



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **South Carolina Reaches Its Highest Annual KIDS COUNT Ranking of Overall Child Well-Being**

***Public Health Prevention Strategies Having Positive, Long-Term Impact; Significant Challenges Remain for Education and Economy***

**Columbia, S.C.**— South Carolina moved to its highest spot in the 27-year history of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's annual *KIDS COUNT*® *Data Book* rankings at No. 41, marking the second consecutive year of improvement for the state in measures of child well-being. The only other period the state improved in consecutive years came in a three-year stretch from 1999 to 2001.

After jumping three spots last year to No. 42, South Carolina climbed one more this year and showed improvements in the health and economic well-being categories.

Children's Trust Chief Executive Officer Sue Williams called the advances a positive step.

"We see slow and steady progress for children and their families, especially where we are making investments in prevention and using proactive public health strategies that work to give children a great start in life. Fewer children are being born at a low birthweight, and more children have access to health care," said Williams.

Data also show that key indicators for our youth are improving. The child and teen death rate, teen birth rate, and percent of teens abusing drugs and alcohol have all decreased significantly since 2008. Children's Trust believes success is due in part to prevention and intervention programs around distracted driving, maternal health and teen pregnancy.

However, other indicators reveal significant deficits and send a strong signal that dedicated strategies are needed to give South Carolina children and families improved opportunities:

- 56 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds are not attending school;
- 67 percent of fourth graders are not proficient in reading;
- 74 percent of eighth graders are not proficient in math; and

- 27 percent of children live in poverty.

“For South Carolina to rise out of the bottom 10, we must help parents earn what it takes to support a family, and we must work to ensure children are getting the education they need for the future,” said Williams. “With education and financial security, families have more opportunity to succeed, and that can have a significant impact to reduce the stressors that can lead to child abuse and neglect.”

Children’s Trust Director of Policy Megan Branham believes the state can continue to make strides in the ranking by addressing particular issues.

“There are very specific things we could do to help children and families,” Branham said. “Expand the choices of quality, affordable child care services; make available a state earned-income tax credit to help working families meet basic needs; and utilize racial impact assessments to increase equity and opportunity for children of color, who continue to face significant barriers to their success.”

Children’s Trust is a leader in the work of the [Early Childhood Common Agenda](#), which supports all these solutions.

Children’s Trust is the KIDS COUNT grantee for South Carolina. The 2016 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* measures child well-being in all 50 states and in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. 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 well-being. Data Center users can create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, as well as view real-time information on mobile devices.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* and South Carolina state profile is available on June 21, at 12:01 a.m. EDT on the Casey Foundation website at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

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*Children’s Trust of South Carolina is the only statewide organization dedicated to strengthening and supporting public and private prevention efforts that keep South Carolina’s children safe. It works to prevent child abuse, neglect and unintentional injuries so every child has the opportunity to thrive in a healthy, nurturing environment. Children’s Trust is home to KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Safe Kids South Carolina, Prevent Child Abuse South Carolina and other programs that deliver on this mission. For more information, visit [scChildren.org](http://scChildren.org).*

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation, which produces the annual Data Book, 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.*