

# Indicator Selection Process

Action for Children North Carolina compiles, analyzes, and disseminates accurate, up-to-date statistical data on children and youth. In partnership with the researchers, field experts and database administrators that constitute its Data Advisory Council, Action for Children North Carolina reviews existing data sources to identify meaningful indicators of child well-being and relies on data collection through surveys, administrative datasets and other data collection methods.

An indicator is a measure of a condition and can point to progress toward the achievement of a desired result. Many indicators of child well-being may be found repeated in analyses at the national and state levels and are supported by extensive research showing that they have long-term impacts on children's well-being. For example, lack of health insurance coverage for children has been linked to lower use of preventive care and higher risk of long-term health problems.

Compared to past years, this *2009 North Carolina Children's Index* presents fewer indicators in the print publication and provides a complete listing of indicators over time online.

Action for Children follows the Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT criteria in the selection and presentation of child well-being indicators. The indicator:

- Must be from a reliable source;
- Must be available and consistent over time;
- Should reflect a salient outcome or measure of child well-being;
- Must be easily understandable to the public; and
- Should be a measure that will continue to be produced in the near future.

There are limitations to the data presented here that should be recognized. Specifically, as noted, certain indicators are not available as population measures but rather rely on survey data. In some areas, data were not available to measure a particular aspect of child well-being and ongoing work will seek to identify better measures to fill these gaps. Finally, while every effort has been made to disaggregate the data by county and by racial or ethnic group, limitations presented by data collection methods have not allowed all indicators presented here to be available in this form.

## Additional Data

The indicators in this publication offer the reader a broad understanding of the state of North Carolina's children and youth. For readers that would like to learn more in-depth about any or all of these issue areas, Action for Children North Carolina recommends our resource list for more information on indicators, studies, and the hard work of other local organizations invested in the well-being of children. We encourage you to visit our website ([www.ncchild.org](http://www.ncchild.org)) to access a new online tool, KIDS COUNT Data Center, for more indicators that are available at both the state and county levels.



# Indicator Definitions, Notes and Sources

## Statistical Significance

Statistical significance is the probability that two numbers, such as percentages or mean scores, are truly different from each other. If a result is statistically significant then it is likely that the difference observed is real versus due to chance. Although percent change calculations are included in the tables, these changes have not been tested for statistical significance. Therefore it cannot be said with certainty whether these changes are statistically meaningful. When the sample size is large, such as public health or education data, it is likely that differences are statistically significant. When sample sizes are smaller, such as for many of the adolescent health or county indicators, it is less likely that differences are real rather than due to chance.

## Demographics

### Population data

SOURCE: Population Reference Bureau, Analysis of 2007 American Community Survey PUMS data and 2003 American Community Survey PUMS data.

### Child Race and Ethnicity data

SOURCE: Population Reference Bureau, Analysis of 2007 American Community Survey PUMS data and 2003 American Community Survey PUMS data.

## Health

**Children who lack health insurance coverage** are the percentage of children under age 18 in North Carolina who were not covered by health insurance at any point during the year.

SOURCE: Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**Children with a medical home** is based on the question, "Do you have one or more persons you think of as the personal doctor or nurse for your child?" from the Child Health Assessment and Monitoring Program (CHAMP) survey. Medical home is generally known as an approach to providing comprehensive primary care, which should be accessible and continuous, among other characteristics.

SOURCE: State Center for Health Statistics, N.C. DHHS, The Child Health Assessment and Monitoring Program survey, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/champ/2007/topics.html>.

**Low birthweight infants** are those live infants born weighing less than 2,500 grams (5 pounds, 8 ounces or less) regardless of period of gestation.

SOURCE: State Center for Health Statistics, N.C. DHHS, "Infant Mortality Report, Table 10: Risk Factors and Characteristics for North Carolina Resident Live Births." Available online at: <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/deaths/ims/2007/>.

**Infant mortality** includes all infants who die before the age of 1.

SOURCE: State Center for Health Statistics, N.C. DHHS, "North Carolina Infant Mortality Report." Available online at: <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/deaths/ims/2007/>.

**Children who are overweight** is conservatively defined as a body mass index equal to or greater than the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile using federal guidelines. The children represented in these data are those who receive services in local health departments or school health centers, and they are primarily low-income. They may not be representative of the state as a whole. These data send an important signal that must be heeded.

SOURCE: 2007 N.C.-NPass Data. "Proportion of Overweight, (BMI  $\geq$  95<sup>th</sup> Percentile) Children by Age, Race and Gender, NC-NPASS\* 2007." Available online at: <http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/data/index.htm>.

### Children with untreated tooth decay

SOURCE: Special data request to the Oral Health section, Division of Public Health, N.C. DHHS, August 2008.

**Teens reporting seriously considering suicide** is based on a survey question from the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), North Carolina High School Survey. The YRBS is conducted every other year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is a national survey of high school students about the behaviors that most affect adolescent health. This indicator was based on the percentage of North Carolina students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months.

SOURCE: The survey and detailed tables are available online at: <http://www.nchealthyschools.org/data/>.

**Children covered by public health insurance** is the number of unduplicated Medicaid-eligibles who are ages 0-18 years for the month of December 2007 plus the number of Health Choice eligible children (including children who are eligible for Health Choice extended coverage) in December 2007.

SOURCE: For Medicaid data- Special data request to the Division of Medical Assistance, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, August 2008. For Health Choice data- Division of Medical Assistance. "North Carolina Eligibility Information- Authorized Eligibles by County, Health Choice," December, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dma/elig/elig.html>.

**School-based health centers** provide age-appropriate primary health, mental health, prevention and health education services in the public school setting.

SOURCE: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina Annual School Health Services Report for Public Schools. Summary Report of School Nursing Services, School Year 2006-2007.

**Primary Care physicians (rate per 10,000 people)** include those physicians who report a primary specialty of family practice, general practice, internal medicine, obstetrics/gynecology, or pediatrics.

SOURCE: North Carolina Health Professions Data System, 2007. Calculated by Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

## Safety

**Maltreatment reports substantiated** include those cases substantiated for abuse, neglect, abuse and neglect or dependency as the outcome of an investigative assessment. Data presented here is based on SFY 2007.

SOURCE: Duncan, D.F, Kum, H.C., Flair, K.A., Stewart, C.J., and Weigensberg, E.C. (2008). *N.C. Child Welfare Program*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families. Special data request December 2008.

**Maltreatment reports found in need of services** is a situation in which a family assessment has been completed on CPS reports of neglect (with the exception of abandonment and the special types of reports) and dependency, and the safety issues and future risk of harm is so great that the agency must provide involuntary CPS services to ensure the safety of the

child. These are situations in which the safety and risk of harm is so great that the agency cannot ensure the safety of the children without either providing necessary services, or monitoring those provided by another agency or provider. Data presented here is based on SFY 2007.

SOURCE: Duncan, D.F, Kum, H.C., Flair, K.A., Stewart, C.J., and Weigensberg, E.C. (2008). *N.C. Child Welfare Program*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families. Special data request December 2008.

**Absence of recurrence of maltreatment** is measured among all the children with a substantiated report of findings abuse and neglect, abuse, neglect, dependency, as well as services needed within the first six months of the reporting period to identify if there is another report within six months of the previous one. Data presented here is based on SFY 2007.

SOURCE: Duncan, D.F, Kum, H.C., Flair, K.A., Stewart, C.J., and Weigensberg, E.C. (2008). *N.C. Child Welfare Program*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families. Special data request December 2008.

**Placement stability within the first year in custody** is found to be an important indicator of the quality of care that children in foster care experience. This indicator is determined by cohort entry. Placement stability excludes short-term placements such as respite care, hospital visits, etc. Specifically, the following living arrangements for placements were not counted: own home, home of parent(s), children's camp, hospital, supervised independent living arrangement, maternity home, jail, lock-up, detention facility, trial home visit, runaway, and respite. Children who have less than three regular placements in a year are considered to be "stable." Data presented here is based on SFY 2007.

SOURCE: Duncan, D.F, Kum, H.C., Flair, K.A., Stewart, C.J., and Weigensberg, E.C. (2008). *N.C. Child Welfare Program*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families. Special data request December 2008.

**Child deaths due to homicide** is based on children ages birth through 17 years.

SOURCE: N.C. Division of Public Health, Women's and Children's Health Section in conjunction with the State Center for Health Statistics, 2007. Available



online at: <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/deaths/child/cd2007.html>.

**Child deaths due to violence** data from the NC-VDRS annual report presents statistics on deaths from violence that occurred during the period of January 1 to December 31, 2005. A violent death is defined as a death due to, "the intentional use of physical force or power against oneself, another person, or against a group or community." Deaths meeting this definition include: intentional deaths (i.e. suicide, homicide), legal interventions, assault, undetermined intent, unintentional firearm, and terrorism. All rates are calculated as the number per 100,000 residents.

SOURCE: North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System Annual Report 2005. N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, Injury and Violence Prevention Branch, August 2008.

**Incidents of school violence** is the number of incidents of school violence, which is measured by the number of juveniles with school-based offenses.

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Special data request October 2008.

**Juvenile Justice** The North Carolina juvenile justice system deals with youth ages 6-17 charged with status/undisciplined offenses and youth ages 6-15 charged with misdemeanors and felonies. Youth 16 and older charged with misdemeanors or felonies are handled by the adult court system.

**Juvenile delinquency rate** is the delinquency rate per 1,000 6- to 17-year-olds in the juvenile justice system.

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2007 county databook. Special data request January 2009.

**Youth development center commitment rate** is per 1,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17 years. A youth development center (YDC) provides long-term education, treatment, and rehabilitative services to youth who are committed to the Department as a dispositional sanction.

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2007 county databook. Special data request January 2009.

**Minors processed in the adult system** are 16- and 17-year-olds at the time of processing for the offense.

SOURCE: North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission. Report on Study of Youthful Offenders Pursuant to Session Law 2006-248,

Sections 34.1 and 34.2. Submitted to the 2007 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly. March 2007.

**Children adopted** is the number of children who were formally adopted.

SOURCE: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Available online at: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/adopt/aboutchildren.html>.

**After-school programs** included in this count are programs or centers coordinated by the Department of Public Instruction, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Governor's Crime Commission, and Support our Students program.

SOURCE: Special data request to N.C. Center on After School Programs.

**Juvenile Crime Prevention Council admission rate** is per 1,000 juveniles ages 10-17 years. Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils are responsible for developing a local continuum of needed sanctions and services to address the issues of delinquent juveniles, those juveniles most likely to become delinquent and their families.

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2007 county databook. Special data request January 2009.

**Detention admission rate** is distinct juveniles in detention (per 1,000) ages 6-17 years. Detention centers are short-term, secure care facilities for youth who are waiting to go to court, need secure custody until another placement can be found, or are being detained as part of a dispositional sanction.

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2007 county databook. Special data request January 2009.

**Youth of color to white youth in custody** is the ratio of the following two rates: 1) the rate of detained and committed youth of color per 100,000 youth and 2) the rate of detained and committed non-Hispanic white youth per 100,000. Detained or committed youth are those who have been charged with or court-adjudicated for an offense and were in residential placement on Feb. 22, 2006.

SOURCE: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book: State Profiles of Well-being. Based on data from the 2006 Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement. P. 130.

## Economic Security

**Median household income** (in 2007 inflation-adjusted dollars) is the dollar

amount that divides the distribution of North Carolina families' income into two equal groups: half have incomes above the median and half have incomes below the median.

SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2003 and 2007. Inflation adjustment calculated by Action for Children North Carolina.

**Children in poverty** is the number of children living in households earning less than the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2003 and 2007. PUMS Data. Analyzed by Population Reference Bureau.

**Poor children in working households** is the percent of children living in households earning less than 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level with at least one parent working at least 50 weeks per year.

SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2003 and 2007. PUMS Data. Analyzed by Population Reference Bureau.

**Children in low-income households** is the number of children living in households earning less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2003 and 2007. PUMS Data. Analyzed by Population Reference Bureau.

**Children in asset poor households** is measured as the percent of children in households with insufficient net worth to remain above the Federal Poverty Level for three months in the absence of earned income.

SOURCE: CFED, Assets & Opportunity Scorecard, 2007-2008.

**Children in households with a housing cost-burden** is the percent of children in a household that spends more than 30 percent of its monthly income on housing costs, either as a renter or owner.

SOURCE: American Community Survey, PUMS Data 2007 and 2003. Analyzed by Population Reference Bureau.

**Children in concentrated poverty neighborhoods** is the number of children living in census tracts, or neighborhoods, where more than 40 percent of the population lives in poverty.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2000.

**Children receiving food stamps** is the unique count of children receiving food stamps in that year.

SOURCE: Duncan, D.F., Kum, H.C., Flair, K.A., Stewart, C.J., and Weigensberg,

E.C. (2008). *N.C. Child Welfare Program*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families website. Special data request, December 2008.

**Food Stamp applications denied due to asset test** is the number of applications that were denied due to households exceeding the resource limits of \$2,000 or \$3,000 if at least one person is age 60 or older, or is disabled.

SOURCE: Special data request to N.C. Division of Social Services, September 2008.

**Households receiving the federal Earned Income Tax Credit** is measured by the total number of tax returns receiving the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.

SOURCE: Compilation of data by Brookings Institution, Metropolitan Policy Program based on Internal Revenue Service's Stakeholder Partnerships, Education, and Communication (IRS-SPEC) Return Information Databases, compiled by the IRS Wage and Investment Research Unit, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.brookings.edu/projects/EITC.aspx>

**Households receiving the federal Child Tax Credit** is measured by the total number of tax returns receiving the Child Tax Credit.

SOURCE: Compilation of data by Brookings Institution, Metropolitan Policy Program based on Internal Revenue Service's Stakeholder Partnerships, Education, and Communication (IRS-SPEC) Return Information Databases, compiled by the IRS Wage and Investment Research Unit, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.brookings.edu/projects/EITC.aspx>

**Household Asset Poverty by Race** is having insufficient net worth to subsist at the federal poverty level for three months in the absence of income by race and ethnicity.

SOURCE: N.C. Local Asset Poverty Index, 2009.

## Early Care and Education

**Children in regulated childcare** is the number of children (ages 0-5) in regulated childcare that is defined to include all childcare that is monitored by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development. Types of care include: licensed childcare providers, religious



sponsored programs, and providers with temporary or provisional licenses.

SOURCE: Regulated and Subsidized Childcare: N.C. DHHS, N.C. Division of Child Development, Childcare Study, special data request October 2008.

**Children in high quality childcare** is the percent of children (ages 0-5) in four- and five-star care centers as rated by the North Carolina Division of Child Development in the Department of Health and Human Services.

SOURCE: N.C. DHHS, Division of Child Development, special data request December 2008.

**Child Subsidy** The maximum gross monthly income to qualify for childcare subsidies for a family of four is \$3,639 according to rules from August 1, 2007.

SOURCE: N.C. DHHS, Division of Child Development, Subsidy Services Section, special data request October 2008.

**Total state per pupil expenditure** is the combined federal, state, and local K-12 per pupil expenditure in North Carolina.

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Public Instruction, special data request October 2008.

**Four-year cohort graduation rate** is based on the number of students entering in 2003-04 as ninth graders who graduated in 2006-07 or earlier.

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Public Instruction. Available online at: <http://ayp.ncpublicschools.org/>.

**Long-term suspension rate** Long-term suspensions last from 11 days up to the remainder of the school year. For more information about suspensions and expulsions please see the "Annual Study of Suspensions and Expulsions: 2006-07."

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Public Instruction. 2007. "Annual Study of Suspensions and Expulsions: 2006-07." Available online at: [www.ncpublicschools.org](http://www.ncpublicschools.org).

**End-of-grade testing scores in reading and math** are designed to measure student performance on the goals, objectives, and grade-level competencies specified in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. For more information please visit: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/eog/>.

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Public Instruction, Division of Accountability Services, special data request October 2008.

**Students taking SAT** assesses critical reading and mathematical reasoning

abilities developed by students over time. In North Carolina, it is not mandatory for high school graduates to take or report taking the SAT, and therefore one must interpret the data with caution.

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Public Instruction. "The North Carolina SAT Report 2007." August 2007. Available online at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/sat/>.

## Community Participation

**Voter turnout** is the percent of registered voters who voted in the presidential election.

SOURCE: N.C. State Board of Elections, Statistics for Presidential Elections Years, 1972-2008, 2004. Accessed at: <http://www.sboe.state.nc.us/content.aspx?ID=70>.

**Residence stability** is the percent of children under the age of 18 in North Carolina who remained in the same house at the time of the survey as they lived in one year ago.

SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2007.

**Library visits per capita** is found by dividing the number of library visits by the unduplicated population of the legal service area.

SOURCE: National Center for Educational Statistics, State Education Data Profile for North Carolina, Public Libraries, 2005. Accessed at: <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/stateprofiles/sresult.asp?mode=full&displaycat=6&s1=37>.

**Median hours of annual volunteer activity** is the average number of hours that young adults aged 16 to 25 years old served in a one-year period prior to the 2003 survey.

SOURCE: Analysis by Sara E. Helms at the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. "Time Spent in Volunteer Activity: 2002 and 2003. August 2004. from Current Population Survey, September 2003 Volunteer Supplement. Accessed at: [http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS\\_Vol%20Hours%20by%20State.pdf](http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_Vol%20Hours%20by%20State.pdf).

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