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## PRESS RELEASE

### Family and Community Trust

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Missouri Ranks 28<sup>th</sup> of 50 States in Child Well-being

### U.S. Child Population Grows and Changes: 74 Million Kids to Shape Future of More Diverse America

(JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI) – The approximately 1.4 million children who comprise nearly one quarter of Missouri’s population are more likely to live in poverty than Missouri’s children in 1990 according to the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The 30<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Data Book* — a comprehensive annual report on child well-being for the United States and every state — examines change in how the nation’s kids are doing since the first *Data Book* was published in 1990 by measuring indicators over time in four areas research consistently shows are important in children’s lives: economic well-being, education, health and family and community.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation ranks Missouri as 28th of 50 states in child well-being this year, a slight decline in ranking from 26th in the 2018 report.

“Missouri’s downward tick in ranking reflects a combination of a persistently slower pace of economic growth in the middle of the country and entrenched disparities in resources and opportunities for Missouri’s kids based on demographics and location,” said Missouri *KIDS COUNT* Program Director Tracy Greever-Rice. “About one-fifth of our children live in poverty and we haven’t made reliable inroads into decreasing this proportion of our child population exposed to the long-term consequences of poverty since the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* was first published.”



In 1990, 17 percent of Missouri’s children lived in households with incomes below the federal poverty line, and in 2017, 19 percent of Missouri’s children lived in poverty. While many of Missouri’s indicators have remained stable or improved between the 2018 and 2019 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, small percentage increases in teens not in school or working and not graduating on time, as well as an increase of children in single-parent households, children without health insurance and in children whose parents lack secure employment are predictors of future economic instability when these kids become adults.

While Missouri’s ranking on the health domain improved from 33rd to 32nd place from 2018 to 2019, the child and teen death rate continues to rise. In 2017, the rate stood at 36 per 100,000, or 521 deaths, between the ages of 1 and 19.

The 2019 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* reports that more than 13 million U.S. children live in poverty, and the nation disparately fails to equip many children with what they need to reach their full potential, especially in communities of color. Obstacles that perpetuate racial disparities can derail African-American, American Indian and Latino kids, undercutting the incredible individual potential of these children. Dismantling these barriers will lead to a brighter future for kids and a stronger America.

The Casey Foundation calls on elected officials and other policymakers to:

- *Count all kids.* Ensure the 2020 census counts all children, especially those under age 5 and from hard-to-count areas.
- *Expand the programs that make and keep kids healthy.* In Missouri, staying committed to ensuring all children have access to high quality, reliable, affordable health care including Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- *Provide the resources that are proven to help families lift themselves up economically.* Federal and state earned income tax credits (EITC) and child tax credit programs mean working parents can use more of their take-home pay to meet their children’s needs.

“America’s children are one-quarter of our population and 100 percent of our future,” said Casey Foundation President and CEO Lisa Hamilton. “All of the 74 million kids in our increasingly diverse country have unlimited potential, and we have the data, knowledge and evidence to create the policies that will help them



realize it. It's incumbent on us to do just that."

Bill Dent, executive director of the Family and Community Trust, Missouri's KIDS COUNT grantee, agrees.

"In Missouri, the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* provides an annual benchmark of what we've achieved and what we must continue to do to ensure opportunity for each and every one of our children," Dent said. "Our child-serving agencies and policymakers collaborate at the state and local level within resource constraints to address the needs of our kids as fully as possible. This year, we're very focused on ensuring a complete count in the 2020 census. Missouri's most vulnerable kids live in circumstances and areas most susceptible to being undercounted, while most in need of federal and state resources leveraged upon an accurate count."

### **About the Family and Community Trust**

The Family and Community Trust (FACT) serves as the affiliate for Missouri KIDS COUNT. The Family and Community Trust is the state level, private and public organization that governs a network of twenty Community Partnerships focused on achieving better results for children and families. FACT's KIDS COUNT initiative focuses on child well-being in Missouri. To read data informed stories and access specific data and information about the well-being of children in our state, visit [mokidscount.org](http://mokidscount.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 [aecf.org](http://aecf.org). *KIDS COUNT* is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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