

## National Report on Child Well-being Includes Online Data for Children in the U.S.V.I.

By Judith Richardson, Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands

The national KIDS COUNT Report is the leading U.S. report on the status and well-being of children in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has posted its 2011 *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> data online to accompany the recent release of its annual National *KIDS COUNT* Data Book. “America’s Children, America’s Challenge: Promoting Opportunity for the Next Generation.”

U.S.V.I. data on children and families is available online with all national KIDS COUNT data, at the Casey Foundation’s online Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>. Data for the Territory is not yet included in the printed *KIDS COUNT National Data Book*, however (because the USVI is not part of the national, annual *American Community Survey*).

This year’s *National Data Book* and Data Center report an 18 percent increase in the U.S. child poverty rate between 2000 and 2009. This increase means that 2.4 million more American children are living below the federal poverty line, effectively wiping out the gains made on this important measure in the late 1990s.

Over the past decade, American children have become increasingly at risk of living in poverty. One out of five now live below the poverty line, meaning their chances of a bright future are already dim.

Unemployment and foreclosure are two new indicators addressed in the national KIDS COUNT reports this year. In 2010, 11 percent of U.S. children had at least one unemployed parent and 4 percent were affected by foreclosure since 2007.

The U.S.V.I. is doing relatively well on some measures, including rates of infant mortality and child death, but not so well on others. Specifically, our child poverty rate is extremely high, averaging 35% of all V.I. children over the past ten years (vs. 20% of all U.S. children). Poverty during childhood increases the likelihood of many significant risks to children, from poor health to developmental delays, to underperformance in school and lack of job readiness.

Overall, the Territory is ranked lower than the 50 states in terms of child well-being.

Clearly, while we should feel good about certain things, we need to do more to give Virgin Islands children a better start in life. This year’s national KIDS COUNT reports focus on how states have fared since the recession. The reports’ data shows that the economic and social gains for all children that occurred during the 1990s stalled even before the economic downturn began.

Here in the U.S. Virgin Islands we should be most concerned - and focus most of our attention on:

- improving early care and education for low-income children to prepare them for greater educational success in school

Evidence: almost 60% of representative V.I. students entering public kindergarten have skills below expected age-level in areas critical to learning and reading.

- addressing the conditions leading to a very high rate of youth crime in the territory

Evidence: Most-recent data shows the V.I. juvenile crime arrest rate for teens age 10-17 climbed to 743 per 100,000 youth this age (from 310/100,000 in 1997). By contrast, the national rate is 306 per 100,000.

- addressing the conditions leading to a growing dropout and jobless rate of older youth in the territory

Evidence: Most-recent figures show that 15% of V.I. youth age 16-19 are not enrolled in school and not employed (from 10% in 1997). By contrast, the national rate is 9% of all youth this age.

Celebrating our successes is important. And among the categories analyzed by the national KIDS COUNT reports in which the U.S.V.I. fared relatively well are the following:

- The V.I. infant mortality rate (4.3 deaths per 1,000 live births) continues to be better than the national rate of 6.7/1,000 live births).
- The V.I. child death rate (19.2 child deaths per 100,000 children age 1-14) is comparable to the national rate of 19/100,000 children this age.

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To access the *National 2011 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, visit [datacenter,kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org), or contact the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (340-774-6031). For more information about the Territory's own annual *U.S.V.I. Kids Count Data Report* visit [www.cfvi.net](http://www.cfvi.net) and click on the button in the left margin marked "How are Kids Doing?" to go to children's data specifically for the U.S. Virgin Islands.