



Center for Business and Economic Research

Immigrant Children in Nevada

Issue # 1 June 2007

From 1990 to 2000, the foreign-born population in Nevada grew 202 percent—from 104,828 to 316,593.¹ Nevada was one of three states to have experienced a 200-plus growth rate, outpaced only by North Carolina (274 percent) and Georgia (233 percent).² Census 2000 data show that Nevada’s immigrants came from 117 counties.³ Not surprisingly, 48 percent of the immigrants came from Mexico. The Philippines and El Salvador, 9 and 4 percent, respectively, were the second-most common countries of origin.⁴

In 2005, 196,000 children lived in immigrant families in Nevada—33,000 were foreign born and 163,000 were U.S. born with at least one foreign-born parent.⁵ With 32 percent, Nevada and New York ranked second in the nation on the percent of children in immigrant families. Only California, with 47 percent, ranked higher.⁶ Some immigrant children who live in Southern Nevada, whether foreign-born or born to an immigrant parent(s), may face challenges due to their circumstances, such as language isolation, below-poverty status, and citizenship status.

This issue brief presents data⁷ on immigrants in Nevada and in Clark County⁸ (Nevada’s largest county); discusses issues related to low-income immigrant children; and considers policies that could help improve the welfare of low-income immigrants in our state.

Nevada Immigrants

Population estimates

Findings from the American Community Survey (ACS), a product of the U.S. Census Bureau, show that in 2005, the number of the native and foreign-born populations for Nevada was 1,967,983 and 413,298, respectively. See Table 1. An estimated 33,477 foreign-born children lived in Nevada in 2005—2,893 under age five and 30,584 between 5 and 17 years of age. The majority (77.8 percent) of the foreign-born population aged 17 years and under lived in Clark County.

Table 1. Number and Percent of Native and Foreign-Born Population in Nevada and in Clark County Age 17 and Under: 2005

Age Group	Total Population*		U.S. Born		Foreign Born		Foreign Born, Naturalized Citizen		Foreign Born, Not a U.S. Citizen	
	NV**	CC***	NV**	CC***	NV**	CC***	NV**	CC***	NV**	CC***
Total population	2,381,281	1,691,213	1,967,983	1,357,126	413,298	334,087	156,593	126,209	256,705	207,878
Under 5 years	7.3% (173,834)	7.6% (128,532)	8.6% (169,247)	9.3% (126,213)	0.7% (2,893)	0.7% (2,339)	0.2% (313)	0.2% (252)	1.0% (2,567)	1.0% (2,079)
5 to 17 years	18.7% (455,300)	18.9% (319,639)	21.1% (415,244)	21.8% (295,853)	7.4% (30,584)	7.1% (23,720)	3.5% (5,481)	3.5% (4,417)	9.8% (25,157)	9.3% (19,333)

Note: “Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters.” The number of children by age group was calculated by CBER.
 *Cells summed may not equal the total due to rounding.
 **NV = Nevada.
 ***CC = Clark County.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder query, “Nevada SO602. Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations,” available online at: <http://factfinder.census.gov>, as of 5/29/07 and U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder query, “Clark County, Nevada SO602. Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations,” available online at: <http://factfinder.census.gov>, as of 4/30/07.

Issues Related to Low-Income Immigrant Children

Poverty

The percentage of families in poverty by family type for Nevada is shown in Table 2. Overall, the foreign-born population has a higher rate of poverty than the U.S. born (natives). This is true for all family categories in Nevada.

The foreign-born non-U.S. citizen family is more likely to be in poverty than the foreign-born, naturalized citizen family. The former's poverty status is similar to natives'.

In 2005, the median family income of immigrant households with children in Nevada was \$43,000, compared to \$57,300 for natives.⁹ Median earnings of full-time year-round workers by gender in Nevada and in Clark County are illustrated in Figure 1. Male immigrants' earnings appear to be significantly higher than females' at both the county and state levels. Compared to the state, Clark County males workers' earnings are slightly lower, whereas the earnings for females are slightly higher.

Table 2. Poverty Rates for Families in Nevada and Clark County for Whom Poverty Status Is Determined: 2005

<i>Family Type</i>	<i>Total (Percent)</i>		<i>U.S. Born (Percent)</i>		<i>Foreign Born (Percent)</i>		<i>Foreign Born; Naturalized Citizen (Percent)</i>		<i>Foreign Born; Not a U.S. Citizen (Percent)</i>	
	<i>NV*</i>	<i>CC**</i>	<i>NV*</i>	<i>CC**</i>	<i>NV*</i>	<i>CC**</i>	<i>NV*</i>	<i>CC**</i>	<i>NV*</i>	<i>CC**</i>
All families	8.9	8.7	7.7	7.6	13.0	12.1	8.6	8.0	16.7	15.6
With related children under 18 years	13.3	13.0	11.7	11.3	17.6	16.7	11.8	11.2	21.4	20.4
With related children under 5 years only	15.4	14.3	14.7	12.4	17.2	18.5	7.8	N*	21.4	23.0
Married couple families	5.5	5.3	4.1	3.7	10.8	10.1	6.5	6.7	14.4	13.0
With related children under 18 years	7.8	7.5	4.6	3.7	15.0	14.4	9.2	10.2	18.5	17.3
With related children under 5 years only	9.2	8.6	5.8	3.1	16.3	18.4	N***	N***	20.8	24.0
Families with female householder, no husband present	22.1	20.8	21.4	20.6	24.9	21.3	18.1	13.6	32.3	29.5
With related children under 18 years	28.0	26.5	27.6	26.9	29.5	25.2	22.0	15.8	36.0	33.0
With related children under 5 years only	34.9	31.4	34.8	31.2	35.8	32.0	N***	N***	39.4	33.2

Note: "Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters."

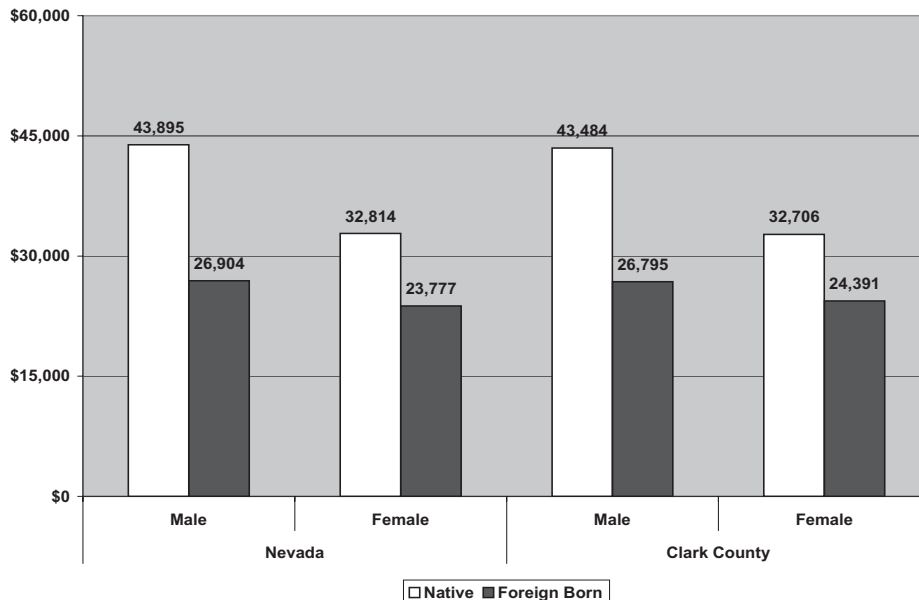
*NV = Nevada.

**CC = Clark County.

***N = Data cannot be displayed because the number of sample cases is too small.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder query, "Nevada, SO602. Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations," and U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder query, "Clark County, Nevada SO602. Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations," available online at: <http://factfinder.census.gov>, as of 4/30/07.

Figure 1: Median Earnings of Full-Time, Year-Round Workers in Nevada and Clark County by Gender and Native and Foreign-Born Populations: 2005



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder query, "Nevada SO602. Selected Characteristics of the U.S. Census Bureau," and American FactFinder query, "Clark County, Nevada SO602. Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations," available online at: <http://factfinder.census.gov>, as of 4/30/07.

Compared to children living in U.S.-born families (natives), children living in immigrant families in Nevada are more likely to live in poverty. Nineteen percent of children in immigrant families lived below the poverty threshold in 2005, relative to 13 percent for natives. See Table 3. Immigrant children did not fare as well as natives on four of the poverty indicators in Table 3, but did better on the percent of children living without secure parental employment.

Table 3. Poverty Profile of Children Living in Immigrant Families and Native Children, Nevada and the U.S.: 2005

Poverty Indicator	Nevada Percent	U.S. Percent
Children living below the poverty threshold*		
Children in immigrant families	19	22
Children in U.S.-born families	13	17
Children living in low-income families (below 200% of the poverty threshold)		
Children in immigrant families	50	51
Children in U.S.-born families	34	37
Children living without secure parental employment		
Children in immigrant families	24	31
Children in U.S.-born families	35	34
Children with all available parents in the labor force		
Children in immigrant families	57	56
Children in U.S.-born families	68	68
Children in low-income working families		
Children in immigrant families	36	32
Children in U.S.-born families	18	18

*The poverty threshold in 2005 for a four-person household with two related children under 18 years of age was \$19,806. U.S. Census Bureau, "Poverty Thresholds 2005," available online at: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/threshld/thresh05.html>, as of 6/5/07. Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT State-Level Data Online, Population Reference Bureau Analysis of data from U.S. Census, data query, at: <http://www.kidscount.org/>, as of 4/27/07.

Housing

Low-income immigrant families have challenges of finding affordable housing in southern Nevada because of high home prices and may spend a significant percentage of their income on housing. As of April 2006, the median home price in Clark County for existing homes was \$285,000 and \$313,000 for new homes.¹⁰ In 2005, 49 percent of children living in immigrant families in Nevada were in households that spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing.¹¹ The corresponding figure for children in U.S.-born families was 40 percent. Immigrant children were more than twice as likely to live in crowded households as children in U.S.-born families (28 percent and 11 percent, respectively).¹² Homeownership by the two groups differed only slightly (61 percent for children in U.S.-born families and 57 percent for children in immigrant families).¹³ The practice of doubling up on housing by immigrants may be more prevalent in areas where housing costs or poverty rates are high.¹⁴

Health-Insurance Coverage

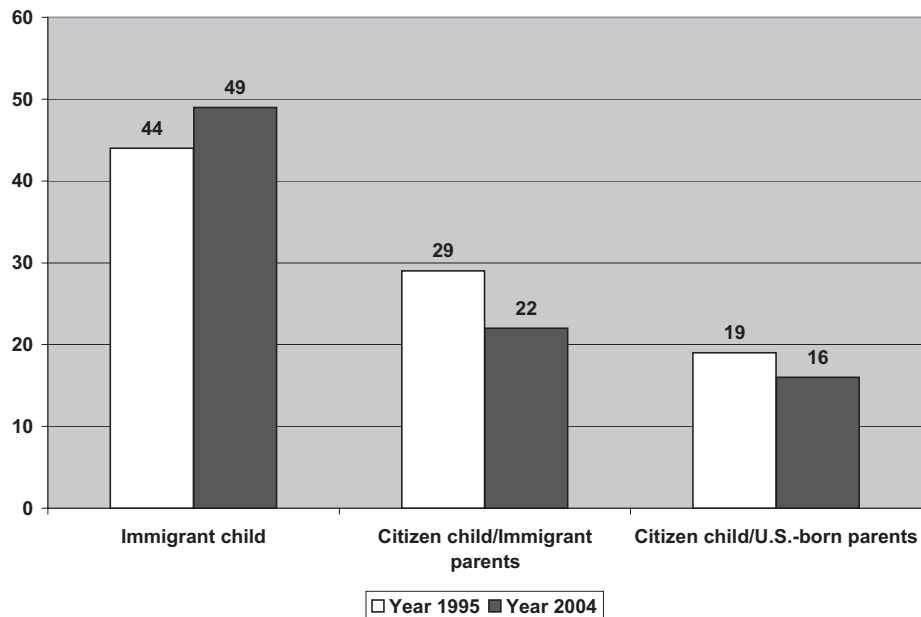
Research at the national level shows that one reason low-income immigrants are less likely to be insured than natives is a lack of employer-sponsored health insurance.¹⁵ Low-income immigrant children's

parents often work in industries less likely to offer insurance, such as construction and service jobs, in addition, they can be treated differently by some employers who classify them as contract workers to avoid offering benefits.¹⁶

Data from the 1996 and 2005 Current Population Surveys show that more than twice as many low-income immigrant children were uninsured than citizen children of immigrant parents or of citizen children of U.S.-born parents and a gap existed in health-insurance coverage among the three groups of children from 1995 to 2004. See Figure 2. During that time frame, the percentage of uninsured immigrants increased, while the percentage decreased for citizen children of immigrant parents and for citizen children of U.S.-born parents.

The number of low-income immigrant children without health-insurance coverage has increased due to federal legislation that prohibits immigrants for five years from receiving health services from federally funded programs, such as Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).¹⁷ Twenty-two states that, as of 2002, implemented a state program to replace some of the health benefits lost prior to 1996.¹⁸ Nevada was not one of them.

Figure 2. Changes in Percent of Low-Income Children (Below 200 Percent of Poverty) Who Were Uninsured: 1995 to 2004



Source: Ku, Leighton, "Why Immigrants Lack Adequate Access to Health Care and Health Insurance," Migration Information Source, Migration Policy Institute, available online at: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/print.cfm?ID=417>, as of 4/26/07.

Access to Health Care

Having insurance increases the likelihood of receiving health-care services. As such, low-income immigrants, especially non-citizens, should have less access to health-care services than natives. Researchers, using data from National Survey of America’s Families, showed that noncitizen immigrant children had fewer emergency room and doctor/nurse visits than citizens.¹⁹ Similar findings were found using data from the 2001 California Health Interview Survey, which showed that “uninsured nonimmigrants had higher odds than uninsured nonimmigrants of forgoing or postponing dental care and visiting the ER.”²⁰

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that of the foreign-born population in Nevada who spoke a language other than English, 32.5 percent perceived that they speak English “very well” and 54.5 percent speak English “less than very well.”²¹ Thus, immigrants’ use of medical services may also be influenced by their inability to speak or understand English.²² This possibility is intensified for illegal immigrants who may fear jeopardizing their immigrant status.

Education

Low-income immigrant families may have fewer resources available for sending their children to school than nonimmigrant families, thus, enrollment and retention between the two groups may differ. In addition, parents who have graduated from high school are likely to have offspring who do the same. Thirty-six percent of children in immigrant families in Nevada had parents who had less than a high school degree.²³ That is four times the national figure.²⁴

A summary of preschool enrollment for Nevada is shown in Table 4. According to the table, children age three living in native-born families were almost twice as likely to be enrolled in preschool/nursery school as children in immigrant families. Overall, a higher proportion of children living in native-born families were enrolled in school than children in immigrant families, for example, at age four the figures were 53.6 versus 37.1.

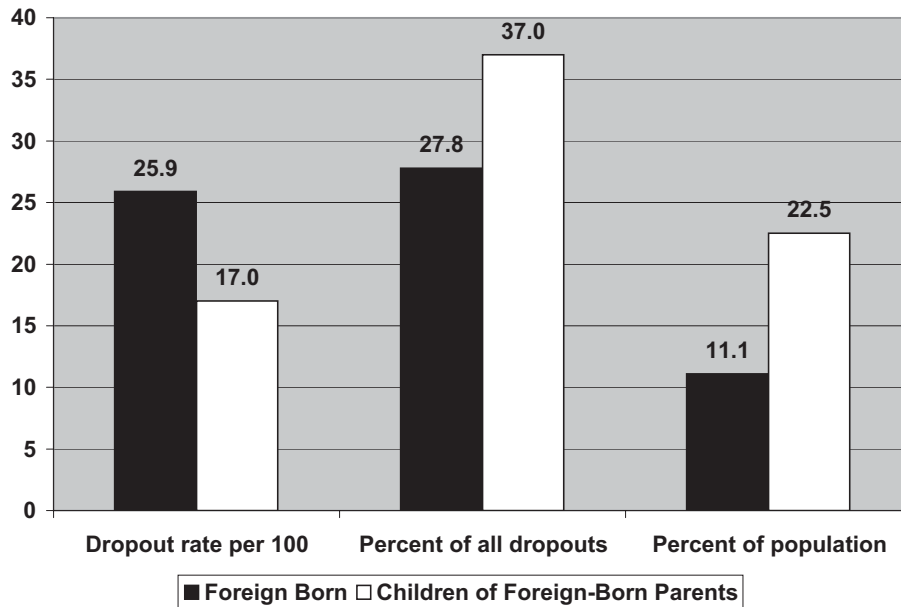
Table 4. Percent of Children Enrolled in School in Nevada by Immigrant Status: 2000

Type of Family	Pre/Nursery School			Kindergarten		Grade School	Any School	
	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 4	Age 5	Age 5	Age 4	Age 5
	26.8	44.7	24.0	3.7	48.3	3.6	48.4	76.0
Children in native-born families	31.9	51.0	27.7	2.6	47.9	3.7	53.6	79.3
Children in immigrant families	16.4	31.1	16.4	6.0	49.1	3.5	37.1	69.0

Source: Hernandez, Donald J., personal E-mail, “Nevada, Census 2000,” Calculations from Census 2000 5 Percent Microdata Samples (PUMS) by Donald J. Hernandez, Nancy A. Denton, and Suzanne E. Macartney, Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, University of Albany, State University of New York, 2006.

Research shows that immigrant children are more likely to drop out of school than natives. Child Trends’ calculations of Census 2000 data reveal that the dropout rate for foreign-born students was higher than for students of nonforeign-born parents (25.9 versus 17 percent). This is the case even though the former group proportionally made up a smaller percentage of the total population (11.1 versus 22.5 percent). See Figure 3.

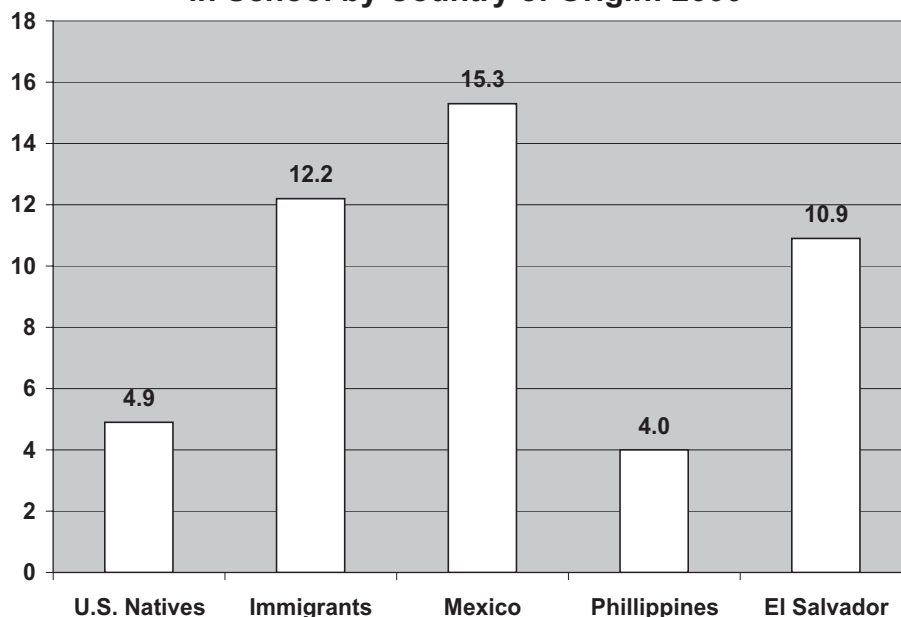
Figure 3. Dropout Rate, Percent of All Dropouts, and Percent of Population of Youth Ages 16 to 24, by Nativity: 2004



Source: Child Trends Data Bank, *High School Dropout Rates*, available online at: <http://www.childtrends.databank.org/indicators/1HighSchoolDropout.cfm>, as of 5/1/07.

The Nevada Department of Education reports that Nevada’s high school dropout rate in 2004-2005 was 5.7 percent and the CCSD’s rate was somewhat higher, 7.1 percent.²⁵ They do not report the dropout rate by immigrant status. CBER analysis of 2000 Census data, however, shows that immigrant children ages 5 to 17 (noncitizens who were born in a foreign country) were almost twice as likely not to be enrolled in school as natives.²⁶ Immigrants from Mexico were the most likely not to be enrolled in school. See Figure 4. Although there are no data to substantiate it, language isolation may have been a contributing factor. In the CCSD, 36.6 percent of the children and youth ages 17 and under were Hispanic (all races) in 2005-2006.²⁷

Figure 4. Percent of Children Ages 5 to 17 Not Enrolled in School by Country of Origin: 2000



Source: Evenson, Bengte and R. Keith Schwer, *The Status of Southern Nevada’s Immigrant Families*, Center for Business and Economic Research, UNLV, 2006.

Policy Considerations

Low-income immigrant children may face greater challenges than natives due to their low-economic status. This may be especially the case for Hispanics/Latinos, many who have limited English-speaking skills. Immigrant families may have a greater need for public benefits associated with low-wage work, including tax credits, housing, food assistance, health-insurance coverage, and child-care subsidies.²⁸

Of the estimated 16.3 percent of children in Nevada who are uninsured, 66 percent are eligible, but not enrolled in Medicaid or Nevada Check Up.²⁹ Additional funding for outreach activities is needed to increase enrollment of low-income immigrant children in publicly funded health programs and to increase their access to and utilization of health-care services.

Future growth of Nevada is dependent upon an educated work force. Developing strategies is essential to help prevent children from dropping out of school to realize their full earnings potential. “Lower levels of education among immigrants may limit future growth prospects. As such, education, though not a serious problem for some job types such as hotel-service and construction, can be a detriment in adjusting to the changing global economic environment and future regional-growth prospects.”³⁰

Shore for the Annie E. Casey Foundation identifies five strategies for reducing the dropout rate:

- “Make it harder for students to drop out of school
- Address the underlying causes of dropping out.
- Address the needs of the groups at highest risk of dropping out.
- Strengthen school readiness.
- Strengthen the skills and understanding of the adults who affect teens’ motivation and ability to stay in school.”³¹

Addressing the needs of the groups at highest risk of dropping out, bullet number three, is relevant to low-income immigrant children with limited English-speaking skills. Schools across the U.S. have experimented with implementing new policies and practices to meet the special needs of immigrant students. These schools worked to:

- “create small-school settings for the students
- strengthen English-as-a-Second-Language instruction
- foster one-on-one contact between adults and students
- encourage input from those who know the students best—their teachers.”³²

Building affordable housing in southern Nevada would help low-income immigrants reduce their housing costs. Research by the Center for Housing Policy identified the following strategies for increasing access to affordable housing:

- “Expand the availability of sites for the development of affordable homes
- Reduce red tape and other regulatory barriers to affordable homes
- Harness the power of strong housing markets
- Generate additional capital for affordable homes
- Preserve and recycle resources for affordable homes
- Empower residents to purchase and retain market-rate homes.”³³

Obviously, not all the challenges that low-income immigrant families and children face while living in southern Nevada were discussed in this essay. Many immigrant families require assistance with finding affordable, dependable child care; meeting their families’ food needs at home and at school; and finding and accessing affordable transportation. These are challenges low-income families face every day.

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Thanks to Lynn Bretthorst, CBER graduate assistant, for her help with this issue brief.

Endnotes

¹Malone, Nolan, Kaari F. Baluja, Joseph M. Costanzo, and Cynthia J. Davis. "The Foreign-Born Population: 2000," Census 2000 Brief. U.S. Census Bureau (Dec. 2003). <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-34.pdf>, as of 5/1/07.

²Ibid.

³Evenson, Bengte and R. Keith Schwer. The Status of Southern Nevada's Immigrant Families: Findings from the 2000 Census. Center for Business and Economic Research, UNLV (June 2006).

⁴Ibid.

⁵The Annie E. Casey Foundation, "One Out of Five U.S. Children Is Living in an Immigrant Family." Data Snapshot, Vol. 4 (March 2007). <http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citmla.htm>, as of 5/1/07.

⁶Ibid.

⁷The ACS Web site would not generate a table for Washoe County either because "... its total population is less than 1,000,000 or the population within the geography for the selected subject falls below a threshold of 65,000." U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder query, "Washoe County, Nevada SO602, Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations," <http://factfinder.census.gov>, as of 5/29/07.

⁸The reader is cautioned that estimates presented in the essay are taken from several U.S. Census Bureau surveys, which may have been conducted in different years. Definitions for immigrants may vary depending upon the source of data.

⁹The Annie E. Casey Foundation. "KIDS COUNT State-Level Data Online." <http://www.kidscount.org/sld/>, as of 4/27/07.

¹⁰Center for Business and Economic Research, UNLV.

¹¹The Annie E. Casey Foundation. "KIDS COUNT State-Level Data Online." <http://www.kidscount.org/sld/>, as of 4/27/07.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Capp, Randy and Karina Fortuny. "Immigration and Child Family Policy." The Urban Institute and Child Trends (12 Jan. 2006).

¹⁵Ku, Leighton. "Why Immigrants Lack Adequate Access to Health Care and Health Insurance." Migration Information Source (Sept 2006). <http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/print.cfm?ID=417>, as of 4/26/07.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ku, Leighton and Sheetal Matani. "Left Out: Immigrants' Access to Health Care and Insurance." Health Affairs (Jan./Feb. 2001).

¹⁸Lessard, Gabrielle and Leighton Ku. "Gaps in Coverage for Children in Immigrant Families" The Future of Children (Mar. 2003).

¹⁹Ku, Leighton and Sheetal Matani. "Left Out: Immigrants' Access to Health Care and Insurance." Health Affairs (Jan./Feb. 2001).

²⁰Guendelman, Sylvia, Veronica Angulo, Megan Wier, and Doug Oman. "Overcoming the Odds: Access to Care for Immigrant Children in Working Poor Families in California." Maternal and Child Health Journal 9.4 (Dec. 2005).

²¹U.S. Census Bureau. American FactFinder query, "Clark County, Nevada SO602, Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations," <http://factfinder.census.gov>, as of 4/30/07.

²²Huang, Zhihuan, Stella Yu, and Rebecca Ledesky. "Health Status and Health Service Access and Use Among Children in U.S. Immigrant Families." American Journal of Public Health 96.4 (April 2006).

²³The Annie E. Casey Foundation. "KIDS COUNT State-Level Data Online." <http://www.kidscount.org/sld/>, as of 4/27/07.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Daneshvary, Rennae, Keith Schwer, Lynn Bretthorst, William Cope, Bob Potts, and Freda Klein, Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2007. Center for Business and Economic Research, UNLV (2007).

²⁶Evenson, Bengte and R. Keith Schwer. The Status of Southern Nevada's Immigrant Families: Findings from the 2000 Census. Center for Business and Economic Research (June 2006).

²⁷Daneshvary, Rennae, R. Keith Schwer, Lynn Bretthorst, William Cope, Bob Potts, and Freda Klein. Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2007. Center for Business and Economic Research (2007).

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹"Medicaid Facts: Nevada." American Academy of Pediatrics (Jan. 2007). <http://www.childrenshospital.net/am/Template.cfm?Section=homepage&Template=/CM/contentdisplay.cfm&ContentID=1834>, as of 5/3/07.

³⁰Evenson, Bengte, and R. Keith Schwer. "The Status of Southern Nevada's Immigrant Families: Findings from the 2000 Census." p.11. Center for Business and Economic Research, UNLV (June 2006).

³¹Shore, Rima. "Reducing the High School Dropout Rate." KIDS COUNT Indicator Brief. p. 13. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (July 2003).

³²Hood, Lucy. "Immigrant Students, Urban High Schools: The Challenge Continues." Carnegie Corporation of New York 2003. http://www.nhc.org/pdf/pub_hwf_solutions_01_07.pdf, as of 5/3/07.

³³Lubell, Jeffery. Increasing the Availability of Affordable Homes: A Handbook of High-Impact State and Local Solutions. Center for Housing Policy and Housing for Working Families (2006). p. v. http://www.nhc.org/pdf/pub_hwf_solutions_01_07.pdf, as of 5/3/07.

If you need more specific information about the children and youth in your local area, contact Nevada KIDS COUNT, Keith Schwer, PhD, Director CBER or Rennae Daneshvary, PhD, Nevada KIDS COUNT Coordinator, Assistant Director CBER
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