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**Jefferson County Youth Development Leaders Gather for KIDS COUNT Conversation
Issues and Solutions for Youth Discussed**

Louisville, KY - Some 85 leaders and staff of youth development organizations in Jefferson County are gathering at Metro United Way today to talk about issues that face youth in the area, and ways that they can collaborate to make positive changes for kids. Kentucky Youth Advocates will present to the group on the findings in the [2009 Kentucky KIDS COUNT County Data Book](#), which tracks the well-being of Kentucky's children, and facilitate a discussion of how youth leaders can use the data in their own organizations.

"It's wonderful to be able to pull together a group of people who want to improve youth success," says Mary Kate Poling, Senior Vice President of Metro United Way. "We are coming together around good data, which should be at the heart of every decision we make for kids. The KIDS COUNT data for Jefferson County show us things that we need to improve on but they also point to strengths in our community and things we are doing well and it is critical that we pay heed to both."

The discussion focused on the following key findings for Jefferson County:

- The Jefferson County high school graduation rate increased from 69 percent in 2003 to 75 percent in 2008, yet remains below the state average of 85 percent.
- The percent of children exiting out-of-home care that were reunified with family decreased from 70 percent in 2003 to 62 percent in 2008.
- Jefferson County's rate of youth charged with status offenses in 2008 (77 per 10,000 ages 10-19) was lower than the state rate of 172 per 10,000.
- In 2006, 18 percent of Jefferson County residents who filed federal taxes claimed the Earned Income Tax Credit; up from 15 percent in 2000.

- The percent of children living in poverty increased from 19 percent in 2000 to 21 percent in 2007.

“We hope the individuals here today will take this data back to their organizations and use it to guide their day-to-day interventions with youth,” said Terry Brooks, executive director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. “But we also hope that they can get engaged in helping to forward state-level policies that will help all kids in Kentucky, including those in Jefferson County. For instance, current efforts to raise the compulsory attendance age to 18 and to improve accountability for alternative education programs are actions that would make a big difference for at-risk youth across the state.”

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Kentucky Youth Advocates is a non-partisan, non-profit, children's advocacy organization. KYA represents a voice for Kentucky's most precious asset – its youth. We believe that Kentucky's youth deserve the opportunities and resources necessary to ensure their productive development and health.