Birth, marriage, death, disease, and accidents are among the vital statistics collected to help measure the health and well-being of the population. Indiana had 83,157 births in 1996, a change of -901 births from five years earlier in 1992 (-1.1 percent decrease). Of those live births, 11,850 were to teen mothers under age 20 — or 14.3 percent of all births in the state. Most births occurred to women between the ages of 20 to 29 (55.2 percent) and 30 to 39 (27.3 percent). There were 1,067 births to women age 40 and older in 1996, and 824 in 1992. The number of teen pregnancies in 1995 was 14,872, compared to 15,926 (15.9 percent) in 1990. There were 49,294 marriages in 1996, and 53,145 in 1990.

Among Indiana two-year old children in 1996, 73 percent had been fully immunized. Indiana had 52,927 deaths in 1996. Of those deaths, 16,785 (31.7 percent) were due to heart disease and 12,482 (23.6 percent) due to cancer. Motor vehicle accidents claimed 967 lives in 1996.

Sadly, in fiscal year 1997, 22,446 Indiana children were reported abused and 33,326 neglected; of those, 3,556 were substantiated as physical abuse, 3,421 as sexual abuse, and 11,127 as neglect. The percent of cases substantiated was 31.1 percent for abuse and 33.4 percent for neglect. The rate of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children under age 18 in Indiana was 12.4 in 1997, compared to 15.9 in 1996.

Questions to ponder...
Are low-cost health services such as immunization for children available to the working poor? What programs can help children and teens at risk? Are services available to help mothers of newborns? Do schools or other organizations provide education to children on drug and alcohol abuse? Is there a safety-net available to abuse victims?