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UNTIL 12:00 AM August 16, 2006

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Study Finds Broken Rungs on Children's Ladder Shortcomings in Education, Mental Health, Child Welfare and More

A new report reviewing the status of children and youth in New York State identifies programs and policies that should be fixed by the next Governor and Legislature.

Growing Up In New York: Charting the Next Generation of Workers, Citizens and Leaders compiles into charts critical data needed to assess New York's progress in helping children, starting with pre-natal care and ending with post-secondary education. The study presents findings in seven areas – education, birth-to-five, health, mental health, economic security, child welfare and youth.

“New York's policymakers have worked hard to make a difference in children's lives,” said Karen Schimke, President and CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. “But this study identifies areas where we can and must do better.”

The most striking findings in the study show weaknesses in the transition into the teenage years. Between fourth and eighth grades, the share of children proficient in reading drops by almost one-third, from 70% to 48%. Four out of ten high school students do not graduate in four years – and two out of three Black and Hispanic youth. One out of five high school students reported engaging in binge drinking, and one out of eight reported being in a fight on school property. Only six out of ten teen mothers gets timely prenatal care, a rate that has not improved since 1997.

While the sharp decline in public assistance enrollment has been heralded as a victory over welfare dependency, *Growing Up In New York* found a potential downside for children. Not only did child participation in public assistance drop overall, it dropped as a share of all poor children by almost half – from 69% in 1993 to 36% in 2005. Those children are at risk of homelessness, hunger and other hardships that public assistance was established to prevent.

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The study found many positive markers as well. Juvenile arrest rates dropped sharply, while the rate of child health insurance coverage jumped. More students are taking AP classes, graduating with Regents diplomas and obtaining Bachelors degrees. The State Earned Income Tax Credit has expanded from an average grant of \$100 per eligible family in 1994 to more than \$600 per family in 2003.

“The problem is not that New York falls short of other states, but that our state falls short of its potential,” said Schimke. “We can do better by developing new strategies to help New York’s children.”

Growing Up In New York: Charting the Next Generation of Workers, Citizens and Leaders is available in Adobe Acrobat format on the SCAA website, www.scaany.org. Members of the press can also obtain a copy by contacting SCAA at (518) 463-1896.

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA) is a nonprofit organization that advocates for policies that will improve the lives of disenfranchised New Yorkers. SCAA achieves its reforms through creative and detail-conscious policy analysis, patient coalition-building and energetic advocacy to elected officials, agency executives and stakeholders. SCAA is based in Albany, the Capitol of New York State.

SCAA is a member of the New York Children’s Action Network, a broad-based coalition of organizations and individuals that provides a strong voice for the children of New York State.