



EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE 13 June 2017, 12:01 a.m. EDT

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Alaska 38th in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being

The Last Frontier finished in the bottom 10 among U.S. states in health and education

ANCHORAGE, Alaska, June 13, 2017 – Despite a few bright spots in economic well-being and family and community aspects, Alaska is in the bottom half of the U.S. for overall child well-being, ranking 38th in the *2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#).

Although Alaska ranks in the bottom half of three out of the four child well-being domains, the state has seen some improvements. The percentage of fourth graders who scored below proficient on reading exams dropped by 3 percent, the state's greatest increase over the past five years. Alaska also saw declines in the percentages of children lacking health insurance coverage, teens not working and not attending school, and children living in families where a parent lacks a high school diploma. The state remains in the top half of states in the family and community domain, finishing 22nd.

“As Alaska struggles to find a solution to the nearly \$3 billion state fiscal gap, one of the most important questions we need to answer is how to best to use the available funds, “ said Abbe Heensley, executive director of Best Beginnings. “Research shows that supporting the policy prescription to invest in our children is key for our state’s future.” Trevor Storrs, executive director of the Alaska Children’s Trust says, “The size of the Alaska fiscal gap ensures that balancing the state budget will be costly no matter what measures are taken. When the Legislature explores potential revenue sources to help fill the fiscal gap, it will be important to select sources that have the least impact on families.”

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — that represent what children need most to thrive. The report measures data over a five-year period, from 2010 to 2015, as well as year to year. Alaska ranks:

- **22nd in the family and community domain.** Alaska finished in the top 10 ranking in both the percentage of children living in families where the head of household lacks a high school diploma (sixth, tying with eight other states), and the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas (seventh, tying with five other states).

- **36th in economic well-being.** While Alaska dropped seven spots in the rankings of children living in poverty since 2010, the state finished with the ninth lowest child poverty rate in the nation in 2015, tying with five other states.
- **41st in health.** Even with Alaska deciding to opt-in to the Medicaid expansion, the state has the highest percentage of children without health insurance in the nation, a terrible statistic that must be reversed immediately. Eleven percent of our children do not have health insurance, more than double the national average of 5 percent.
- **46th in education.** At 68 percent, the percentage of eighth graders below proficient in math remained largely stagnant over the last five years. But Alaska is not alone in its need to invest in academics as the national average is also 68 percent. Alaska's high-school graduation rate in 2015 ranked among the bottom 5 percent in the nation.

"The 2017 *Data Book* shows that Alaska is at a critical point. This is not a time for further cuts to the essential services that ensure our children and families succeed", said Storrs. "In recent years, government policies have helped drive positive outcomes for children and families. We recognize our Legislators have a tough decision before them to address the fiscal gap. Our hope is this data is utilized to help drive key decision and use this opportunity to be innovative to improve the health and education of our future generations."

Release Information

The 2017 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available June 13 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the Data Book can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

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About Alaska Children's Trust

Alaska Children's Trust improves the status of children in Alaska by generating funds and committing resources to eliminate child abuse and neglect. Established in 1997, ACT has granted over \$5 million dollars to organizations across the State of Alaska to prevent child abuse and neglect. www.alaskachildrenstrust.org

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

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.