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30th Annual Report Ranks Rhode Island 19th in Nation for Child Well-Being

30th KIDS COUNT® Data Book finds Rhode Island leads in health, lags in economic and education indicators

PROVIDENCE, Rhode Island — The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, a national and state-by-state report on child well-being, issued today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, finds that Rhode Island ranks 19th in the nation for overall child well-being and last in New England, behind New Hampshire (1), Massachusetts (2), Vermont (6), Connecticut (8) and Maine (9).

The KIDS COUNT Data Book: Most Comprehensive National Report on Child Well-Being

In their 30th edition of the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* — the most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States — the Annie E. Casey Foundation today urged policymakers and child advocates to prioritize policies that would expand opportunity for America’s 74 million children, noting measurable but still inadequate progress over the past three decades to ensure all children can realize their full potential.

The Casey Foundation notes progress in helping children thrive since the first *Data Book* was published in 1990. But it finds the nation has failed to tear down barriers affecting children of color and underscores that America’s future will be brighter if all kids in all communities have the opportunity to thrive.

Among the top-line findings: More than 13 million U.S. children live in poverty and the nation is failing to equip many children, particularly in communities of color, with what they need to reach their full potential.

“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.”

Rhode Island-Specific Information: The Ocean State is leading in health, lagging in education

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

- **4th in health**
- **26th in economic well-being**
- **28th in education**
- **26th in family and community**

“We are pleased to see that Rhode Island ranks fourth in the nation on child health measures,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “We have more work to do to improve our overall rank of 19th by reducing childhood poverty, providing education and economic opportunities for parents and accelerating progress on education outcomes.”

National Findings from the 2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book

This report compares past data on 16 indicators with figures from 2017, the most recent year available in most cases:

- Broadly speaking, children in the United States had a better chance at thriving in 2017 than in 1990 — with improvements in 11 of the 16 *KIDS COUNT* index measures of child well-being — but racial and ethnic disparities persisted.
- Nearly one in six American kids lived in poverty in 2017, presenting tremendous risks to child well-being. Despite economic growth and reduced unemployment, there’s been virtually no progress on child poverty since the publication of the first *Data Book* in 1990.
- 2017 was the first year since 2010 that saw an increase in the *number* of uninsured kids. Four million American kids didn’t have health insurance. The 5 percent uninsured rate is 62 percent better than it was three decades ago — thanks to the Affordable Care Act, the Children’s Health Insurance Program and state-by-state Medicaid expansion.
- Low birth weight, which often portends developmental challenges, has increased three years in a row, matching the three-decade high of 8.3 percent of all live births (2006).

Direct lines can be drawn between areas of tremendous improvement in well-being — including health insurance coverage, decreased rates of teen childbearing and increased rates of high school graduation — and policies that have supported these successes. Policymakers should take additional steps to help all children thrive. The Casey Foundation calls on elected officials and representatives to:

- *Expand the programs that make and keep kids healthy.* For the sake of all children, regardless of their immigration status, states should expand access to Medicaid.

- *Provide the tools 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 devote more resources to meeting their children’s needs.
- *Tear down obstacles faced by kids of color.* Every child has incredible individual potential, and communities thrive when all kids thrive. African-American, Latino and Native American children remain more likely than others to encounter barriers — from living in high-poverty neighborhoods to not having health insurance — that contribute to disparate outcomes. Our public policies must acknowledge and eliminate those obstacles.
- *Count all kids.* Ensure the 2020 census counts all children, especially those under 5 years old and from hard-to-count areas. The 2010 census missed 2.2 million such kids, and the upcoming count may miss even more if young children are not a priority. The stakes are high: 55 major federal programs, including Head Start and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, allocate more than \$880 billion each year based on census data.

The *2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is the 30th edition of an annual study based on publicly available data for all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Release Information

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at 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.

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. Please visit www.rikidscount.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. *KIDS COUNT®* is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.