

New "Right Start" Rankings Released

The Annie E. Casey Foundation recently updated its online report, *The Right Start for America's Newborns: City and State Trends*, to include 2001 data, adding to the birth information the report has tracked yearly since 1990.

The conditions under which infants are born can have lifelong effects on a child's development and readiness for school. The measures tracked in *The Right Start* are intended to provide policymakers, child advocates and others with data that reflect conditions prior to birth; a newborn's health status at birth; and maternal characteristics that are associated with a child's educational and social outcomes.

As of 2001, Massachusetts ranks in the top ten states in five of eight indicators. Boston ranks in the top ten in three indicators among the nation's 50 largest cities.

These are the eight indicators with Massachusetts and Boston ranks in parentheses:

- births to teens (MA 1; Boston 5)
- births to teens who were already mothers (MA 5; Boston 2)
- births to unmarried women (MA 6; Boston 28)
- births to mothers with less than 12 years of education (MA 8; Boston 6)
- births to mothers receiving late or no prenatal care (MA 6; Boston 16)
- births to mothers who smoked during pregnancy (MA 14; Boston 13)
- low-birthweight births (less than 5.5 pounds) (MA 19; Boston 26)
- preterm births (less than 37 weeks of gestation) (MA 11; Boston 20)

The report is available at <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/rightstart2004>. The online format allows viewers to create custom reports such as state and city profiles, line graphs showing trends over time, color-coded U.S. maps, and ranking tables, which are all generated from *The Right Start* database.

Don't Forget to Vote! Massachusetts Holds Primaries this Tuesday

Massachusetts holds its Presidential Primary this coming Tuesday, March 2nd 2004. Polling places are located in each precinct and are open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Call your local clerk or election commission to find out where your polling place is located. You can locate the number by visiting <http://www.state.ma.us/sec/ele/eleclk/clkidx.htm> or by looking under the white pages of your telephone book, under the name of your city or town.

Tax Credit Means Free Money – But Only If Claimed

Tax time is coming, and too many hard working families with low to moderate incomes miss an important federal tax credit: **The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**. The EITC provides families and individuals with extra money in a time of economic hardship, and can result in a refund up to \$4,200. An additional \$4,200 for a family earning less than \$34,000 increases the family's income by over 10%, and can mean better child care, a reliable car, or a security deposit and rent for a better apartment. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has released an [EITC toolkit](http://www.cbpp.org/eic2004/index.html), available at <http://www.cbpp.org/eic2004/index.html> with everything a person needs to know about how to file for the EITC, including the necessary application forms. The State of Massachusetts has its own version of this program available to workers who are eligible for the federal Earned Income Credit (EIC). The State of Massachusetts' EIC is an additional 15% of the federal EIC amount that a worker is entitled to receive. For information on how to claim the Massachusetts EIC visit <http://www.massresources.org>

SAVE THE DATE: MCC to promote Shaken Baby Syndrome Awareness at Boston's Baby Faire

Mark your calendars! This year's Boston Baby Faire will be held on April 24th and 25th. MCC will be on-site to promote awareness of Shaken Baby Syndrome and to pass out brochures for Child Abuse Prevention Month. Over 100 exhibitors will be showcasing their selection of baby products and services. You'll be able to collect free product samples and money-saving coupons, as well as have a chance to win prizes from exhibitors throughout the day. Lively stage entertainment and children's activity areas make the American Baby Faire experience fun for the entire family. The cost of admission is \$8.00 for adults and free for grandparents and children under twelve. Discount coupons for \$3.00 off are available at area Babies "R" Us locations. For more information visit: <http://www.americanbaby.com/ab/babyfaire/consumerInfo.jhtml>

StopFamilyViolence.Org Urges Academy of Motion Pictures to Act Responsibly

"Capturing the Friedmans", a film that distorts the truth about pedophilia and child sexual abuse in a way that harms victims and protects pedophiles, has been nominated for an Academy Award in the category "Best Documentary". In addition to perpetuating damaging myths about child sexual abuse, the film has been used to raise money for the release of convicted sex offenders from prison.

While the votes for the Oscar winners have already been cast, the organization Stop Family Violence has launched a national campaign to ask the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and ABC to air public service announcements that dispel these damaging myths about child sexual abuse and tell people where to call for help. For more information, please visit:

http://www.stopfamilyviolence.org/sfvo/oscar_main.html