

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY  
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Agenda Number:**

**Prepared on:** 11/25/02  
**Department Name:** Social Services  
**Department No.:** 044  
**Agenda Date:** 01/07/03  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimate Time:** n/a  
**Continued Item:** NO  
**If Yes, date from:**  
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**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Charlene Chase, Director  
Dept. of Social Services  
**STAFF CONTACT:** Hedy Damery  
KIDS Network, 614-1990  
**SUBJECT:** 2002 Children's Scorecard for Santa Barbara County

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**Recommendation(s):**

That the Board of Supervisors:

Accept the 2002 Children's Scorecard for Santa Barbara County as produced by the KIDS Network in collaboration with the UCSB Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, the Children and Families Commission and various county departments and community-based agencies.

**Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:**

The recommendation(s) are primarily aligned with Goal No. 7. A Community that Fosters the Safety and Well-Being of Families and Children.

**Executive Summary and Discussion:** This is the ninth annual Children's Scorecard for Santa Barbara County. The Scorecard was developed as a tool to help track and measure our county's progress toward the goal of improving outcomes for children, youth and families. The data are derived from a variety of sources, including state agencies, county departments and community-based organizations. The information is collected, analyzed and prepared by KIDS Network for entry into a centralized database maintained and updated by Dr. Mike Furlong and staff at the UCSB Gevirtz Graduate School of Education. UCSB staff also design and prepare the layout for the Scorecard, a valuable in-kind contribution to each year's production. This edition of the Scorecard again includes several new indicators, plus a new "Highlights" page and a special section featuring new initiatives of the Santa Barbara County's Children and Families Commission.

## 2002 Highlights and Trends:

As we release Santa Barbara County's 2002 Children's Scorecard it seems appropriate to take a look at some the long-term trends in the conditions of children, youth and families. We now have data covering a considerable period of time - some for as much as ten years. All indicators must be evaluated in the context of our county's ongoing changes in population and socio-economic factors. The current releases of Census 2000 data provide this background and will help us assess our real progress toward Santa Barbara County's vision for our children.

### Notable and Encouraging Results...

- The number of families receiving **cash assistance** under CalWORKs (welfare) has decreased 41% since 1993. Factors responsible for this include highly successful Self-Sufficiency Centers established in the early 90's, followed by the implementation of welfare reform in 1998 and record low unemployment through 2000.
- **Child support** collections have risen 47% since 1996-97 driven by aggressive campaign enforcing absent parents' responsibility for their children's care. Attention paid to this issue was enhanced in 2000 when the state and county put responsibility for child support under independent agencies.
- **Teen births** countywide have declined to their lowest level in the county in eleven years, both in total number and in the percent of all births. The highest proportion of these still occur in Santa Maria, but even there the actual number has seen a marked decline since 1994.
- Santa Barbara County's **juvenile justice** system has seen the fruits of its efforts to provide more family-focused, community-based prevention, early intervention and after care services under a number of Probation Department initiatives. As a result, juvenile referrals, caseloads and placements have all declined substantially in recent years despite a steady growth in the youth population.

### Mixed Results...

- **Child care** capacity is lagging behind demand, as both home- and center-based providers struggle to find and retain qualified staff. However quality of care is going up as a result of a number of recent initiatives offering opportunities and incentives for education, training and facilities improvements. The opening of the county's new Office of Early Care and Education, with its Quality Improvement program, is bringing needed attention and new resources to this issue.
- As might be expected, **student success**, as reflected by test scores and graduation rates, parallels the socio-economic level and educational background of the child's family and community. Leveling the playing field and providing opportunity for all children to succeed will mean addressing the underlying causes. School-based services like Healthy Start make a difference, but as each year passes, more of these go off-grant and must rely on scarce local resources.

### Less than Ideal Conditions...

- Poverty continues to grow, as reflected in both the Census numbers and the nine year trend showing growth in the number and percentage (42%) of students enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch programs in Santa Barbara County's schools, as well as the growing number of children in homeless families.

**New Indicators:**

The Children's Scorecard has been published annually in Santa Barbara County since 1994. Each year, as new data sources emerged, one or more new indicators have been added to increase the comprehensiveness of this report on the condition of children, youth and families in our county. In 2001 we welcomed the county's Children and Families Commission as a new partner and worked with them to expand the number of indicators for the 0-5 age group and their families. Indicators added to the 2001 edition included (1) Access to Prenatal Care, (2) Infant Mortality Rate, (3) Child Care Supply, and (4) Reading Achievement (as an outcome measure of improved access to quality early care and education services).

During the past year a Scorecard Data Development Committee was formed to monitor new or improved sources of relevant data and assess these for inclusion in future Scorecards. Members include staff from the UCSB Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, the Children and Families Commission, the Office of Early Care and Education and the KIDS Network. The Committee identified several important areas that needed to be addressed. These have been included for the first time in this edition:

1. Child and Family Access to Health Care
2. Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS in Youth
3. Lead Levels in Children and Youth
4. Childhood Obesity and Diabetes Risk or Prevalence
5. Children's Need for Dental Care
6. Youth in the Workforce

For some of these indicators the data were less than ideal, as there was a lack of complete or historical information, but the Committee felt it was important to make a start and begin to establish a baseline. We have heard it said that "**we count what we care about**". The areas of need or risk addressed by the new indicators are issues of growing concern. By including them in our annual Children's Scorecard, we hope to draw attention to those issues and inspire our communities to respond.

The Children's Scorecard is available on the Web at [www.countyofsb.org/kidsnet/publications.htm](http://www.countyofsb.org/kidsnet/publications.htm)

**Mandates and Service Levels:** No change.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:** Costs to produce the Scorecard are included in the Dept. of Social Services adopted budget for fiscal year 2002-2003.

**Special Instructions:** After passage by the Board of Supervisors, please send one (1) certified copy of the Minute Order to the KIDS Network, c/o DSS-SM (Carmen Lane #208), Attn. Hedy Damery.

**Concurrence:** None

**COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA:**

**ATTEST:  
MICHAEL F. BROWN  
Clerk of the Board**

**By:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Chair, Board of Supervisors**

**By:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Deputy**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_