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## Connecticut Ranks Sixth Overall in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being

*Solid Gains in Health, Education Require Continued Investment  
Amid Discussion of Budget Cuts*

HARTFORD, Conn., June 13, 2017 — According to the 2017 *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Connecticut is among the leading states in the country when it comes to child well-being, finishing sixth overall. Connecticut ranked high in overall health and education domains, finishing third and fourth respectively.

Progress for kids in health and education reflect targeted state investments in these areas, including the HUSKY Health program (which encompasses Medicaid and CHIP in Connecticut) and early care and education — areas where state policymakers are now considering budget cuts. Meanwhile, more than 100,000 children in Connecticut are living below the poverty line, and the state is 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation for children living in high-poverty areas and 18<sup>th</sup> in parents lacking secure employment. The state's relatively lower rankings in economic well-being reflect the need for greater investment in areas of concentrated poverty and better employment opportunities.

“Connecticut is a great place for most kids to grow up, and that’s something to celebrate,” said Jim Horan, CEO of the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), the Connecticut KIDS COUNT organization. “We need to maintain the investments that make this possible, and seek to improve outcomes for *all* children, especially those living in poor cities.”

The annual *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *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. Connecticut ranks:

- **Third in health.** The percentage of low-birthweight babies remains a challenge for the state as Connecticut is ranked 22<sup>nd</sup>. However, with the lowest child and teen death rate in the country, and ranking fifth in the number of children not covered by health insurance, Connecticut’s health policies and systems are serving children well.
- **Fourth in education.** In addition to leading the country in the percentage of children ages 3 and 4 attending preschool, Connecticut also ranks fourth for the percentage of fourth graders reading at grade level. Unfortunately, the closure of Care 4 Kids, the state childcare subsidy program funded under the Child Care Development Block Grant, threatens these high marks for early education. These rankings, combined with Connecticut’s 16<sup>th</sup> place finish for eighth grader proficiency in math and 12<sup>th</sup> for students not graduating on time, underscore the additional work that must be done to support students.

- **Ninth in the family and community domain.** Connecticut’s teen birth rate is the second lowest in the nation, and the state ranks sixth in the percentage of children living in families where the head of the household has at least a high-school diploma. However, 32 percent of Connecticut’s children live in single-parent families, and 9 percent live in high-poverty areas, both of which, as research shows, can impede healthy youth development.
- **17<sup>th</sup> in economic well-being.** Connecticut remains one of the top five states with a low percentage of teens not working and not in school. But with more than a third of children growing up in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, and with 27 percent of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment, there is clearly room for improvement.

As the *2017 Data Book* shows, Connecticut is a national leader in early child care and education, K-12 education, children’s health, and teen pregnancy prevention, and this due to strong state — and in some cases, local — policies and financial support in these areas. These investments have long-term payoffs for children and the state.

However, despite strong national rankings on child well-being in the state, there also exist clear disparities at the local level, with some communities disproportionately impacted by economic hardship or facing obstacles in health and education. A [town-by-town state KIDS COUNT® report](#) and the recent CAHS *KIDS COUNT®* Special Report, “[Race Equity in the Five Connecticut](#),” take an in-depth look at child well-being at the local level.

“Our biggest concern right now is the state budget, since the deficit threatens a wide range of investments in early care and education, health insurance coverage, K-12 education and more,” said Horan. “At the same time, it’s clear that we need to invest more in our cities and kids of color so that all children have the opportunity to thrive. Policymakers must think about our future — our children — as they finalize the state budget.”

#### **Release Information**

The *2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 13 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://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](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

#### **About the Connecticut Association for Human Services**

The Connecticut Association for Human Services has been at the center of the fight to eliminate poverty in Connecticut for over a hundred years. Every day, we advance policies and deliver programs that help make sure every family and every child has an equal opportunity to thrive and share in our prosperity.

#### **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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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