



UNDER EMBARGO

Until 12:01 AM EDT

June 13, 2017

CONTACT: Teresa Falgoust

(504) 586-8509, ext. 117

tfgoust@agendaforchildren.org

Louisiana Ranked 48th in Latest National Rankings for Overall Child Well-Being

*Despite High Child Poverty Rate,
96 percent of Louisiana Children Have Health Insurance*

NEW ORLEANS, June 13, 2017 — More Louisiana children have access to health insurance today than in previous years, but the state continues to struggle to see significant gains for children in their overall well-being, according to data shown in the *2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In 2015, just 4 percent of Louisiana children were uninsured, a result of sustained, ongoing commitments to improve policies and expand coverage through Medicaid, LaCHIP and the Affordable Care Act. Regarding access to health insurance, Louisiana was in line with national trends: 43 other states also saw improvements in children with health insurance between 2010 and 2015.

However, information from the *Data Book* also confirms that Louisiana children fall at the bottom of all well-being indicators. They are more likely than their peers nationwide to experience negative outcomes such as living in poverty, not graduating high school on time, or being born at a low birthweight.

“As Louisiana grapples with budget deficits, we need a laser-like focus on policies that can bring more economic opportunity to children and families,” said Dr. Anthony Recasner, CEO of Agenda for Children. “If we want a strong economy in the future, we need to make sure that today’s families have clear pathways out of poverty. We also need to give children access to high-quality education and healthcare so that they can be prepared for tomorrow’s jobs.”

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. Louisiana ranks:

- **47th in education.** This domain examines the percentage of children ages 3 and 4 not attending school, fourth graders below proficient reading level, eighth graders below proficient math level, and high school students not graduating on time.
- **48th in the family and community domain.** 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.
- **49th in health.** The health domain looks at the percentage of children who lack health insurance, child and teen death rates, low-birthweight babies, and alcohol or drug abuse among teens.

- **49th in economic well-being.** The economic well-being domain examines data related to child poverty, family employment, housing costs and whether older teens not in school are working.

The *2017 Data Book* revealed that while Louisiana children have made gains in some areas, the state continues to lag behind almost every other state on most measures of child well-being included in the *Data Book*.

- **Fewer children live in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma.** In 2015, 13 percent of Louisiana children lived in families where the head of household lacks a high school diploma, a decrease of 24 percent since 2010. Louisiana ranked 37th on this measure in this year's *Data Book*.
- **The state has one of the highest percentages of non-working, non-matriculated teens.** Despite a 21 percent reduction in the percentage of teens ages 16-19 who are neither in school nor working between 2010 and 2015, Louisiana ranked 50th among states on this measure.
- **The child and teen death rate is on the rise.** Louisiana was one of 14 states in which the child and teen death rate increased between 2010 and 2015. With 40 deaths per 100,000 children, Louisiana's rate was 60 percent higher than the national average.

Economic security indicators showed that Louisiana children continue to face serious economic challenges, even as the country moves beyond the recession. While the child poverty rate has decreased slightly nationwide since 2010, Louisiana has seen a small uptick. In 2015, 28 percent of Louisiana children lived in poverty — two and a half times as large as New Hampshire's rate, which was the lowest in the country. Just over a third (34 percent) of Louisiana children lived in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment in 2015.

“Policies that help working families maintain their jobs and get ahead — such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Care Assistance — are some of the best tools we have to make sure children grow up in economically secure households,” said Dr. Recasner. “Louisiana has made some improvements to policies in recent years, but if we really want to move the needle on child poverty, our lawmakers need to significantly increase public investments in these evidence-based programs.”

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.

About Agenda for Children

Agenda for Children, a private non-profit organization, works to make Louisiana a state in which all children can thrive. Visit www.agendaforchildren.org to learn more.

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.

###