

Every Number Tells a Story

"Overview Indicators — statistical markers — are used in many areas of life to track patterns and trends over time. For example, indicators are used in the economic realm to monitor the ups and downs of the economy, in the public health field to track patterns of disease, and by the nation's school systems to track student achievement. And while most baseball fans might not be aware of it, they're using indicators when they cite 'stats' on batting averages to debate the merits of one ballplayer over another."

— Child Trends, "The Uses (and Misuses) of Social Indicators: Implications for Public Policy"

Data are more than numbers. They are windows into the circumstances that surround and shape lives. They tell tales — not always happy, but hard to dismiss. For Pennsylvania's children, data reveal a world of unmet needs and smothered potential. Credible research shows that children living in detrimental circumstances risk consequences that include academic failure, juvenile delinquency, and lifetime poverty. Data reveal who those children are and where they live, so policymakers, parents, and concerned citizens can avert their failure and promote success.

This users' guide to data on children:

- Suggests practical uses for data.
- Defines the basic data sources used in policymaking, communications, and community planning, such as the U.S. Census and state agencies.
- Describes new data sources from Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children and the Annie E. Casey Foundation,

including collations of data by Pennsylvania legislative district.

- Lists online data sites by topic, for statistics on child well-being as seen in specific areas, including family economics, living circumstances, education, and health.

Part I: Practical Uses for Data

Finding the right data can be hard (hence, this users' guide), but putting it to work can be easy:

- **Build a case for policy change:** In Pennsylvania, one child in seven lives in poverty. One child in 12 is born to a teen mother. One in 12 does not have health insurance. Singly or in groups, data indicators show the need for policy changes to soften the harsh consequences of risk.
- **Pinpoint the need:** Policymakers, community leaders, and parents all have to make choices for children's well-being based on limited resources.

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Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children is a strong, effective, and trusted voice to improve the health, education, and well-being of the Commonwealth's children. Joan L. Benso, President and CEO.

Part I: Practical Uses for Data

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Data spotlight children in need, shining on the policy places where resources can be put to the best use for improved child outcomes.

- **Rally support:** Different audiences have different needs. Their priorities reflect the issues closest to them. Good data, refined to specific geographic or demographic boundaries, can build support among critical audiences needed to win passage of policies for child well-being. For targeted Pennsylvania policymaking, data on

children is now available by legislative district — a first, putting the power of numbers at the disposal of people who develop and vote on vital issues.

- **Write grants and proposals:** Government offices and foundations that determine policy and program directions want to know their dollars will make a difference. Good data can demonstrate the need for resources to improve outcomes and reverse course for children who could otherwise be slated for failure.

Part II: Know the Source

Data assume many forms. Collecting agencies and methods differ, even to the point of competing conclusions. Relying on recognized sources, including this partial but not exhaustive list, can strengthen the story that numbers tell.

Federal sources

U.S. Census of Population and Housing, www.census.gov: The census is conducted every 10 years and collects demographic and housing-related information. Census data is available at state, county, city, municipality, census tract, block, block group, and other levels. American Fact Finder, <http://factfinder.census.gov>, provides a quick and easy user interface to access data.

Current Population Survey (CPS), www.bls.census.gov/cps: The CPS is a national survey that collects labor force characteristic data from about 50,000 U.S. households. Results can provide insights into employment, hours of work, occupation and industry types, income, health and health coverage, and employee benefits.

Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe/overview.html: SAIPE is the U.S. Census Bureau's program for post-decennial census updates of selected income and poverty statistics. Estimates are created for states, counties, and school districts. Findings guide the administration of federal programs and allocation of federal funds to local jurisdictions.

State sources

Pennsylvania Department of Education, www.pde.state.pa.us: The state Department of Education collects information about public and private schools in Pennsylvania. Details include enrollments, graduations, plans after graduation, test scores, resources available, spending, and more. Data are provided by school building, school district, and county.

Pennsylvania Department of Health, www.health.state.pa.us: The Health Department provides information about the health status of babies and mothers, diseases, and deaths. Data are available for the state, counties, and certain municipalities.

Pennsylvania Department of Insurance, www.ins.state.pa.us: The Insurance Department collects and disseminates state- and county-level information about the Children's Health Insurance Program, AdultBasic, and other insurance-related issues.

Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, www.dpw.state.pa.us: DPW provides state- and county-level information about child abuse and Medicaid programs.

Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, www.dli.state.pa.us: L&I provides state- and county-level information about unemployment, workers' compensation, and the workforce, plus analysis.

Part III: The First Places to Look

Many online options offer narrowly defined data on children. But a few rich sources yield comprehensive looks at the lives of Pennsylvania kids.

- Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children's Web site links to U.S. Census profiles by state House and Senate districts, at www.papartnerships.org/kc/. Visitors to the legislative-district profiles, developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, can find district-specific numbers on children by age and sex, race, Hispanic origin, living arrangements, income and poverty, employment, education, language, and disability.
- County-level, basic census findings and summaries of their implications for child well-being are available in *State of the Child Profiles*, www.papartnerships.org/kc/. The county-level fact sheets include demographics, racial and ethnic diversity, and English proficiency; child poverty; family employment; and living arrangements and housing.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation's CLIKS system offers a selected set of county-level child well-being indicators for states and counties,

www.aecf.org/cgi-bin/cliiks.cgi. This site provides information on babies' conditions at birth, basic demographics, economics, and poverty.

- The Child Trends DataBank, www.childtrendsdatabank.org, links to extensive sources, including state-level data, on health; social and emotional development; income, assets, and work; education and skills; demographics; and family and community.

The redesigned Web site of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children also offers a full range of information on child well-being and policy development. The site houses reports, briefings, data sources, links, policy news, and other tools to help Pennsylvanians effectively assess and address children's needs.

Coming in June 2004: The State of the Child in Pennsylvania: A 2004 Guide to Child Well-Being in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children's comprehensive guide to child health, education, and family circumstances gathers top indicators in one easy-to-use resource. Watch for ordering information at www.papartnerships.org.

Part IV: Key Data Sources by Topic

Child care/early education

- **Education Resource Information Clearinghouse**, www.eric.ed.gov. From the "ERIC Database Search" drop-down menu, select "ERIC Search Engine" and "Topics Organized Alphabetically."
- **National Child Care Information Center**, www.nccic.org. Select "Searchable Database" for state-based information on federal child care and TANF fund distribution.

Economic data, population, and poverty

- **U.S. Census Bureau home page**, www.census.gov. Use the alphabetical index to search for topics.
- **American FactFinder**, www.factfinder.census.gov. The Census Bureau's searchable site for census data. To find children's

data, select "People," and in Geography, type "Pennsylvania" and/or the desired county.

- **Census poverty estimates**, www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe.html. For county poverty, select "State and County Estimates," then select "Tables for States and Counties by Income Year and Statistic." From the drop-downs, select year, state, and desired population (for instance, "people under age 18 in poverty" yields child poverty).
- **County Business Patterns**, www.census.gov/epcd/cbp/view/cbpview.html. County Business Patterns provides data on economic activity of small areas, analyzing changes over time. Business and government use the data for

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Part IV: Key Data Sources by Topic

Economic data, population, and poverty, continued from page three

planning efforts. For children, economic data reveal the depth of supports and resources available to meet their needs.

- **Current Population Survey, www.bls.census.gov/cps.** CPS also sponsors Ferret, its site for finding specifics, <http://ferret.bls.census.gov>. Find CPS poverty status by state and age at http://ferret.bls.census.gov/macro/032003/pov/new46_001.htm.
- **State Median Incomes, www.census.gov/hhes/www/income.html.** Find Census Bureau state median incomes by following "Income in the United States, 2002" to "Median Household Income by State."

Education

- **Pennsylvania Department of Education, www.pde.state.pa.us.** From the home page, follow the "Statistical Reports" link to find three data selections: K-12 education, higher and adult education, and secondary career and technical education. The K-12 section details basic education enrollment, graduation rates, personnel, students receiving TANF, students from low-income families, and other school and student indicators.
- **Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), www.eric.ed.gov.** ERIC is the national information system funded by the U.S. Department of Education. To search ERIC's entire catalog of resources for education-related topics, from the "ERIC Database Search" drop-down menu, select "ERIC Search Engine" and "Topics Organized Alphabetically." (Note that www.eric.ed.gov has replaced the old www.askeric.gov and other ERIC sites).
- **National Center for Education Statistics, www.nces.ed.gov.** NCES is a federal education data collection and analysis agency. Follow "ED Stats at a Glance" to a list of NCES statistical compendiums. Selecting "Subject Area Search" offers an alphabeti-

cal menu to search available topics.

Selecting "The Condition of Education, 2000-2003" goes to a compilation of annual reports of educational indicators, www.nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/.

Family employment/family support

- **Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, www.dli.state.pa.us.** To access information on unemployment and workers' compensation, select "Statistics." Selecting "Workforce Information and Analysis" accesses the Current Local Economic Picture, for county- and region-specific employment and wage data. Select "Pennsylvania Labor Market Information Database System" for labor force, income, area profiles, and other employment-related data.
- **American FactFinder, www.factfinder.census.gov.** FactFinder is the Census Bureau's searchable site for census data. To find income and employment data, select "People," and in Geography, type "Pennsylvania" and/or the desired county.
- **2003 KIDS COUNT Data Book, www.aecf.org/kidscount/databook/.** The Annie E. Casey Foundation's annual *Data Book* includes state data on parental and teen employment, plus state rankings.

Health

- **Pennsylvania Department of Health, www.health.state.pa.us.** Select "Health Statistics & Vital Statistics" for county health profiles, maternal and child health, and — for a fun read — popular first names given to newborn boys and girls.
- **Pennsylvania Department of Insurance, www.ins.state.pa.us.** Follow the CHIP icon for Children's Health Insurance Program enrollment by county.
- **Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, www.dpw.state.pa.us.** Use the OMAP site map to find Medical Assistance statistics.

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Part IV: Key Data Sources by Topic

Health, continued from page four

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics** www.cdc.gov/nchs. "FASTATS A to Z" leads to a state click-on map and alphabetical list of conditions for which data is available.
- **Kaiser Family Foundation, www.kff.org**. Select "State Health Facts" for state comparisons on demographics and the economy, health status, health coverage and uninsured, Medicaid and SCHIP, Medicare, health costs and budgets, managed care and insurance, providers and service use, minority health, women's health, and HIV/AIDS. Go to the state health pages directly through www.statehealthfacts.kff.org/.
- **2003 KIDS COUNT Data Book, www.aecf.org/kidscount/databook/**. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's annual *Data Book* includes state data on low birth weight, infant mortality, and child deaths.

Legislative-level data

- **Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, www.papartnerships.org/kc/**. Follow "Senate Districts" and "House Districts" for legislative-level data on children by age and sex, race, Hispanic origin, living arrangements, income and poverty, employment, education, language, and disability.

Living arrangements and housing

- **U.S. Census Bureau home page, www.census.gov**. Use the alphabetical index to search for topics.

- **American FactFinder, www.factfinder.census.gov**. FactFinder is the Census Bureau's searchable site. To find housing, select "Housing," and in Geography, type "Pennsylvania" and/or the desired county. For living arrangements, such as single mothers, follow "People" to "Relationships."

School violence

- **Pennsylvania Department of Education, www.safeschools.state.pa.us/**. This page offers PDE reports on "Violence and Weapons Possession in Pennsylvania Schools." Select "Historic Reports" for more recent data by districts and school buildings.
- **National Center for Education Statistics, www.nces.ed.gov**. Select "Electronic Catalog" for NCES' school violence data reports.

Youth development/after-school

Little data is available on after-school programs, but two sites profile the benefits and program models:

- **Pennsylvania Department of Education, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, www.pde.state.pa.us/21stccclc**.
- **Education Resource Information Clearinghouse, www.eric.ed.gov**. From the "ERIC Database Search" drop-down menu, select "ERIC Search Engine" and "Topics Organized Alphabetically."

Questions?

For all data questions on children in Pennsylvania, contact Diane Ollivier, KIDS COUNT Director at Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 717-236-5680, ext. 114; dollivier@papartnerships.org.

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