

Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy KIDS COUNT Factbook  
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[www.odl.state.ok.us/kids/factbook](http://www.odl.state.ok.us/kids/factbook) Factbook available at this link



## Good News for Oklahoma's Kids OK KIDS COUNT 12th Annual Factbook Shows Improvement And Decline for the Well Being of Oklahoma's Children, Youth and Families

Part 1: State Overview and Findings

Part 2: Focus Area: Children's Behavioral Health

### State Overview and Findings

(Oklahoma City, OK) "There's good news for kids," says Anne Roberts, Executive director for the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy (OICA). The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Oklahoma KIDS COUNT Factbook being released today at the Southern Hills Marriott of Tulsa shows improvement in nine indicators:

Birth to Young Teens (ages 15-17)	Infant Mortality (under age 1)
Birth to older Teens (ages 18 & 19)	Child Death (ages 1-14)
Birth Teens (combined ages 15-19)	Teen Death (ages 15-19)
High School Dropouts	Child & Teen Death (ages 1-19)
Juvenile Violent Crime Arrests	

The same nine indicators which improved in recent years still show some improvement over comparable data from the middle of the 1990s or early 2000s. But, some of the significant areas of improvement in all four death indicators is starting to erode; staying the same or slowing. Three indicators worsened: Low Birthweight (less than 5 ½ pounds), Very Low Birthweight (less than 3 pounds 5 ounces) and Child Abuse and Neglect. Each year, more than thirteen thousand children are abused or neglected.

The 2007-2008 Factbook presents a state-wide overview and county by county data reflecting the well-being of Oklahoma's children, youth and families. The same 13 indicators are documented each year and compared to previous years. This year's book includes a focus area for Children's Behavioral Health which includes new county level indicators resulting in the Childhood Stress Index and ranking. This index reflects the prevalence of children's mental health needs versus the capacity for services

Dr. Hiram Fitzgerald, Executive Director of the World Association for Infant Mental Health, is the featured speaker for the KIDS COUNT Factbook release. Anne Roberts, OICA Executive Director, is hosting the Factbook release sharing pertinent information from this year's book. Following the Press Conference, Dr. Fitzgerald is the key note luncheon speaker at the combined 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Substance Abuse and the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Mental Health Best Practices Conference.

Dr. Fitzgerald is also Associate Provost for University Outreach and Engagement and University Distinguished Professor of Psychology at Michigan State University and Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Michigan. Additional bio information is available with this release.

## **Part Two: Children's Behavioral Health (Factbook Focus Section)**

The 2007-2008 Factbook focuses on the reality of behavioral health issues in Oklahoma's children and youth as well as the lack of sufficient treatment opportunities available. Children are not spared the stresses that plague most adults.

Oklahoma infants, children and adolescents suffer from mental illness just as adults do. According to the OK KIDS COUNT Factbook, mental illness in children requires assessment that is different from that undertaken for adults. Understanding childhood mental health and illness requires unraveling the individual child's particular history, both normal and abnormal, including development, biology, genetics, relationships, behavior, environment and more. Good mental health requires that a child's first relationships be trusting and caring to provide a "secure base" from which they can begin exploring the world. When an infant feels insecure and lacks healthy nurturing relationships, a lifetime of poor mental health begins. A baby can experience serious depression or develop eating disorders as early as four months of age.

A very large number of Oklahoma children and teens, almost ninety thousand, suffer from mental or behavioral impairments. One of five children over age 9 and teens under age 18 have a diagnosable mental illness or addiction disorder associated with at least some impairment.

Mental disorder among Oklahoma children may be influenced by biological factors, environmental factors, exposure to trauma and access to effective care. These risk factors do not occur in isolation, but are interrelated and appear in clusters.

Typically, Oklahomans face more ordinary traumas, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Oklahoma ranks first per capita in federal disaster declarations. According to the ACE Study (Adverse Childhood Experiences Study), the focus area of the 2006-07 OK KIDS COUNT Factbook, adverse childhood experiences have a powerful relationship to adult health status half a century later. The same adverse childhood experiences place a child at risk for mental illness, addition disorders and behavioral problems.

The OK Kids Count Factbook is produced by the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy (OICA) to provide parents, policymakers, educators, children's service providers, and the public with a better understanding of the needs of Oklahoma's children, youth, and families. The full report is available at [www.oica.org](http://www.oica.org).

**OICA is celebrating 25 years of creating awareness, taking action and changing policy on behalf of Oklahoma children, youth and families.**