SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

North Dakota KIDS COUNT seeks to examine critical issues for North Dakota children and families.
For two years in a row, North Dakota is the fastest growing state in the U.S., growing 3 percent in the last year – four times the national average in 2013.

Population
Energy development activity in western North Dakota continues to impact population trends within the state. After decades of population loss, shifting migration patterns and an increase in total births has resulted in significant growth for the state. For two years in a row, North Dakota has been the fastest growing state in the nation. According to the 2013 population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, North Dakota has 723,393 residents, a record high. This also represents a 3 percent growth from 2012, which is four times the growth nationally.

In 2012, there were 699,628 North Dakota residents. Children ages 0 through 17 comprised 22 percent of the total population (i.e., 154,608 children). After nearly two decades of continuous loss, the number of children has grown consistently since 2008, by approximately 2 percent annually through 2012.

Approximately two out of three North Dakota counties (36 of 53) had an increase in their child population from 2011 to 2012, with the fastest growth counties located in western North Dakota (e.g., Billings 26%, McKenzie 15%, Slope 12%, Mountrail 11%, Williams 10%, Divide 9%).

Total Births
The number of young children ages 0 through 5 began increasing in 2003, which parallels the upswing in total births. After decades of decline, total births began to increase in 2002 when there were 7,755 births. By 2012, there were 10,072 births recorded statewide by the North Dakota Department of Health.

Births to teenagers in North Dakota totaled 597 in 2012, which is 6 percent of all births statewide. The teen birth rate in North Dakota decreased 10 percent over the past few years, from 29 births per 1,000 female teens in 2010 to a rate of 26 in 2012. Nationally, there were 29 teen births per 1,000 female teens in 2012.

Race and Ethnicity
Race and ethnicity have important implications for culture, identity, and well-being. Children of different races and ethnicities often show large variation in well-being including health, mortality, school performance and attainment, and access to family and community resources.

The racial mix among North Dakota children continues to change. During the past 13 years, the percentage of the state’s child population that is white (i.e., 141,529 children in 2012) decreased from 88 percent in 2000 to 86 percent in 2012. During the same time, the state has seen an increase in the number of minority children. Native American children, North Dakota’s largest minority group, grew 16 percent from 2000 to 2012. The state’s smaller minority child populations grew much faster. From 2000 to 2012, the number of Asian children grew 65 percent, Hispanic children grew 103 percent, and children reported as black grew 146 percent.


Living Arrangements
While the majority of all North Dakota children ages 0 through 17 live with their parents, the composition of families is changing. In 2012, 71 percent of North Dakota children lived with both parents. This percentage is down from 82 percent in 1990. During the same period of time, the proportion of children living with a single parent has grown. In 1990, 14 percent of children lived with a single parent. This percentage increased to 23 percent in 2012. Other family arrangements include children living with their grandparents. In 2012, 4 percent of North Dakota children lived with a grandparent (5,271 children), which is up from 2 percent in 1990 (2,628 children).

The number of North Dakota children receiving foster care services totaled 2,019 in 2013 (i.e., 1% of all children statewide). The majority of children in foster care are in a family home (79%). Approximately one in five children in foster care are in a group home or institution (21%).

Nearly one-third of all North Dakota births in 2012 were to unmarried women (32%). The percentage of births to unmarried women was 23 percent in 1994 and grew an average of 3 percent per year through 2005 where it has remained relatively unchanged through 2012. Approximately 16 percent of births to unmarried women in 2012 was to a teenager. Births to unmarried teens ages 12 through 19 totaled 533 in 2012, which is 5 percent of all births statewide.

Working Parents
Most North Dakota children live with their mothers (whether she is married or single) and most North Dakota mothers work. In 2012, 88 percent of all North Dakota children lived with their mother, which is the largest percentage in the nation. In addition, 82 percent of North Dakota mothers were in the labor force in 2012, the second highest percentage nationwide (behind South Dakota). Nationally, 73 percent of mothers with children ages 0 through 17 were in the labor force in 2012.

A major contributor to financial stability and well-being of children is parents having secure employment\(^1\). In 2012, 78 percent of children ages 0 through 13 in North Dakota lived in situations where all parents were in the labor force, which is the third highest proportion among states (behind South Dakota and Iowa). Nationally, 69 percent of children live with parents who are all in the labor force.

Employed Youth
Employment can provide valuable experience for youth. In moderation, work experience can help youth build skills and can open up valuable opportunities as youth prepare for work and a career\(^2\). In North Dakota, nearly half of teens ages 16 through 19 were employed in 2012 (45%), which is the second largest percentage among states (behind South Dakota). Among young adults ages 20 through 24 in North Dakota, 74 percent were employed (second nationally behind Nebraska).
ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

North Dakota’s child poverty rate continues to remain unaffected by the state’s economic prosperity (15% in 2012).

Income and Poverty

Experiencing unprecedented economic growth, North Dakota continues to lead the nation in low unemployment\(^1\), growth in GDP\(^2\), and increases in per capita personal income\(^2\). In addition, the median household income for families with children grew to $68,658 in 2012. Despite this economic boom, child poverty has been largely unaffected by the state’s prosperity. Approximately one out of every seven children living in North Dakota is considered impoverished (15% in 2012, or 21,835 children). This percentage has remained relatively unchanged for the past 12 years. An additional 13,203 North Dakota children live in families with incomes just above the poverty line (i.e., near poverty) (9% in 2012).

Younger children (i.e., ages 0 through 4) in the state had a higher poverty rate than older children (i.e., ages 5 through 17) in 2012 (19% compared to 13%, respectively); in six of North Dakota’s 53 counties, at least one in three young children was living in poverty. Children living on Native American Indian reservations tend to have the highest child poverty rates in North Dakota. Data from 2012 indicate that about half of all children in Sioux, Benson, and Rolette counties were impoverished (59%, 50%, and 48%, 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 2012, a four-person family earning $23,492 or less was considered impoverished\(^3\).

Public Assistance

Public benefit programs are available to help low-income families and children in North Dakota. The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (i.e., SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) helped provide food to 37,826 North Dakota children ages 0 through 18 in 2013 (23% of children statewide). The free or reduced price lunch program served 34,381 North Dakota school children in 2013 (31% of total school enrollment). In four of North Dakota’s 53 counties, at least half of students received free or reduced price lunches in 2013 (Sioux, Benson, Rolette, and Sheridan).

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF), designed to help families in need achieve self-sufficiency, provided assistance to 5,795 North Dakota children ages 0 through 19 in 2013, which is down 8 percent from 2012.

In an effort to allow parents to work or attain the education necessary to become employed and self-sufficient, 4,381 North Dakota children received child care assistance in 2013 (4% of all children ages 0 through 13 statewide).

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Enrollment

North Dakota's public schools averaged 101,852 students daily during the 2012-13 academic year. After several years of continued decreases in enrollments, North Dakota's average daily membership in public schools has increased an average of 2 percent per year since 2008-09 and 3 percent in 2012-13 alone. Six counties, all located within western energy development areas, had the fastest growth in average daily membership in 2012-13, at least 10 percent each (Slope, Billings, McKenzie, Divide, Burke, and Adams). Seventeen of North Dakota's 53 counties reported a loss in average daily membership in 2012-13.

Expenditures per student in North Dakota public schools averaged $10,517 statewide in 2012-13, which is a 3.1 percent increase from 2011-12.

In 2013, 13,399 North Dakota children were enrolled in special education (13% of public school enrollment): 31 percent had a specific learning disability, 22 percent had a speech impairment, 6 percent were emotionally disturbed, 6 percent had an intellectual disability, and 6 percent had autism.

The number of North Dakota high school students who were enrolled in school and then dropped out in 2013 totaled 901 (3% of high school enrollment).

Achievement

The ability to read proficiently is a fundamental skill that affects the learning experiences and school performance of children and adolescents. Students who are competent readers are more likely to perform well in other subjects, such as math and science. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only a handful of states have higher performance scores for 4th grade reading and 8th grade math than North Dakota. Even so, less than half of the 2013 North Dakota public high school graduates were considered ready for college-level reading courses, as measured by the ACT (41%).

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 four benchmark areas, 61 percent of the 2013 ACT-tested North Dakota high school graduates were ready for college English, 43 percent were ready for college math, 41 percent were ready for college reading, and 35 percent were ready for college science. Approximately one in four (23%) were ready for all four courses.

Overall, 2013 public high school graduates in North Dakota averaged 20.5 out of a possible 36 on the ACT. The national average ACT score was 20.9.
**SUMMARY AND FINDINGS**

**Child Care**

As indicated in the Economic Well-Being section, North Dakota is experiencing a financial boom, which is largely the result of energy development. In addition to low unemployment, North Dakota has one of the largest multiple job holding rates in the nation. This means that most parents are working and are in need of quality child care and early education for their children. As noted in the Family and Community section, 78 percent of North Dakota children live in families where all the parents are in the labor force (i.e., 88,092 children statewide).

Reliable and affordable child care helps children, families, and communities prosper. With dependable child care, parents can be productive at work and school. In addition, research on child care reveals that, on average, for each new dollar spent on child care, the total statewide economic impact is two dollars.

As of February 2014, North Dakota reported 1,503 licensed child care programs with the capacity to care for 35,222 children. This means that licensed child care programs in the state have the ability to meet 40 percent of potential need. According to Child Care Aware of North Dakota, national child care standards recommend that licensed care should meet at least 50 percent of potential need. Currently, only two counties in North Dakota—Cass and Ramsey—meet that minimum.

In the southwestern corner of the state (i.e., Planning Region 8 composed of Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope, and Stark counties), licensed care is meeting less than 30 percent of the potential need. This is the smallest percentage among all eight planning regions. Licensed care in Planning Region 5 (i.e., Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Steele, and Traill) is meeting 55 percent of the potential need; which is the largest percentage among the eight planning regions.

**Unlicensed Child Care**

Legally recognized yet unlicensed child care providers in the state included 335 self-certified and in-home providers, 35 registered tribal child care providers, and 404 approved relatives in February 2014.

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.

**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 2013 data from Child Care Aware of North Dakota, care for one infant in a licensed center averages $8,318 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 4,381 children in 2013, or 4 percent of all children ages 0 through 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 10,072 North Dakota births in 2012, 16 percent had mothers who received no prenatal care or late care (i.e., after the first trimester) and 5 percent had mothers whose prenatal care was infrequent and inconsistent (i.e., inadequate).

In 2012, 619 babies were born weighing less than 5.5 pounds (or 2,500 grams) in North Dakota. These low birth weight babies comprised 6 percent of all births in 2012. North Dakota consistently ranks among states with the lowest percentage of low birth weight births in the nation.

In 2012, 52 North Dakota babies died within one year of life. Of all North Dakota deaths in 2012, 50 were children ages 1 through 19.

Hearing Impairment
Hearing loss can affect a child's ability to develop communication, language, and social skills. The earlier that children with a hearing impairment get services, the more likely they are to reach their full potential. In 2013, nearly all resident live births in North Dakota were screened for hearing loss (99%); of those screened, 11 percent did not pass the initial screening and were referred for further testing.

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 22,305 in 2013.

To assist North Dakota children needing health care, 53,292 children ages 0 through 20 received health care assistance through Medicaid (28% of youth ages 0 through 20 statewide) in 2013. To help 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 Program (CHIP) provided premium-free health coverage to 4,076 enrollees in January 2013.

Uninsured Children
Children without health insurance have limited access to health care, which can lead to a greater risk of illness and hospitalization. In addition, a lack of health insurance can have a negative influence on school attendance and participation in extracurricular activities, and increased financial and emotional stress among parents. While most children in North Dakota are covered by some form of health insurance, 11,653 were uninsured in 2012, which is 7 percent of all children statewide. The majority of uninsured children live in families with low to moderate incomes and are potentially eligible for coverage programs such as Medicaid, Healthy Steps, or Caring for Children. In 2012, 6,046 uninsured North Dakota children were living at or below 200 percent of poverty, which is 52 percent of all uninsured children statewide.

**SAFETY AND RISKY BEHAVIOR**

Approximately 3 percent of North Dakota youth were considered idle (i.e., not in school, not high school graduates, and not working) in 2012 (1,022 youth ages 16 through 19).

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**SUMMARY AND FINDINGS**

**Juvenile Court Referrals**

Juvenile delinquency has potentially high stakes for both individuals and society as a whole. Delinquency is linked to higher crime rates in adulthood and other negative outcomes. One estimate suggests that between 50 and 75 percent of adolescents who have spent time in juvenile detention centers are incarcerated later in life.

A total of 3,789 North Dakota juveniles ages 10 through 17 were referred to court for delinquent or unruly behavior a total of 7,009 times in 2013. Each time a juvenile is referred to court, he or she may be charged with multiple offenses. In 2013, North Dakota juveniles were charged with a total of 7,609 offenses. While each referral may have charges for multiple offenses, an offense description is available for the major offense only. Major offenses associated with the 7,009 juvenile court referrals in 2013 include: unruly behavior (25%), offenses against property (20%), alcohol offenses (14%), offenses against persons (10%), and others (e.g., disorderly conduct, controlled substance, traffic) (31%).

North Dakota juveniles referred to court as a proportion of all youth ages 10 through 17 has decreased over the past decade. In 2013, 6 percent of all children ages 10 through 17 (3,789 juveniles) were referred to court for delinquent or unruly behavior, which is down from 9 percent in 2003.

**Child Abuse and Neglect**

Providing children with safe and secure environments free from abuse and neglect will improve the likelihood of positive educational, emotional, and social outcomes that extend into adulthood. In 2013, there were 6,170 children suspected of being abused or neglected in North Dakota. When a suspected case of abuse or neglect is investigated by the North Dakota Child Protection Services Program, a determination is made as to whether services are required to provide for the protection and treatment of a child. Following assessments of the 2013 cases by Child Protection Services social workers, it was determined that 1,517 children (25% of all suspected victims) were in high-risk situations requiring immediate services; which is an increase from 18 percent in 2010. Overall, for every 1,000 children in North Dakota, approximately 9.8 were maltreated in 2013; nationally, the rate was 9.2 per 1,000 in 2012.

**Idle Teens**

The transition from youth into independent adulthood involves many challenges. While there are multiple pathways to success, the consequences of unemployment, under-employment, or not acquiring post-secondary education can be damaging and enduring. Males who are neither enrolled in school nor working are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior or illegal activities. Females in this group are more likely to become dependent on welfare. North Dakota youth who were not in school, not high school graduates, and not in the labor force (referred to as idle teens) comprised 3 percent of all children ages 16 through 19 in 2012, a rate similar to the national average.

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Research indicates that challenges do not affect North Dakota children equally.