



**UNDER EMBARGO until Wednesday, June 27 at 12:01 a.m. ET**

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***2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book Reveals Improved Child Outcomes and Continued Areas of Need in Kentucky***

*Accurate count in 2020 census critical to sustaining progress*

**LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY** — Kentucky ranks 37<sup>th</sup> in the nation in overall child well-being, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Kentucky's standing is due in part to progress in family economic well-being, child health coverage, teen births, and parental education.

However, an accurate 2020 census count of the commonwealth's kids and families is vital in protecting gains and continuing progress in child well-being in Kentucky.

"The Data Book tells us some good news for Kentucky kids, as most of the data trends in health, economic well-being, education, and family and community show continued progress," said Dr. Terry Brooks, executive director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. "But, without an accurate count of all Kentucky kids in 2020, we risk leaving money on the table that could be used for health care, education, and other vital programs many young children in low-income families count on for a healthy and strong start in life."

An accurate decennial census is essential for obtaining a reliable picture of child, family, and community well-being across the nation and the commonwealth.

Children under age five have repeatedly been the most undercounted age group in the decennial census of everyone living in the nation. According to census expert Bill O'Hare, in the estimated net undercount of the 2010 census, 8,000 Kentucky children ages zero to four were missed. It is also estimated that 11 percent of Kentucky children under age five live in hard-to-count areas, including parts of eastern Kentucky and west Louisville. Low-income children and children of color are disproportionately impacted by the census undercount.

"If our youngest kids aren't getting counted, they won't get the resources they need to grow, learn, and succeed. I urge our local leaders in Louisville and across Kentucky to prioritize our hardest to count kids by prioritizing the 2020 census. We must take advantage of all available funds—our kids deserve it," said Sadiqa Reynolds, president and CEO of the Louisville Urban League.

The Hazard Community and Technical College recently hosted a Census Matters event to begin organizing census efforts in their community. "The event brought together county and city officials, first responders, library and K-12 staff, and many more community members to collaboratively discuss the benefits of the

upcoming count and what it means to our local areas as far as future funding for our children. The event gave our community the opportunity to have a voice in brainstorming the best ways to reach pockets of those otherwise underrepresented. I encourage other rural areas to immediately begin engaging local leaders and educating its residents on the importance of the census," said Dr. Jennifer Lindon, president and CEO of Hazard Community and Technical College.

### **State Trends in Child Well-Being**

**40<sup>th</sup> in economic well-being:** Despite Kentucky's improvement in economic well-being since 2010, other states are improving at a faster pace. One in four children live in poverty. Thirty-three percent of children live in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment, though the indicator improved by 11 percent from 2010 to 2016. Now at eight percent, the percent of teens ages 16 to 19 not attending school and not working has also improved since 2010.

**28<sup>th</sup> in health:** Kids' health coverage remains a bright spot for Kentucky with 97 percent of children covered—putting the commonwealth at a slightly higher rate than the nation (96 percent). Two areas of child health that have moved in the wrong direction since 2010 are the percent of low birth-weight babies (at 9.1 percent) and the child and teen death rate (at 34 per 100,000 youth ages 1 to 19).

"Health care discussions are filled with challenges, but Kentucky kids have significantly benefited from investments in health coverage over the years, including the Children's Health Insurance Program and the expansion of Medicaid coverage for their parents. An accurate census count in Kentucky will ensure the commonwealth gets the funds needed to keep kids covered so they can grow up healthy," said Dr. Brooks.

**29<sup>th</sup> in education:** The good news is that nearly nine in ten Kentucky high school students (89 percent) are graduating on time—ranking the commonwealth fourth in the nation on this indicator. The bad news is that there was no significant progress from 2009 to 2017 in fourth grade reading and eighth grade math proficiency. Currently, 62 percent of fourth graders are below proficient in reading and 71 percent of eighth graders are below proficient in math. Additionally, 59 percent of children ages three to four are not attending school in Kentucky, a continued area of need for the commonwealth.

"An accurate census count in Kentucky will also ensure the proper amount of Title I funds are allocated to Kentucky schools, providing resources to support students from low-income families in meeting academic achievement standards, including reading and math proficiency," said Dr. Brooks.

**39<sup>th</sup> in family and community:** Between 2010 and 2016, the teen birth rate in Kentucky fell by 33 percent to 31 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19. The percent of children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma also decreased during that time, down to 11 percent. The percent of children living in high-poverty areas remains at 16 percent.

### **Recommendations**

Kentucky needs common-ground solutions on the federal, state, and local levels to guarantee an accurate census count and to help kids and families succeed. Communities should mobilize a localized effort to ensure all children, especially children under age five and in hard-to-count areas, are counted in the 2020 census and planned for in the next decade.

"This is not just an urban or a rural issue. This is not a one community issue. This is a statewide, community-by-community opportunity to ensure each child is counted and therefore planned for in local, state, and federal

budgets. Given Kentucky's revenue shortfalls and tough budget decisions in the 2018 legislature, every child accounted for in the 2020 census means federal funding infused into our communities for the next decade. It means Kentucky isn't risking the gains we've made and future improvements in child well-being," said Dr. Brooks.

#### **Release Information**

The *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 27 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). 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). The *2018 Kentucky KIDS COUNT County Data Book*, which includes county-level child well-being data, will be released in November.

#### **About Kentucky Youth Advocates**

Kentucky Youth Advocates believes all children deserve to be safe, healthy, and secure. As THE independent voice for Kentucky's children, we work to ensure policymakers create investments and policies that are good for children. Learn more at [www.kyyouth.org](http://www.kyyouth.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, 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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