



**Media Contact:**

OICA CEO Joe Dorman: [jdorman@oica.org](mailto:jdorman@oica.org) or 405-892-9205

## **Oklahoma Ranks 36<sup>th</sup> in National Ranking of Child Well-Being**

*State makes modest gains and policy improvements during a difficult legislative session*

**OKLAHOMA CITY, June 13, 2017** — Oklahoma falls below the national average in several areas of child well-being, placing the state at 36<sup>th</sup> in the nation, according to the 2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Despite seeing modest improvements, advocates say the state needs to do more.

“A ranking of 36<sup>th</sup> place out of 50 is not good enough for our children and not good enough for Oklahoma,” said Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy (OICA) CEO Joe Dorman. “Our mediocre outcomes reflect mediocre investments made in the services that children rely on, like public education and health. We have to do more to lift our children up and lay the groundwork for the next generation to be successful.”

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 reflect what children need most to thrive. Oklahoma ranks:

- **28<sup>th</sup> 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. In Oklahoma, 22 percent of children – more than one in five – are growing up below the poverty line.
- **29<sup>th</sup> in health:** The health domain looks at the percentage of children who lack insurance, child and teen death rates, low-birth weight babies and alcohol or drug abuse among teens. Oklahoma moved up five spots in health to 29<sup>th</sup> place, due in part to increased access to health insurance. Seven percent of Oklahoma’s kids now lack coverage, a 30 percent decrease between 2010 and 2015.
- **39<sup>th</sup> in education:** This domain examines the percentage of children ages 3 and 4 not attending school, fourth graders not proficient in reading, eighth graders not proficient in math and high school students not graduating on time. Fifty-seven percent of Oklahoma’s 3- and 4-year olds are not attending school, above the national average. A disappointing 77 percent of eighth graders lack proficiency in math.

- **39<sup>th</sup> in family and community:** 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 births. The teen birth rate in Oklahoma remains far higher than the national average at 35 births per 1,000 females, compared to 22 nationally. Twelve percent of children are living in high-poverty neighborhoods.

Dorman said, despite the rankings, the state has made progress in pursuing reforms that should have an impact in the long run, such as a push to address child nutrition. OICA worked closely with legislators to pass a bill strengthening child nutrition by supporting greater partnerships between food banks and public schools.

“While we still have a ways to go, I am proud of the progress that Oklahoma has made for our state’s children through data-driven investments and policies,” said Dorman. “Maintaining health care programs, investing in early childhood education and expanding programs to create economic stability for families will help ensure all children in the state have the opportunity to thrive.”

#### **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 Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy**

Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy (OICA) is an Oklahoma partner of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, visit <http://oica.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, building paths to economic opportunity and transforming 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.