Examining critical issues for North Dakota children and families
Children
In 2009, children ages 0 to 17 comprised 22 percent of North Dakota's total population, compared to 25 percent in 2000 and 28 percent in 1990. Statewide, these children numbered 143,971 in 2009, an 11 percent decrease from 160,849 in 2000 and an 18 percent decrease from 175,385 in 1990.

The proportion of North Dakota children ages 0 to 17 in 2009 ranged from a low of 15 percent in Sheridan County to a high of 36 percent in Sioux County. From 1990 through 2000, five of North Dakota's 53 counties had growth in the number of children (Cass, Burleigh, Rolette, Sioux, and Benson); from 2000 to 2009, three counties (Cass, Burleigh, and Mountrail) showed growth.

Due to a consistent increase in births during the past few years, the number of children ages 0 to 5 in North Dakota has grown each year since 2003; 31 North Dakota counties had an increase in the number of children ages 0 to 5 from 2003 to 2009. Conversely, the number of children ages 6 to 17 continues to decrease statewide.

Total Births
A historical analysis of the number of births in North Dakota indicates a steady decline throughout the 1980s and 1990s, reaching a low of 7,635 in 1999. However, beginning in 2002, the number began to increase. In 2009, the North Dakota Department of Health reported 8,974 births, a level last seen in 1990.

Teen Births
The number of births to North Dakota teens totaled 662 in 2009, which is 7 percent of all births statewide. While this proportion has remained relatively unchanged since 2003, the teen birth rate (i.e., teen births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19) rose from 25.6 in 2004 to 29.8 in 2007, then decreased to 27.9 in 2009.

Race and Ethnicity
Though white children comprised the majority of children ages 0 to 18 statewide in 2009 (86 percent), their numbers declined 12 percent from 2000 to 2009 (150,812 to 132,922). During the same time, the number of American Indian children, North Dakota’s largest minority group, grew 14 percent (13,522 to 15,360).

The state’s smallest minority groups saw much larger percentage gains. From 2000 to 2009, the number of Hispanic children (of any race) increased 77 percent (3,377 to 5,962), the number of African American children increased 76 percent (2,248 to 3,951), and the number of Asian children increased 41 percent (1,311 to 1,854).
SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Living Arrangements
While the vast majority of all North Dakota children ages 0 to 17 live with their parents, the composition of households is changing.

For example, the proportion of North Dakota children who live with both parents is decreasing. In 1990, 82 percent of all North Dakota children lived with both parents. This proportion decreased to 76 percent in 2000. Current 2009 data indicate that 72 percent of North Dakota children live with both parents. Conversely, the proportion of children living with a single parent is growing. In 1990, 14 percent of North Dakota children lived with a single parent. This proportion increased to 19 percent in 2000 and to 21 percent in 2009.

Other family arrangements include children living with their grandparents. In 2009, 4 percent of North Dakota children lived in a grandparent-headed household (5,002 children), up from 2 percent in 1990 (2,628 children).

The number of North Dakota children receiving foster care services totaled 1,912 in 2010, representing 1 percent of all children ages 0 to 18 statewide. The majority of North Dakota children receiving foster care services in 2010 were in a family home (76 percent). One in five children in foster care was in a group home or institution (22 percent).

Working Mothers
Most North Dakota children live with their mothers (whether she is married or single), and most North Dakota mothers work. In 2009, 87 percent of all North Dakota children lived with both parents or with a single mother, the second largest proportion in the nation (behind Utah and tied with Connecticut). In addition, the proportion of North Dakota mothers (with children ages 0 to 17) who are in the labor force was 82 percent in 2009, the second highest proportion nationwide (behind South Dakota).

The proportion of mothers with young children ages 0 to 5 who are in the labor force was 77 percent in 2009, compared to 86 percent for mothers with only older children (ages 6 to 17 only). Nationally, 72 percent of mothers with children ages 0 to 17 were in the labor force in 2009.

Unmarried Mothers
One-third of all North Dakota births in 2009 were to unmarried women (33 percent). This proportion has risen consistently over the past several years, up from 23 percent in 1994. Most of the births to unmarried women in 2009 were to women ages 20 or older (80 percent); 20 percent were to teenagers. Births to unmarried teens ages 12 to 19 totaled 589 in 2009, or 7 percent of all births statewide.

- U.S. Census Bureau; Census 1990 and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
In 2009, 14 percent of North Dakota children lived in poverty, a rate which has not improved in the past 10 years.

-U.S. Census Bureau; Census 2000 and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Income and Poverty

With an unemployment rate one of the lowest in the nation and per capita income and gross domestic product figures growing faster than most states, North Dakota was identified by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Chamber Foundation as the nation’s top economic growth performer for the decade of the 2000s.

Yet, despite these positive steps toward economic betterment, North Dakota’s child poverty rate has not changed in the last 10 years. In 2000, 14 percent of North Dakota children were impoverished. This rate remains unchanged in 2009 with 14 percent (i.e., approximately 20,000 children) still impoverished. In fact, the proportion of children in extreme poverty (living in families below 50 percent of the poverty level) rose to 7 percent in 2009 (i.e., 10,000 children), which is up from 6 percent in 2000.

Geographically, reservation counties tend to have the highest child poverty rates in the state. In 2009, one in two children in Sioux County (which includes part of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation) was impoverished (53 percent) and nearly one in three was living in extreme poverty (30 percent). Younger children (i.e., ages 0 to 4) in North Dakota had a higher poverty rate than children overall in 2009 (18 percent compared to 14 percent, respectively).

Poverty refers to a condition in which one is unable to afford basic human needs, such as clean water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing, and shelter. Income thresholds used to determine poverty are updated annually by the Census Bureau. In 2009, a four-person family earning $21,954 or less was considered impoverished, which is less than the $22,025 threshold in 2008.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance programs are available to help low-income families and children in North Dakota. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP (formerly the Food Stamp Program) provided help to 37,553 children ages 0 to 18 in 2010 (24 percent of children statewide). The free or reduced price lunch program served 33,870 school children in 2010 (33 percent of total school enrollment). In 15 of North Dakota’s 53 counties, at least 40 percent of students received free or reduced price lunches in 2010.

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF) provided assistance to 7,819 North Dakota children ages 0 to 19 in 2010, down 13 percent from 2009.

In addition, North Dakota helped low-income families pay child care bills for 7,757 children ages 0 to 13 in 2010, or 7 percent of all children ages 0 to 13 statewide.
School Enrollment and Costs
North Dakota's public schools averaged 95,507 students daily during the 2009-10 academic year. As daily enrollments continue to decrease throughout the state (2 percent per year, on average, since 1996-97), expenditures continue to rise. Since 1996-97, per student expenditures have increased 7 percent per year on average, totaling $9,812 per student in 2009-10.

Test Scores
Academically, North Dakota 4th and 8th grade students test well in reading, math, and science - with achievement scores exceeding national averages in 2009 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/). While North Dakota students rank relatively well nationally in terms of overall academic achievement, there is room for improvement. Significant disparities exist with regard to race and income.

Composite scores for 2010 North Dakota public high school graduates taking the ACT averaged 21.5 out of a possible 36, slightly higher than the national average of 21.0.

Beyond the overall composite ACT score, ACT, Inc. has developed benchmarks in the areas of English, math, reading, and science to measure what it takes to be successful in standard first-year college courses. Based on these benchmarks, 71 percent of the 2010 ACT-tested North Dakota high school graduates were ready for college English, 48 percent were ready for college math, 56 percent were ready for college reading, and 31 percent were ready for college science. However, 24 percent were ready for all four courses, a proportion that has changed little over the past several years.

High School Dropouts
Various measures exist for determining high school dropout rates. In this publication, the actual number of dropout events is presented along with dropouts as a percentage of total high school enrollment. According to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, the number of high school students (in grades 9 through 12) who were enrolled in school and then dropped out in 2010 totaled 701 (2 percent of high school enrollment). Four counties in North Dakota had dropout rates of at least 5 percent: Rolette (8 percent), Sioux (5 percent), Morton (5 percent), and Williams (5 percent).

Special Education
In 2010, 13,170 North Dakota children were enrolled in special education (14 percent of total public school enrollment). Statewide, 32 percent of students enrolled in special education had a specific learning disability, 25 percent had a speech impairment, 6 percent were emotionally disturbed, and 6 percent were mentally handicapped in 2010.
Legally recognized child care providers in North Dakota numbered 3,035 in February 2010 and had the capacity to care for 41,870 children (i.e., 38% of all children ages 0 to 13).

-U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division and North Dakota Department of Human Services

Education and Early Care (cont.)

Summary and Findings

Child Care

Child care indicators presented in this publication focus on legally recognized child care providers, i.e., licensed, self-certified, in-home providers, approved relatives, and registered tribal providers. Legally recognized child care providers in North Dakota numbered 3,035 in February 2011 and had the combined capacity to care for 41,870 children (i.e., 38 percent of all children ages 0 to 13). While not all children are in need of a child care program, current estimates suggest that approximately 76 percent of children ages 0 to 13 may require care (i.e., have working parents).

Informal networks of relatives, friends, and neighbors provide care for many North Dakota children. These situations are difficult to track and the number of providers and quality of care are not monitored.

Licensed Child Care

Licensed child care in North Dakota is state-approved and reviewed yearly, with licenses being granted by county social services. As of February 2011, North Dakota reported 1,678 licensed child care programs.

As of February 2011, licensed child care providers in North Dakota had the capacity to care for 37,145 children. This capacity represents one-third of children ages 0 to 13 in the state (34 percent).

In the northwestern corner of the state (i.e., Planning Region 1 comprised of Divide, Williams, and McKenzie counties), licensed care has the capacity to serve only 14 percent of children ages 0 to 13. This is the smallest proportion among all eight planning regions by at least 8 percentage points.

Unlicensed Child Care

Legally recognized yet unlicensed child care providers in the state included 571 self-certified and in-home providers, 139 registered tribal child care providers, and 647 approved relatives in February 2011.

Child Care Cost and Assistance

Child care has become part of the daily routine for thousands of North Dakota families, many of whom are struggling financially. According to North Dakota Child Care Resource and Referral, 2010 data suggest that care for one infant in a licensed center averages $7,503 annually.

As mentioned in the Economic Well-Being component of this report, the Child Care Assistance Program helped low-income families in North Dakota pay child care bills for 7,757 children ages 0 to 13 in 2010, or 7 percent of all children ages 0 to 13 statewide.
SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Vital Records
A healthy mother is vital to the health of her child. Prenatal care can improve birth outcomes and is more likely to be effective if begun early in pregnancy. Of the 8,974 North Dakota births in 2009, 389 (4 percent) were to mothers receiving late or no prenatal care.

Throughout North Dakota, 571 babies were born weighing less than 5.5 pounds (or 2,500 grams) in 2009. These low birth weight babies comprised 6 percent of all births in 2009. North Dakota consistently ranks among states with the lowest percentage of low birth weight births in the nation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Stats, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vitalstats.htm).

In 2009, 55 North Dakota babies died within one year of life (0.6 percent of all births). Of all North Dakota deaths in 2009, 58 were youth ages 1 to 19 (1 percent of all deaths).

Hearing Impaired
Hearing loss can affect a child's ability to develop communication, language, and social skills. The earlier children with hearing loss get services, the more likely they are to reach their full potential. In 2010, nearly every newborn in North Dakota was screened for hearing loss (98 percent); of those screened, 9 percent did not pass the screening.

Assistance
The supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children (WIC) provides nutritious foods, nutrition counseling, and health and social service referrals to eligible participants at no charge. The number of North Dakota WIC participants totaled 24,331 in 2010.

To assist North Dakota children needing health care, 49,110 children ages 0 to 20 received health care assistance through Medicaid (27 percent of persons ages 0 to 20 statewide) in 2010.

To help those children from working families that earn too much to qualify for full Medicaid coverage, but not enough to afford private insurance, the state's Healthy Steps Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP) provided premium-free health coverage to 3,749 enrollees in January 2011.

Uninsured Children
While most children ages 0 to 18 in North Dakota are covered by some form of health insurance, 12,329 children were uninsured in 2007, which is 8 percent of all children statewide. The majority of the uninsured children in North Dakota were living in or near poverty. In 2007, 7,809 uninsured North Dakota children ages 0 to 18 were living below 200 percent of poverty, which is 63 percent of all uninsured children and 5 percent of all children statewide.
SAFETY AND RISKY BEHAVIORS

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Juvenile Court Referrals
A total of 5,139 North Dakota juveniles ages 10 to 17 were referred to court a total of 9,516 times in 2010. Each time a juvenile is referred to court, he or she may be charged with multiple offenses. In 2010, North Dakota juveniles were charged with a total of 10,097 offenses.

While each juvenile court referral may have several charges for multiple offenses, an offense description is available for the major offense only. The major offenses associated with the 9,516 juvenile court referrals in 2010 were distributed into five categories: unruly behavior (24 percent), offenses against property (23 percent), alcohol offenses (15 percent), offenses against person (8 percent), and other offenses not included in the previously mentioned categories (e.g., disorderly conduct, controlled substance, traffic) (30 percent).

North Dakota juveniles referred to court as a proportion of all youth ages 10 to 17 has remained relatively unchanged over the past several years. In 2010, 8 percent of all children ages 10 to 17 (5,139 juveniles) were referred to court for various offenses.

Child Abuse, Neglect, and Domestic Violence
In 2010, there were 6,399 children suspected of being abused or neglected in North Dakota, or 4 percent of all children ages 0 to 17 (a proportion which is relatively unchanged since the mid-1990s). When a suspected case of abuse or neglect is investigated by the North Dakota Child Protection Services Program, it is determined if services are required, if services are recommended, or if no services are required or recommended.

Following assessments of the 2010 cases by Child Protection Services social workers, it was determined that 1,136 children (18 percent of all suspected victims - or 0.8 percent of all children ages 0 to 17) were in high-risk situations requiring immediate services. The proportion of children requiring services for abuse and neglect varied widely throughout the state. Of particular concern is Divide County in which 4 percent of all children ages 0 to 17 required immediate services for child abuse and neglect in 2010.

Children are also affected by domestic violence in general. In 2010, the number of children directly impacted by incidents of domestic violence reported to crisis intervention centers in North Dakota totaled 4,180, which is down 20 percent from 5,222 in 2009.

Idle Teens
North Dakota youth who were not in school, not high school graduates, and not in the labor force (referred to as idle teens) comprised 2 percent of all children ages 16 to 19 in 2009. Nationally, 3 percent of teens were considered idle in 2009.