

**UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, July 21, 2015, 12:01 a.m. EDT**

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**Oklahoma Ranks 39<sup>th</sup> in Overall Child Well-Being, According to 2015 KIDS COUNT  
Data Book**

Oklahoma City – The state of Oklahoma ranks among the worst in the nation in the overall well-being of its children according to the 2015 *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *Data Book* released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The state's ranking remained stagnant at 39<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states. The *Data Book* reveals negative changes in the majority of economic well-being indicator rankings but improvement in all of the health indicator rankings.

- **Economic instability is increasingly an issue for Oklahoma children.** Three of the four indicators of economic well-being worsened. More children live in poverty, more teens are not in school and not working, and more parents lack secure employment.
- **Children are progressing slightly in the areas of education and health.** Three out of four education indicators covering milestones such as high school graduation and eight graders not proficient in math, showed some improvements, while the number of children not attending preschool – 59 percent – remained stagnant compared to 2007-09. Child health improved across the board with all four indicators. There were drops in child and teen mortality, low birthweight babies, teen substance abuse, and the percentage of children without health insurance.
- **Fluctuation among Family and Community indicators persists.** There was an increase in the percentage of children living in single parent families and the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas rose significantly. However, Oklahoma's teen birth rates improved and there was no change in the number of children where the household head lacked a high school diploma.

“Oklahoma is experiencing a time of economic growth, but poverty is increasing among the state's children and it is becoming more concentrated,” said Terry Smith, president and CEO of the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy, which directs Oklahoma KIDS COUNT. “There is an ever-widening gap between those children living in poor families and those children living in families with more resources.”

At the national level, about 1.7 million more children live in low-income working families today than during the Great Recession, according to the annual report. In 2013, one in four children, 18.7 million, lived in a low-income working family in the United States. Nearly a third of children are living in families where no parent has full-time employment. And even when parents are working full time, wages and benefits are often not sufficient to adequately support a family.

The 2015 *Data Book*, which focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, measures child well-being in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. The Casey Foundation report finds that the rising tide of recovery, with both increased employment and more concentrated wealth, has left stagnant pockets of low-income, struggling communities and families, where a child's future is anchored in scarcity and hardship.

“Although we are several years past the end of the recession, millions of families still have not benefited from the economic recovery,” said Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation. “While we've seen an increase in employment in recent years, many of these jobs are low-wage and cannot support even basic family expenses. Far too many families are still struggling to provide for the day-to-day needs of their children, notably for the 16 million kids who are living in poverty. We can and must do better: we can make policy choices to lift more families into economic stability.”

The Casey Foundation recommends policies that promote higher pay, paid sick leave, flexible scheduling and expanded unemployment benefits that will result in higher family income, reduced parental stress and an increased capacity of parents to invest in their kids. Detailed recommendations can be found in the 2014 report, [Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two-Generation Approach](#).

The 2015 *Data Book* will be available July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices, <http://mobile.kidscount.org>.

### **About the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier

places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

### **About the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy (OICA)**

The Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy is a non-partisan, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that creates awareness, takes action and changes policy to improve the health, safety and economic well-being of children and youth. More information can be found at [www.oica.org](http://www.oica.org).

### **About KIDS COUNT**

KIDS COUNT is a project that utilizes data and research to support smart decisions about children and families. A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the KIDS COUNT Data Center is the premier source for data on child and family well-being in the United States. Visit <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/> to access hundreds of indicators, download data and create reports and graphics. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.