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National Report: N.M. Still Ranks 49th for Overall Child Well-Being

KIDS COUNT Data Book Report Ranks N.M. 50th in Education, Child Poverty; 44th in Health

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—New Mexico retains its ranking of 49th out of 50 states, according to the 2016 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This marks the third year in a row that the state has ranked next-to-last in the nation for child well-being; only Mississippi has ranked lower. However, New Mexico has shown some progress in some indicators of child well-being—particularly in health, where the state rose four positions to 44th place.

“There are some bright spots for New Mexico in the *Data Book* this year,” said Veronica C. García, Ed.D., executive director of New Mexico Voices for Children, which runs the state’s KIDS COUNT program. “However, some of our success is overshadowed by the fact that other states are seeing more significant improvement. Once again, New Mexico is falling behind.”

The national *KIDS COUNT Data Book* ranks the 50 states on a total of 16 indicators of child well-being. The indicators are grouped under four domains: economic well-being, education, health and family and community. The indicators range from the percent of children in poverty to fourth grade reading proficiency, to the percentage of children without health insurance and teen birth rates. Each indicator and each domain receives a ranking from which the overall ranking is determined.

This year, New Mexico fell to 50th place in the education domain. The state had ranked 49th in this domain for the past four years. “Overall, we’ve been improving slightly in the education domain, especially in preschool attendance,” said Dr. García. “Making strong gains in the rankings is difficult, because as all states make improvements, they move upwards together.”

New Mexico also fell to 50th place in the child poverty indicator, even though the state’s rate of child poverty—30 percent—fell slightly from 31 percent in last year’s *Data Book*.

New Mexico did pull ahead of some other states in one area. “The biggest bright spot was our ranking in the health domain, which rose from 48th last year to 44th this year,” said Amber Wallin, MPA, the New Mexico KIDS COUNT director. “We can give a lot of the credit for this improvement on the fact that New Mexico chose to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. Some 35,000 kids who were already eligible for Medicaid but who were not signed up received insurance when their parents enrolled. States that didn’t expand Medicaid didn’t see such a dramatic increase in children with health insurance. It just goes to show that public policies can lead to dramatic improvements for our children.”

The single most significant indicator impacting child well-being continues to be New Mexico’s child poverty rate, according to Dr. Garcia. “Child poverty is the persistent problem that’s going to keep our state at the bottom of the rankings until we have the political will to address it in a comprehensive way,” she said. “When our kids aren’t doing well it’s because their families aren’t doing well. And when our families are struggling that means our state’s economy is struggling. [Child poverty is a microcosm of a larger, systemic problem](#) that drags down everyone’s quality of life. But it’s not likely to budge until we ensure that every family has the tools necessary to work their way out of poverty.”

Two fact sheets for New Mexico are attached separately and can also be accessed online at www.nmvoices.org.

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The 2016 Data Book will be available June 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at 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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. 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.



KIDS COUNT© is a program of New Mexico Voices for Children and is made possible by grants from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

New Mexico Voices for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.

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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.