

## WELCOME

On behalf of the Kern County Network for Children Governing Board, it is my pleasure to be releasing the 2013 Kern County Report Card. 2013 marks the 21st year of the joint partnership agreement that created the Kern County Network for Children. During the month of April, also referred to as Child Abuse Prevention month, we share with you the findings of this year's report.

More babies were born at low birth weight, however, fewer infants are dying before their first birthday. We are becoming increasingly aware that the sleep environment can mean life or death for our Kern County infants. Kern's declining teen birth rate mirrors the trend in California and throughout the nation. Kern County's average annual unemployment rate declined slightly in 2012, however, remains in the double digits. Housing affordability in Kern County is increasingly more difficult and more families are accessing safety net food programs.

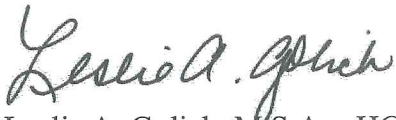
The impact of child abuse and neglect points to the importance of primary prevention. Programs and strategies like Differential Response, parent education, mental health services, expanding the availability of substance abuse treatment, all play a role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

It is your turn to make a difference in the life of a child. This "Make a Difference for a Child" theme represents efforts to change the way our communities think about prevention, focusing on community activities and public policies that prioritize prevention right from the start.

Working collaboratively is vitally important and is something Kern does well. However, we can always do better. We need to strive each and every day to be the best we can be, because one interaction with a child or family in need can change the outcome of their situation. We need to collaborate. Improving the health and well-being of our most vulnerable population is OUR responsibility. Everyone has a role to play and one by one, we can make a difference in the lives of our children.

The Kern County Report Card is produced as a call to action. It is important that we continue to be vigilant in our fight to improve the health and social service outcomes for our children and their families.

Sincerely,



Leslie A. Golich, M.S.A. - HCM  
KCNC Governing Board President