



## Kids living in poverty on rise, study says

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While the number of births in Wayne County has declined, more of the county's children are living in poverty, according to a study released Monday.

Spending on programs to help children in their first years of life -- when brain development is the most rapid -- will prevent problems later, said officials with Great Start, a Wayne County collaborative.

The study was conducted for Great Start by Kurt Metzger of the United Way for Southeastern Michigan, who said the percentage of children under age 6 living in poverty in Detroit grew from 37% in 1999 to almost 46% in 2005. The percentage of those children living in poverty in Wayne County outside Detroit rose from almost 25% to just below 30%.

Metzger said there were 40,680 births in 1990 and 27,422 in 2005, a 33% drop.

Of every 100 babies born in Wayne County in 2004, 29 did not have adequate prenatal care and one in four babies in the county was born to a mother without a high school diploma. Both are indicators that the children will struggle in school, Metzger said.

There was some good news: The percentage of Wayne County children tested and found to have lead poisoning dropped to 5.2% in 2005; it was 9.5% in 2001.

John Colina, president of the Southgate-based Colina Foundation and a member of Great Start, said that for every dollar spent on early childhood development, the public receives \$17 in benefits that include a better-educated and higher-earning workforce and fewer children failing in school and going on to be criminals.

*For more information about Great Start, including how to get involved, go to <http://www.greatstartcollaborativewayne.org/>. Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at [jkresnak@freepress.com](mailto:jkresnak@freepress.com).*

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