                | 2                | 4                 | 3                      | 6                     | 5             | 11                 | 12                     | 6                  | 7                          | 7                 | 2              | Massachusetts  |
| Michigan       | 34               | 14               | 22                | 17                     | 20                    | 30            | 2                  | 18                     | NA                 | 18                         | 21                | 16             | Michigan       |
| Minnesota      | 3                | 12               | 10                | 7                      | 8                     | 5             | 18                 | 20                     | 14                 | 29                         | 11                | 8              | Minnesota      |
| Mississippi    | 49               | 45               | 48                | 49                     | 13                    | 50            | 48                 | 4                      | 29                 | 48                         | 47                | 49             | Mississippi    |
| Missouri       | 31               | 36               | 36                | 31                     | 8                     | 34            | 22                 | 17                     | 44                 | 11                         | 39                | 28             | Missouri       |
| Montana        | 1                | 45               | 49                | 20                     | 16                    | 24            | 41                 | 16                     | 11                 | 36                         | 39                | 29             | Montana        |
| Nebraska       | 24               | 34               | 25                | 20                     | 22                    | 13            | 28                 | 36                     | 17                 | 10                         | 22                | 23             | Nebraska       |
| Nevada         | 23               | 20               | 35                | 39                     | 39                    | 13            | 47                 | 42                     | 40                 | 44                         | 4                 | 43             | Nevada         |
| New Hampshire  | 12               | 6                | 4                 | 1                      | NA                    | 1             | 12                 | 3                      | 8                  | 27                         | 29                | 5              | New Hampshire  |
| New Jersey     | 12               | 4                | 7                 | 4                      | 37                    | 5             | 39                 | 9                      | 17                 | 30                         | 3                 | 13             | New Jersey     |
| New Mexico     | 20               | 41               | 40                | 48                     | 41                    | 48            | 46                 | 19                     | 37                 | 37                         | 45                | 48             | New Mexico     |
| New York       | 18               | 6                | 6                 | 7                      | NA                    | 36            | 20                 | 23                     | 24                 | 6                          | 2                 | 12             | New York       |
| North Carolina | 46               | 20               | 34                | 37                     | 16                    | 36            | 40                 | 6                      | NA                 | 46                         | 24                | 34             | North Carolina |
| North Dakota   | 12               | 36               | 19                | 7                      | 15                    | 11            | 30                 | 40                     | 1                  | 24                         | 37                | 14             | North Dakota   |
| Ohio           | 36               | 18               | 21                | 23                     | 10                    | 34            | 4                  | 33                     | 43                 | 40                         | 18                | 26             | Ohio           |
| Oklahoma       | 37               | 40               | 40                | 44                     | 37                    | 44            | 34                 | 21                     | 48                 | 31                         | 50                | 47             | Oklahoma       |
| Oregon         | 9                | 14               | 11                | 15                     | 31                    | 24            | 38                 | 35                     | 33                 | 14                         | 31                | 22             | Oregon         |
| Pennsylvania   | 29               | 14               | 22                | 10                     | NA                    | 24            | 12                 | 32                     | 20                 | 4                          | 20                | 15             | Pennsylvania   |
| Rhode Island   | 8                | 1                | 12                | 15                     | 1                     | 16            | 1                  | 29                     | 31                 | 1                          | 6                 | 4              | Rhode Island   |
| South Carolina | 48               | 34               | 39                | 40                     | NA                    | 40            | 32                 | 39                     | 36                 | 50                         | 35                | 45             | South Carolina |
| South Dakota   | 39               | 50               | 36                | 23                     | 28                    | 24            | 23                 | 49                     | 33                 | 25                         | 43                | 42             | South Dakota   |
| Tennessee      | 43               | 29               | 45                | 40                     | NA                    | 41            | 8                  | 14                     | 37                 | 17                         | 46                | 36             | Tennessee      |
| Texas          | 20               | 29               | 24                | 50                     | 33                    | 44            | 50                 | 34                     | 45                 | 42                         | 41                | 46             | Texas          |
| Utah           | 6                | 20               | 8                 | 17                     | 33                    | 5             | 43                 | 31                     | 16                 | 34                         | 36                | 21             | Utah           |
| Vermont        | 1                | 2                | 8                 | 2                      | 1                     | 11            | 18                 | 1                      | 1                  | 3                          | 5                 | 1              | Vermont        |
| Virginia       | 31               | 12               | 16                | 19                     | 23                    | 5             | 28                 | 28                     | 20                 | 47                         | 17                | 24             | Virginia       |
| Washington     | 9                | 6                | 13                | 12                     | NA                    | 16            | 10                 | 15                     | 7                  | 23                         | 9                 | 9              | Washington     |
| West Virginia  | 34               | 41               | 43                | 33                     | 5                     | 47            | 21                 | 22                     | 47                 | 20                         | 40                | 37             | West Virginia  |
| Wisconsin      | 17               | 9                | 13                | 10                     | 16                    | 16            | 3                  | 25                     | 12                 | 22                         | 13                | 11             | Wisconsin      |
| Wyoming        | 46               | 18               | 31                | 31                     | 21                    | 5             | 17                 | 50                     | 26                 | 33                         | 19                | 32             | Wyoming        |

\* The overall tax burden data comes from The Tax Foundation and reflects the overall federal, state, and local tax burden.

\*\* Please see <http://www.everychildmatters.org> for a full explanation on how the overall rankings were calculated.

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