



kids

count

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

December 21, 1999

Ms. Ruby Shamir
Office of Communications
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear Ruby:

I thought you would be interested in the enclosed KIDS COUNT Special Report, published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. *The Right Start: Conditions of Babies and Their Families in America's Largest Cities*, takes a close look at the circumstances into which babies are born in the nation's major urban centers.

To break the cycle of disadvantage and injustice, we need multi-dimensional approaches to change family circumstances that are family-focused, comprehensive, long term, and engage entire communities.

I hope you will use this report as you examine policies and practices that have an impact on children and their families.

Best Regards,

Anthony T. Podesta



A Project of

The Annie E. Casey

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news

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
December 16, 1999, 12:01 a.m.

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Newborns in America's Biggest Cities Face Longer Odds in Life than Most U.S. Kids

WASHINGTON – Babies born in the nation's top 50 cities are far more likely to start life at a substantial disadvantage relative to other infants, according to a new study of birth certificate data for more than 750,000 babies born in large cities in 1997. The report is the first comprehensive study of large cities based on data drawn from birth certificates.

The study, a KIDS COUNT Special Report focused on the nation's largest cities, underscores the extent to which many urban communities remain isolated from the economic and social resurgence experienced over the past decade.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's *The Right Start: Conditions of Babies and Their Families in America's Largest Cities* found urban newborns are more likely to be born to unmarried women, to women with less than 12 years of education, and to women who get late or no prenatal care – risk factors that can have lifelong implications

The report also ranks cities on measures such as mothers who smoke during pregnancy and pre-term births, providing potential clues to how communities can give children a better start in life.

"We believe that children do best when their families do well, and that families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods," said Douglas W. Nelson, president of the Casey Foundation. "This study shows clearly what happens when families don't get the kind of support they need. But because of the differences between cities, it may also give us more information on how to change this picture."

(more)



Among the major findings:

- In the average large city, 43 percent of total births occurred to unmarried women, compared to a national average of 32.4 percent. In the cities, that percentage ranged from a high of 71.6 percent in Detroit to a low of 24.5 percent in Honolulu.
- In the average large city, 14.9 percent of all births were to women under 20, compared to 12.7 nationally. The rate ranged from a high in Baltimore of 22.8 percent to a low in Seattle of 6.3 percent.
- In the average large city, 27.7 percent of births were to women with less than 12 years of education, compared to 22.1 percent nationwide. In the cities, the rate was highest in Los Angeles, at 47.1 percent, and lowest in Honolulu, at 9.5 percent.

The report also found some positive national changes between 1990 and 1997. Among the greatest changes:

- The percent of total births to mothers who smoked during pregnancy dropped from 18.4 percent in 1990 to 13.2 percent in 1997.
- The percent of total births to mothers receiving late or no prenatal care dropped from 6.1 percent in 1990 to 3.9 percent in 1997.

The report ranks the 50 largest cities using eight individual indicators, and two combined indexes, for a total of 10 measurements. An Appendix provides the same measures for every state. Data are also provided for five additional cities that are part of the Casey Foundation's 22-city *Making Connections* initiative, even though they are not among the 50 largest. This initiative seeks to stimulate and support local networks of residents, civic groups, political leaders, grassroots groups, government, and faith-based organizations to transform tough neighborhoods into family-supportive environments.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children and families in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother.

The Casey Foundation also publishes the annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* that provides a state-by-state assessment of children's well-being.

Complete data from *The Right Start* is available on the Foundation's Website at www.aecf.org.

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