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## **Colorado is 20th in Nation for Well-Being of Kids**

### ***Economic gains and policy changes improve Colorado's ranking for second year***

DENVER—Colorado moved up one spot to 20<sup>th</sup> in the nation in a ranking of overall child well-being, according to the 2016 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Colorado's gains in the economic well-being and health of kids drove the improved ranking this year. Indicators tracked during the past six years suggest a longer-term pattern of improved child well-being in our state, although data shows the economic recovery has been uneven across Colorado communities and demographic groups.

Colorado fares better than the national average in terms of the percent of children living in poverty and the percent of children living in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Yet, nearly one in three kids in Colorado lives in a family for whom housing is unaffordable.

Despite these positive trends, Colorado saw its education ranking drop three places to 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation due to a dip in test scores on a national assessment. We also remain among the bottom half of states in key indicators including the percent of babies born at low birthweight and the percent of teens who abused alcohol or drugs in the past year.

"The lives of many Colorado children have been improved because of innovative national and state policy action," said Bill Jaeger, Interim president and CEO of the Colorado Children's Campaign. "Our steady progress compared to other states shows that our long-term vision of providing every chance to every child is one we can achieve together. As we see progress, we need to double our efforts to ensure that Colorado's economic prosperity reaches every child, no matter their background, demographic or geography."

Although Colorado saw its fourth consecutive year of improvement in the percent of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment, the number has still not returned to pre-recession levels. In 2014, one in four Colorado kids were living in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment; compared to 2008, this represents about 18,000 more children whose parents lacked secure jobs to support their families.

Colorado's rankings in the 2016 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*:

- Overall: 20<sup>th</sup> (up from 21<sup>st</sup> in 2015)
- Economic Well-Being: 12<sup>th</sup> (up from 13<sup>th</sup> in 2015)

- Education: 12<sup>th</sup> (down from 9<sup>th</sup> in 2015)
- Health: 43<sup>rd</sup> (up from 44<sup>th</sup> in 2015)
- Family and Community: 22<sup>nd</sup> (same as 2015)

**Encouraging Trends in this year's report:**

- Colorado's teen birth rate fell 50 percent between 2008 and 2014, the steepest decline of any state. Colorado ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the nation on this indicator with 20 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 19, down from 40 per 1,000 in 2008.
- Just six percent of Colorado kids were uninsured in 2014, down from eight percent the previous year. This improvement buoyed Colorado from 36<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> in the rankings for this indicator. Compared to 2008, there were over 100,000 fewer uninsured children living in Colorado in 2014.
- Colorado's child poverty rate fell for the second year in a row in 2014. Fifteen percent of Colorado kids—about 190,000 children—lived in poverty in 2014, returning to pre-recession levels.
- About 12 percent of Colorado children (155,000 kids) lived in families where the household head lacked a high school diploma in 2014, down from 15 percent (176,000 kids) in 2008.
- In line with national trends, Colorado has seen a decrease in the percent of teens ages 12 to 17 who abused alcohol or drugs in the past year. Just six percent of teens reported abusing alcohol or drugs in 2013-2014, compared to 10 percent in 2007-2008 – a decline of 40 percent.
- Colorado rose from 32<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> for the percent of children in households with a high housing cost burden. 32 percent of children lived in households that spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing in 2014, compared to 34 percent in 2013 and 38 percent in 2008. However, despite this improvement, nearly one in three kids in Colorado live in families for whom housing is unaffordable.

The 2016 *Data Book* will be available June 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.

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*The **Colorado Children's Campaign** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization committed since 1985 to realizing every chance for every child in Colorado. We advocate for the development and implementation of data-driven public policies that improve child well-being in health, education and early childhood. We do this by providing Coloradans with trusted data and research on child well-being and organizing an extensive state-wide network of dedicated child advocates. For more information, please visit [www.coloradokids.org](http://www.coloradokids.org).*

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