



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

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Utah Ranks Sixth Nationwide in Child Well-Being

Data shows the state struggles in the area of health where the child death rate continues to worsen.

Salt Lake City — Utah ranks sixth when it comes to overall child well-being according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The state saw improvement in the majority of the 16 indicators included in the publication. Yet, despite positive trends across three out of four of the domains, advocates at Voices for Utah Children are concerned about the health domain where two out of the four indicators worsened.

Utah saw a 3 percent increase in the percent of low birthweight babies that dropped the state from 12th in 2010 to 15th in 2016. Similarly, the state saw an 8 percent rise in the child and teen death rate between 2010 and 2016, ranking Utah 20th. The percentage of children without health insurance, while improving along with the rest of the nation, was our lowest ranking at 40th in 2016.

“Utah has made progress improving our child insurance rate thanks to CHIP, Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act, but we are still lagging behind the rest of the nation. We need to follow the lead of high-performing states by expanding Medicaid, helping kids stay covered year-round by improving Medicaid eligibility and outreach, and ensuring that immigration status is not a barrier to kids’ coverage,” says Jessie Mandel, Senior Health Policy Analyst for Voices for Utah Children.

Part of the rise in child and teen death rates can be attributed to a rising suicide rate among teens. Voices for Utah Children sees a need for more school-based services. “The critical shortage of school nurses and counselors highlights the need for more school-based healthcare services. Kids need a place to go for care and support before a condition or a problem escalates,” says Mandel.

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 — as an assessment of child well-being. Utah ranks:

- **7th in economic well-being.** Utah families have experienced significant progress in economic security with a 31 percent decrease in the percentage of children living in poverty compared to 2010.
- **12th in education.** With 58 percent of children ages three and four not attending school, preschool attendance and early education continues to lag behind the nation where only 52 percent of children are not in school. Utah ranked 36th on this indicator, our second to the lowest ranking for the state, slightly above the ranking for percent of children without health insurance.

- **1st in the family and community domain.** Teen birth rates are at an all-time low nationwide, and Utah is no exception, improving from 28 births per 1,000 teens in 2010 to 16 births in 2016. Utah ranks 11th on this indicator.
- **19th in health.** Utah lags behind the rest of the nation with regard to the percentage of children who still lack health insurance. More investments in state programs are needed to reach the 54,000 children statewide who remain uninsured.

This year's *Data Book* focuses on the upcoming 2020 national census, the results of which will determine the future of federally-funded programs for the next decade, putting key drivers of child success and well-being at risk of losing funding if all children are not counted. Nationally, the child undercount continues to rise and Utah is no different.

"With potentially 9 percent of Utah kids at risk of being undercounted in the upcoming 2020 census, federally-funded supports that have driven youth success are in jeopardy," says Terry Haven, Deputy Director for Voices for Utah Children. "Given our negative trends in the health domain, a child undercount will impact the amount of funds Utah will have to help change the trajectory of worsening health trends."

In Utah, over \$1 billion in federal funds are distributed based on the decennial census each year. The upward trends in the four major areas of child well-being signal that existing resources and systems are benefiting kids' progress. They also underscore the importance of maintaining federal funding so children in Utah can continue to prosper. Traditionally, low-income children, children of color and kids living in immigrant families stand to be disproportionately undercounted and have the most to lose as vital programs face reductions in funding. Children and families living in rural areas and on reservations also are at risk of missing from the census and stand to lose their existing share of political representation and a voice for their children.

Release Information

The 2018 KIDS COUNT® *Data Book* will be available June 27 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 Voices for Utah Children

Voices for Utah Children works to make Utah a place where all children thrive. We start with one basic question: "Is it good for kids?" At Voices for Utah Children, we believe that every child deserves the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. And to achieve this vision, we focus on five key areas that benefit the healthy development of all children: Health, School readiness, Safety, Economic Stability, and Diversity.

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.

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