Our Opinion: Foreclosures hit kids

As economy suffers, so do our children

Each year the Annie E. Casey Foundation issues its Kids Count report on the status of children. Released this week, it shows that Florida ranks 36th among states in how well it does by its children.

What’s noticeable about this designation is that Florida consistently ranks in the middle or low 30s among all 50 states. Children’s advocates use this dismal number to push for more federal and state funding. But reports such as this one should be an incentive for all of us to pay closer attention to the needs of our children.

One way to do that is to get involved by lobbying local and state elected officials and potential candidates to make sure that their platforms include putting children first.

This ranges from support for programs that help educate young parents, funding for our public schools, initiatives that lead to the creation of jobs and skills training.

Equally important, is being more responsible parents. Improving the plight of our children starts with the environment in which they are born, nurtured and developed. That reaches beyond government’s help.

This summer, Circuit Judge Charles Dodson, whose work in the second Judicial Circuit often involves the juvenile docket, is reaching out to parents through public service announcements promoting the Parent Helpline, which is accessible by calling 1-800-352-5683 or dialing 211, the Big Bend emergency line.

This year, the Kids Count report shows how many families may be in economic distress, and that means their kids, too.

Consider this:

• More than 850,000 children in Florida lived in poverty in 2009, and 626,000 have been impacted by foreclosures since 2007. This makes Florida the state with the second highest percent of children impacted by their family’s loss of a home, income and stability.