



UNDER EMBARGO Until Monday, June 21, 2021 at 12:01 a.m. ET

Contact: Beza Taddress, Communications Director
Beza@coloradokids.org, 720-422-3906

**Decade of Progress on Child and Family Well-Being in Colorado Imperiled by Pandemic
Data Across 50 States Show Struggles with Housing Affordability, Mental Health, But Hopes for
Recovery Remain, Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds**

DENVER — Colorado ranks 15th in the nation in overall child well-being in the **2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how families have fared between the Great Recession and the COVID-19 crisis. In the decade preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, Colorado made important strides in improving opportunity for kids in all but four of the 16 indicators highlighted in the *Data Book*. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Colorado had seen steady declines in its child poverty rate and an improving uninsured rate for children but struggled with housing affordability and a higher-than-average child and teen mortality rate.

The *Data Book* — a 50-state report released annually to track child well-being in the United States — shows nearly a decade of progress could be erased by the COVID-19 pandemic unless policymakers act boldly to sustain the recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

Colorado saw improvement on several indicators of economic well-being prior to the pandemic. The percentage of children living in poverty in the state fell from 17% in 2010 to 11% in 2019, a faster decline than all but five other states and the District of Columbia. The share of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods, where economic and social resources are often limited, also dropped sharply during the decade preceding the pandemic. Data collected during the pandemic, however, show that this progress is at risk, with many Colorado families reporting that they struggled to pay for basic needs throughout 2020 and into 2021.

“Every child deserves to grow up in a safe community where they have a roof over their head and can access the education and health care services they need to realize their full potential,” said Kelly Causey, president and CEO of the Colorado Children’s Campaign, Colorado’s member of the KIDS COUNT network. “The data from this report highlight that our state needs to double down on its investments in the well-being of kids and families, not only to reverse the challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, but also to undo historic challenges many Coloradans continue to face.”

For Colorado, the *Data Book* shows simply returning to a pre-pandemic level of support for children and families would shortchange hundreds of thousands of kids and fail to address persistent racial and ethnic disparities. Therefore, it is critical that our policymakers address the foundations of these issues in a way that prioritizes equity and accessibility for all.

Sixteen indicators measuring four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community context — are used by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in each year's *Data Book* to assess the state of the nation's children. The annual KIDS COUNT data and rankings represent the most recent information available, but do not capture the impacts felt in 2020. In this year's KIDS COUNT data book, Colorado ranked:

- **13th in economic well-being:** Colorado made more progress on child poverty than most other states during the time frame examined in the report, but the state's high housing costs continue to strain family budgets. The state ranks poorly (39th in the nation) for the percentage of children living in households that are housing cost-burdened, defined as spending more than 30% of their income on housing.
- **15th in education:** On two of the education indicators examined in the report, progress has either stalled or reversed in Colorado. The percentage of fourth grade students who scored proficient in reading remained flat between 2010 and 2019, while the percentage of eighth grade students who scored proficient in math declined.
- **26th in health:** Although the state's health ranking was the same as last year's, child and teen mortality is one of the four areas where Colorado worsened between 2010 and 2019. These data include child and teen suicides, which have increased significantly in recent years.
- **11th in family and community context:** Remaining on par with last year, Colorado saw improvement in the percentage of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods, where more than 30% of the residents are experiencing poverty, and economic and educational opportunities are often limited. Between 2008–12 and 2015–2019, the number of Colorado kids living in these areas of concentrated poverty fell by more than 70%, or 77,000 children.

Survey data from the last year add to the story of Colorado's children and families as they begin to move towards recovery from the pandemic:

- Throughout the pandemic, Colorado families have struggled with their mental health. In 2020, 20% of Colorado adults living in households with children reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless. In March of 2021, this figure had risen to 25%, suggesting that Colorado is not yet experiencing the beginnings of a recovery that are being seen in other parts of the country.
- At the end of 2020, more than one in seven of Colorado's households with children (15%) reported they had only slight confidence or no confidence at all that they would be able to make their next rent or mortgage payment on time.
- As most schools shifted to remote learning in 2020, internet access became more critical than ever. Yet 12% of Colorado households with children enrolled in public or private school reported in 2020 that internet or a digital device were not usually or not always

available for children for educational purposes. Among Hispanic or Latino households with children in Colorado, this figure was 18%.

Investing in children, families and communities is a priority to ensure an equitable and expansive recovery. The Colorado Children's Campaign joins the Annie E. Casey Foundation in calling on national, state and local stakeholders to act now and help families recover from the pandemic's fallout. Several of the Foundation's suggestions have already been enacted in [the American Rescue Plan](#), and additional recommendations include:

- **Congress should make the expansion of the child tax credit permanent.** The child tax credit has long had bipartisan support, so lawmakers should find common cause and ensure the largest one-year drop ever in child poverty is not followed by a surge.
- **State and local governments should prioritize the recovery of hard-hit communities of color.**
- **States should expand income support that helps families care for their children.** Permanently extending unemployment insurance eligibility to contract, gig and other workers and expanding state tax credits would benefit parents and children.

Release Information

The *2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 21 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 the Colorado Children's Campaign

The Colorado Children's Campaign is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization committed since 1985 to realizing every chance for every child in Colorado. We advocate for the development and implementation of data-driven public policies that improve child well-being in health, education and early childhood. We do this by providing Coloradans with trusted data and research on child well-being and organizing an extensive statewide network of dedicated child advocates. For more information, please visit www.coloradokids.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.

###