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Indiana Improves in Education but Poverty Persists Overall State Child Well-being Ranking Rises

INDIANAPOLIS. – New data show Indiana children are making strides in education, but the state continues to struggle with high rates of child poverty.

Data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 2014 *KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book* ranked Indiana 27th nationally in overall child well-being, up three spots from 2013. The new ranking is related to improvement in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test scores. Fewer Indiana fourth grade students scored below proficient reading level in 2013, an 11 percent change from 2005, and fewer Indiana eighth graders scored below proficient math level, also an 11 percent change. The rankings are for the 50 states.

Indiana’s ranking for education is 26th, up from 34th in 2013. Though Indiana has improved its ranking, more work can be done to enhance the well-being of Hoosier children. Indiana children have made gains in reading and math test scores, but a significant number of students still performed below proficiency. Sixty-two percent of fourth grade students scored below proficient in reading, and a similar percentage of eighth graders scored below proficient in math.

“Any and all academic progress for Hoosier students is a cause for celebration,” said Bill Stanczykiewicz, president and CEO of the Indiana Youth Institute. “However, the fact that so many students still lack proficiency in reading and math reveals that Indiana’s educational outcomes still have room for significant improvement.”

In addition, the child poverty rate in Indiana is still high, even though Indiana’s economic well-being ranking improved. The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* ranked the economic well-being of Hoosier children 19th, up seven spots from last year’s *Data Book*. Indiana’s child poverty rate is at 22 percent, meaning nearly a quarter of Indiana’s children age 18 and under live in poverty. While that figure is slightly below the national average (23 percent), Indiana’s child poverty rate grew by 29 percent from 2005 to 2012, compared to 21 percent for the national average.

“While Indiana’s national ranking in child poverty has improved, the number of low-income children in the Hoosier state remains stubbornly high,” said Stanczykiewicz.

“The reasons for poverty are many and complex, but national research confirms that academic attainment is a primary pathway out of poverty. Continued improvement in Indiana’s education outcomes would lead to greater long-term reductions in Indiana’s child poverty rate.”

The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 25th edition *KIDS COUNT Data Book* provides a detailed picture of how children across the nation are faring. It gives a comprehensive index to measure childhood well-being at the national and state level in four categories—economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* ranks Indiana 27th in health and 31st in the family and community domain.

The [Indiana Youth Institute](#) (IYI) contributed data to the book for each of Indiana’s 92 counties. The national *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, Indiana statewide data, and [data for each Indiana county](#), are all available online.

The Indiana Youth Institute promotes the healthy development of children and youth by serving the people, institutions and communities that impact their well-being.

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(Note to editors: IYI provides members of the media free data research and information on sources for stories on youth issues. To access this service or to arrange an interview with IYI President and CEO Bill Stanczykiewicz, please contact Nicole Caan, media relations manager, at 800-343-7060, 317-396-2737 or ncaan@iyi.org.)