



UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, June 21, 2016, 12:01 a.m. EDT

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More Washington Kids Have Health Coverage, but Poverty Still a Roadblock

KIDS COUNT report gives state better well-being ranking, but still shows big challenges

SEATTLE – Kids and families in Washington state have made some progress in the face of poverty rates that have yet to improve, according to the new national 2016 *KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book* from the [Annie. E. Casey Foundation](#).

Washington is ranked 15th among the 50 states in the Data Book, moving up four places in the national rankings of child well-being since 2015.

Key among the positive changes: since 2008, the number of children growing up without the health coverage they need to see a doctor or get medicine when they're sick has improved by 38 percent. What's at work is the state's Cover All Kids law, which passed in 2007 and created affordable health coverage called Apple Health for Kids. The Affordable Care Act's 2014 creation of a flexible market for individual plans has also propelled child coverage in Washington to one of the nation's highest.

Yet the child poverty rate is nearly 30 percent higher than it was in 2008, with an additional 59,000 children growing up below the federal poverty level. Poverty can impede children's cognitive, social and emotional development and contribute to poor health. And poverty disproportionately harms kids and families in communities of color, who face other barriers to economic security in the form of an educational opportunity gap and a high cost burden for housing, food and other basic needs. These stressors are caused by, and contribute to, the structural racism faced by families of color. This undermines progress for children and the state as a whole.

"We can't afford to leave any children on the wrong side of these barriers," says Paola Maranan, executive director of the Children's Alliance, a statewide organization advocating for racially equitable policy solutions that move all of Washington's 1.6 million children along a path of opportunity.

"Children of color are already the majority in 12 states. By the end of the decade, children of color will be the majority of all children in the United States," says Laura Speer, associate

director for policy reform and advocacy at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Our shared future depends on today’s young people fulfilling their potential.”

The Children’s Alliance and the Washington State Budget & Policy Center support two-generation approaches to creating economic security for both children and their parents—because kids do better when their parents do better. One 2016 proposal that would help both kids and families is Initiative 1433, now gathering signatures for the state’s November ballot. It would raise the take-home pay for the working parents of an estimated 90,000 Washington children. And it would also provide up to seven days of paid sick and safe leave per year, helping Washington families by ensuring that workers don’t lose wages when they need to take care of themselves or their children when they’re sick.

The 2016 *Data Book* will be available Tuesday, 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.

KIDS COUNT is a partnership of the Children’s Alliance with the Washington State Budget & Policy Center, pursuing measurable improvements in child outcomes through equitable public-policy measures. We give policymakers and the public the knowledge they need to remove the barriers kids face to brighter, freer, more equal futures.

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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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