

## Press Release

Contact: Anne Roberts 405-236-5437, ext. 101,  
cell 405-627-9877



## Oklahoma KIDS COUNT Factbook Announces Good and Bad News for Oklahoma Children

The Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy (OICA) will announce good news and bad news for children in their release of the 2006-2007 *Oklahoma KIDS COUNT Factbook*. The *Factbook* is an annual publication evaluating the well-being of Oklahoma's children. A number of the factors tracked in the *Factbook* show improvement this year, but several areas continue to resist improvement.

An increase in the incidence of very low birthweight (less than 3 pounds, 5 ounces) and low birthweight (less than 5 ½ pounds) is demonstrated in the book. Every day in Oklahoma, eleven babies are born too small. Many babies born too small will experience serious health and/or developmental problems. As they grow, depression, anxiety, hyperactivity and aggression often create unmanageable social difficulties. In addition, the latest data shows an increase statewide in the number of child abuse and neglect confirmations. Each year in Oklahoma, almost 13,000 children are abused or neglected.

The 2006-2007 *Factbook* reports several areas of improvement for the state's children. This includes a drop in births to older teens, young teens and teens overall. There was also a decline in high school dropouts, juvenile violent crime arrests, infant mortality, child death and teen death.

In addition to reporting on the overall status of children and youth in Oklahoma, the 2006-2007 *Factbook* focuses on the impact that adverse childhood experiences have throughout the life of a person. This year's *Factbook* and a series of five issue briefs present information derived from the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience) Study, a collaborative research project of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the

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Department of Preventive Medicine at Kaiser Permanente (KP) in San Diego, California. This on-going study has tracked over 17,000 middle-class people to determine the correlation between childhood experiences and adult health.

Divided into ten ACE categories, the study examines five areas of child maltreatment and five areas of household or family dysfunction: emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, physical neglect, mother treated violently, household substance abuse, household mental illness, parental separation or divorce and incarcerated household member. The study draws an undeniable connection between the traumas and family dysfunction suffered as children to health conditions years later

According to Anne Roberts, OICA's executive director, "The findings of this study were startling. Adverse childhood experiences are vastly more common than generally recognized. In order to improve the overall quality of health in our state, we must improve the life experiences of our children."

Dr. Vincent Felitti, author of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study, will be in Oklahoma on January 25 for the release of the 2006-2007 *Oklahoma KIDS COUNT Factbook*. In addition, Dr. Felitti will present the findings of the ACE Study in a variety of settings on that day, beginning with Pediatric Grand Rounds in OKC, which is free and open to the public. This will be followed by a luncheon presentation for health professionals and a Children's Policy orientation for policy makers at the Oklahoma History Center. For more information about the 2006-2007 *Factbook* or Dr. Felitti's lectures on January 25, go to [www.oica.org](http://www.oica.org) or call 405/236-5437.