

# PREFACE

Every two years Citizens' Committee for Children of New York publishes *Keeping Track of New York City's Children* to document how nearly two million New York City children are faring.

*Keeping Track* identifies the many advantages and challenges children face growing up in New York City, illustrating where progress is being made as well as where children's prospects remain poor.

When we released the last edition of *Keeping Track*, the data told the story of a city that had begun to regain its footing from the massive emotional, economic and social impacts of the fallout from 9/11. The economy was only beginning to recover, with jobs and tax revenues increasing and large-scale urban development projects in the planning stages. Improvements in child well-being were set in motion alongside that growth.

With this new edition of *Keeping Track*, the data show an economy stronger in 2006 than in previous years, but also beginning to soften. And while trends in household income and unemployment show a vibrant city on the whole, economic improvements are beginning to level off. In turn, improvements in child well-being, which have been on a several year upswing, are also beginning to plateau.

New York City is undoubtedly a better place for children to grow up than it has been in previous years. The 2006 data in *Keeping Track* shows the lowest unemployment since 1990, median household income remaining steady, and public assistance caseloads continuing to decline. More children are enrolled in public health insurance, academic achievement is improving across the board for students of every race and ethnic group, and greater numbers of children are enrolled in Universal PreKindergarten and Out-of-School Time services. Fewer teens are sexually active, teen births are declining, and high school graduation rates are improving.

Yet, despite these positive trends, the data in *Keeping Track* also call attention to concentrated poverty, a dearth of affordable housing, greater numbers of households spending more than half their income on rent, increased family homelessness, and significant child safety concerns with an increase in indicated reports of abuse and neglect.

As a softening economy can negatively impact the availability of public services and social supports, economic downturns tend to have a disproportionate, harmful impact on children's well-being. This edition of *Keeping Track* illustrates the need to be ever conscious of the innumerable forces impacting a child's life and to continually be proactive about implementing strong supports and quality programs for children and their families. The data in *Keeping Track* identifies where more work is needed to improve outcomes for children in New York City, especially the children who are poor, African-American or Latino, and who despite much progress, continue to lag behind their peers.

Several years ago, CCC embarked on a multi-year campaign – *Securing Every Child's Birthright (SECB)* – to promote economic, housing, and developmental security for all New York City children. By championing large-scale initiatives as the best way to solve chronic problems affecting children, the SECB campaign called upon policymakers to go beyond short-term fixes and instead create structural reforms designed to have long lasting positive impacts. While New York City has made progress toward these goals - with the establishment of a city Earned Income Tax Credit, the nation's first local Child Care Tax Credit, expansion of supports for newborns and early educational opportunities for young children, as well as increased attention paid to improving access to healthy affordable food - there is much more to accomplish.

*Keeping Track* creates a record of fact that provides a road map for the future – reflecting where New York City is as a society, emphasizing the accomplishments made in caring for and supporting children and identifying where too little progress has been made and where children continue to fall behind.

CCC hopes that you will find the data useful in understanding children in your community and in New York City as a whole. We ask New Yorkers – citizens, elected and appointed officials, policy makers, service providers, academics, and foundations – to use the data in *Keeping Track* to redouble efforts towards making lasting improvements in the lives of all New York City children to ensure that every child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

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