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Pennsylvania Falls Again in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being

HARRISBURG, Pa.— For the second year in a row, Pennsylvania has dropped in the national rankings for overall child well-being, falling to 18th in the country, according to the 2016 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* issued today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The commonwealth's ranking worsened from 17th last year and 16th two years ago. Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children President and CEO Joan Benso called Pennsylvania's continual decline in the national rankings a wake-up call for the state's policymakers.

"Our gradual fall in rankings in recent years reflects Pennsylvania's failure to prioritize investments in our kids," Benso said. "We need stronger investments in critical areas like child care, evidence-based home visiting programs and high-quality Pre-K and K-12 education. We need to start with this year's budget and continue in the years ahead to turn this decline around and begin moving up in state rankings."

"Pennsylvania's children are the single greatest resource we have to build a bright future, but we're not being aggressive enough in ensuring we are giving our kids what they need to succeed," she added.

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

- **22nd in economic well-being, down from 19th 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.
- **10th in education, down from seventh 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, the same ranking as 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.
- **13th in health, up from 21st 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.

On the whole, the report indicates Pennsylvania's children are still facing tough economic times due to a sluggish recovery, while poverty continues to be a challenge in many households. A large number of children live in households where parents lack a high school diploma.

"Because we know education is an effective tool to help children get ahead, Pennsylvania needs to invest more aggressively to increase access to high-quality Pre-kKand better fund our public schools so every child has the resources to achieve, regardless of where that child lives," Benso said. "Every year we wait is a year we risk falling further behind."

“This generation of teenagers and young adults are coming of age in the wake of the worst economic climate in nearly 80 years, and yet they are achieving key milestones that are critical for future success,” said Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation. “We urge candidates in state and national campaigns to describe in depth their proposals to help these determined young people realize their full potential.”

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. 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.

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children is a strong, effective and trusted voice to improve the health, education and well-being of children and youth in the commonwealth. Since 1992, our public policy victories have helped countless children learn, thrive and succeed, regardless of circumstances. PPC is statewide, independent, non-partisan and non-profit.

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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, visit www.aecf.org.

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