

UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, June 13, 2017, 12:01 a.m. EDT

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Rhode Island Ranks 29th in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being

Report tells policymakers: Do not backtrack on gains made for children

Providence, R.I., June 13, 2017 – The 2017 edition of the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, a state-by-state report on child well-being issued today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, finds that Rhode Island ranks 29th in the nation for overall child well-being.

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 — which represent what children need most to thrive. The report examines trends over a five-year period, as well as annual changes.

The economic well-being for many families in Rhode Island has been up and down. In 2015, 35 percent of children lived in families that spent 30 percent or more of their salaries on housing — a 22 percent change from 2010 and a decrease from 2014, when it was 42 percent. The state has seen a relatively steady decline over the years in children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round work, falling from 34 percent in 2010 to 30 percent in 2015.

There is also room for progress in education for Rhode Island’s children, especially with reading and math proficiency. In 2015, 60 percent of fourth graders lacked proficiency in reading and 68 percent of eighth graders scored below proficient in math.

“Rhode Island is making advances for our kids, but we must do more to implement policies that support the health and well-being of our children,” said Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Executive Director Elizabeth Burke Bryant. “State lawmakers need to make greater investments in resources to ensure our children have what they need to lead healthy, productive lives.”

According to the *Data Book*, Rhode Island ranks:

- **13th in health.** Ninety-seven percent of children in Rhode Island had health insurance in 2015, among the best percentages in the nation. While the state’s child and teen death rate rose from 2014, at 18 per 100,000, it was still below the national average and represented a 6 percent decline from 2010.
- **20th in education.** Seventeen percent of Rhode Island’s high school students did not graduate on time in the 2014-15 school year, matching the national average.
- **32nd in the family and community domain.** The teen birth rate in the state fell significantly between 2010 and 2015, dropping 36 percent. However, the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas has risen by a disturbing 31 percent since 2008.

- **34th in economic well-being.** The percentage of Rhode Island children living in poverty declined to 19 percent in 2015, a slight improvement from 2014, but the same percentage as in 2010.

In recent years, government policies have helped drive positive outcomes for children and families nationwide and in several states. Only 5 percent of U.S. children lack health care coverage, a historic low, due to the combination of key provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and expansions to Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

With the support of policies such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit, fewer children overall live in poverty, more parents have jobs and more families are able to bear the cost of housing.

With the *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* showing steady improvements in several areas of child well-being, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is urging state and federal policymakers not to back away from targeted investments that are proving to help U.S. children become healthier, more likely to complete high school and better positioned to contribute to the nation’s economy as adults.

“As policymakers search for ideas to expand the economy and bring economic opportunity to families, I urge them not to abandon targeted public investments that are helping more people lift themselves out of poverty and gain access to health care,” said Foundation President and CEO **Patrick McCarthy**.

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 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, education, safety, and development of Rhode Island’s children and youth. It is one of 50 state-level organizations that work in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the social condition of children at the state and local level across the country.

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.