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## Kansas has third largest drop in annual state rankings of child well-being

*Consequences of state policy choices reflected in 2016 Annie E. Casey  
Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Book*

TOPEKA, KAN. – As the national economy continues to improve, indicators pointing to the well-being of Kansas children stagnated or declined significantly, according to the latest *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

This year marks the 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Data Book*, which ranks each state in 16 indicators of child well-being within four domains: economic well-being, education, health and family and community. Kansas ranks 19<sup>th</sup> overall this year, down from 15<sup>th</sup> in 2015. Kansas experienced the third largest overall state ranking drop. Most notably, Kansas dropped from 13<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> in the overall health domain and from 12<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> overall in the education domain. The state also failed to make advances in economic well-being and family and community, stagnating at 9<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, respectively.

“Since 2011, Kansas has reduced early education funding and significantly weakened the state safety net. This has been negatively impacting children and families for years, but we’re only just now starting to see the consequences due to a lag in the data,” said Annie McKay, president and CEO of Kansas Action for Children. “What’s evident is that policy choices of the post-recession years have eroded the well-being of children and families in Kansas - especially compared to other states that made different choices. Kansas struggles to keep afloat while other states swim laps around us.”

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* focuses on multi-year trends rather than year-to-year data. This is because year-to-year comparisons can mask how states perform over the longer-term. This year’s data reflects trends from 2008 (the start of the Great Recession) to 2014 (the most recent federal data available).

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Other highlights from the *Data Book*:

- From 2008 to 2014, the number of Kansas children living in high poverty areas increased to 65,000 – or 9 percent of all kids – compared to 2 percent in 2000;
- Children in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment increased to 25 percent, with the overall state ranking dropping from 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> since last year’s Data Book;
- 65 percent of Kansas fourth graders scored below proficient in reading, dropping from 13<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> nationally since 2015;
- The percentage of children without health insurance improved, dropping from eight percent to five percent since 2008, with Kansas’ national ranking in this indicator improving from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> since last year’s Data Book. This reflects national trends attributed to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

“Kansas investments in early child health and education have largely stagnated or declined since the Great Recession, which ended years ago,” said McKay. “Unfortunately, instead of re-investing in important programs like early childhood education and expanding access to the safety net for Kansas’ most vulnerable kids, policymakers weakened the safety net, repeatedly cut or swept funding for the Children’s Initiatives Fund and diminished the state revenue stream, making Kansas families even more vulnerable and economically fragile. Kansas’ overall decline is a direct reflection of those choices,” said McKay.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* features the latest data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. This information is available in the KIDS COUNT Data Center, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of measures of child wellbeing. Data Center users can create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites and view real-time information on mobile devices.

The 2016 *Data Book* is available at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). 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.

For more than 30 years, Kansas Action for Children has worked to shape health, education and economic policy that puts children first. Visit [kac.org](http://kac.org) to learn more about our policy priorities and to view KIDS COUNT data at the state and county levels. This October, KAC will issue the Kansas KIDS COUNT report with updated county-level data.

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