



UNDER EMBARGO Tuesday, June 13, 2017 12:01AM EDT

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South Carolina's Rebounding Economy Places State at 39th in Overall Child Well-Being in Leading National Report

State leaders to gather at statehouse June 13th at 11 a.m. EDT for news conference to share results

COLUMBIA, S.C., June 13, 2017 — The combination of an improving economy and policies benefitting families and children have helped place South Carolina at 39th in the nation in overall child well-being, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's annual *KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book* rankings, released today. South Carolina's ranking outpaces several of its southern neighbors, including Florida (40th) and Georgia (42nd).

State leaders, including State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman, will gather at the East Ground/Gardens of the State House at 11 a.m. EDT today to formally share results of the 2017 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*.

"We are encouraged by a number of positive data, including a 40 percent decline since 2010 in the teen birth rate, and a 14 percent decline in children whose head of household lacks a high school diploma," said Children's Trust Chief Executive Officer, Sue Williams.

Williams called the advances a positive step. "We see slow and steady progress toward improving child well-being in South Carolina, especially where we are making investments in prevention and using proactive public policies that work to support children and families," she said.

The impact of South Carolina's rebounding economy has contributed to positive effects on child well-being in the state. For example, the percentage of children living in poverty has dropped 8 percent from 2010 to 2015, and children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round work decreased 16 percent over the same period.

"We want to sustain this forward progress, and efforts like the recently approved Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) will help," said Williams. "The newly passed EITC allows working families to better meet their needs and foster safer and more secure environments to raise children. The EITC was included as part of the recent roads bill to ensure that the state's investment in infrastructure would not be borne disproportionately by lower-income working families."

“I am excited about the progress we have made to improve outcomes for South Carolina’s youth,” said State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman. “While we still have a ways to go in improving academic achievement and advancing health and wellness of students, it is encouraging to see the positive results of our strong collaborative efforts that will ultimately benefit our state for years to come,” concluded Spearman.

Several education indicators in this year’s *Data Book* reveal significant opportunities for strategies to improve outcomes for South Carolina’s children:

- 55 percent of children ages 3 and 4 are not attending school (a 10 percent increase since 2010);
- 67 percent of fourth graders scored below the reading proficiency level (a 7 percent drop from 2010)
- 74 percent of eighth graders scored below the math proficiency level (6 percent more than in 2010)

“For South Carolina children to be competitive today, and in the future, we must provide the building blocks for opportunity now, such as quality early care and financial security, that will help families and communities thrive for the long term. We know that this kind of support has significant impact in reducing the stressors that too often lead to child abuse and neglect,” added Williams.

News Conference Information

S.C. State House

East Ground/Gardens

11 a.m. EDT on June 13, 2017

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Release Information

The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available June 13 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at <http://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 Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

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About Children’s Trust

As the KIDS Count grantee for South Carolina, Children’s Trust is a leader in the work of the [Early Childhood Common Agenda](http://www.aecf.org/earlychildhood), which promotes these solutions through data-informed policy recommendations. Children’s Trust of South Carolina is the only statewide organization dedicated to strengthening and supporting public and private prevention efforts that keep South Carolina’s children safe. It works to prevent child abuse, neglect and unintentional injuries so every child has the opportunity to thrive in a healthy, nurturing environment. Children’s Trust is home to KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Safe Kids South Carolina, Prevent Child Abuse South Carolina and other programs that deliver on this mission. For more information, visit scChildren.org.

About 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 safe 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.