

***** EMBARGOED UNTIL Tuesday, July 21, 2015, 12:01 a.m. EDT *****

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Pennsylvania Drops in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being

(HARRISBURG, PA) July 21 – Pennsylvania ranks 17th in the nation in overall child well-being, down from 16th a year ago, according to the latest 2015 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* issued today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children President and CEO Joan Benso called Pennsylvania's drop in the national rankings "a clear sign we need to pick up the pace in prioritizing investments in our children. We are hopeful a new state budget will begin moving us in the right direction."

The latest *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows more than half a million children living in poverty in Pennsylvania, or about 19 percent of the commonwealth's child population.

"While this is slightly better than the national rate of children in poverty, it's hardly an acceptable statistic," Benso said. "It's especially troubling to see that child poverty in the commonwealth has worsened since 2008, when we were in the depths of the recession and had about 1 in 6 children in poverty. Today, that statistic is about 1 in 5."

The *Data Book* released today uses 16 indicators to rank each state within four domains that represent what children need most to thrive. Pennsylvania now ranks:

- **19th in economic well-being, down from 17th last year.** The economic well-being domain examines data related to child poverty, family employment, housing costs and whether older teens not in school are working.
- **7th in education, the same ranking as last year.** The education domain looks at preschool opportunities, reading and math proficiency, and whether high school students graduate on time.
- **25th in the family and community domain, down from 23rd last year.** This domain examines the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas, single-parent households and education levels among heads of households, as well as teen birth rates.
- **21st in health, up from 25th last year.** The health domain looks at the percentage of children who lack health insurance, child and teen death rates, low-birth weight babies, and alcohol or drug abuse among teens.

Benso said Pennsylvania has ample room for improvement in our efforts to provide stronger economic well-being and family and community supports for our children. “The good news is that when we invest in the right strategies and policies, we can make a difference for kids,” she added.

Nationally, the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows about 1.7 million more children live in low-income working families today than during the Great Recession.

“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 2015 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* can be found online at www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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