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Utah kids compare favorably in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2015 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*

Children in Utah lag behind national averages in preschool attendance and graduating high school on time

Salt Lake City, UT – The Annie E. Casey Foundation released its annual *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* and Utah ranks in the top ten for the first time in several years.

“2011 was the last time we were in the top ten so a ranking of nine is good news for Utah,” says Terry Haven, deputy director for Voices for Utah Children.

The rankings are based on 16 child well-being indicators in four domains. Utah stayed the same in two domains, Education (29th) and Family and Community (2nd), dropped in its Health ranking from 4th to 7th, and improved in Economic Well-Being from 10th to 8th. Education remains Utah's lowest ranking in a domain indicator at 29.

This year's trend data is for 2007-2008 through 2013. Utah improved in 10 of the 16 indicators and worsened in six.

“While it is interesting to see how we compare to other states, it is even more useful to look at those states and see what is being done in the highest performing states. For example, 9% of Utah's children are uninsured. The best state, Massachusetts, has only 2% of their kids uninsured. To improve our ranking to number one for this indicator, we would have to insure 67,000 more kids. Expanding Medicaid coverage to more parents and investing in outreach to high uninsured populations, like Hispanic families would go a long way in closing Utah's gap,” says Haven.

Another area where Utah lags behind the nation is the percent of kids not attending preschool. The best state in the nation, Connecticut, has only 37% of its young children not attending preschool. In Utah, 60% of children don't attend. Utah has been making strides in this area through collaborative work with Voices for Utah Children, United Way and Salt Lake County as well as new appropriations from our legislators for

quality preschool. “We hope to expand these efforts and look forward to seeing these numbers improve,” says Haven.

Haven cautions that we need to remember that a number one ranking doesn’t mean there are no problems. Utah ranks first in the nation in the percent of children living in single-parent families, but still has 168,000 children living in a one-parent household. The state also ranks number one in lowest percent of teens who abuse alcohol or drugs, but 13,000 teens still participate in these unsafe behaviors.

“While we should be proud of the improvements we are seeing, we must remember that all children in Utah deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential,” says Haven. “Knowing that we are better than Nevada or Colorado is great but we need to make sure we are the best Utah for kids that we can be. This publication is a great start and provides the numbers to get us there.”

The 2015 Data Book will be available July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](http://www.aecf.org/kidscount), 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>. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.