



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

Contact: Janice Barlow jls@udel.edu (302) 750-9533

Delaware Child and Family Well-Being Further Imperiled by Pandemic
Data Across 50 States Show Struggles with Basic Needs, But Hopes for Recovery Remain,
Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds

NEWARK, DELAWARE — Sixteen percent of Delaware children lived in households with an income below the poverty line in 2019 and Delaware’s percentage of children living in high-poverty areas increased immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the **2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how families have fared between the Great Recession and the COVID-19 crisis.

Growing up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to healthy child development. It increases the likelihood that a child will be exposed to factors that can impair brain development and lead to poor academic, cognitive and health outcomes. Approximately 32,000 Delaware children were living in poverty pre-pandemic. Furthermore, the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas, increased from 4% in 2008-2012 to 5% in 2015-2019.

COVID-19 intensified this historical socioeconomic divide, with more families struggling to maintain housing or put food on the table as caregivers lost jobs, income and benefits like health insurance. During the pandemic, in 2020, 20% of households with children in Delaware had little or no confidence in their ability to pay their next rent or mortgage payment.

This year’s *Data Book* shows nearly a decade of progress could be erased by the COVID-19 pandemic unless policymakers act boldly to sustain the beginnings of a recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

“Every child needs food, health care, safe and stable housing and access to education in normal times, but most especially in times of crisis,” said Janice Barlow, director of KIDS COUNT in Delaware. “Robust federal interventions, from the CARES Act to the American Rescue Plan, have been important in keeping families afloat during the crisis.”

The *Data Book* shows simply returning to a pre-pandemic level of support for children and families would shortchange millions of kids and fail to address persistent racial and ethnic disparities.

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 child well-being. The annual KIDS COUNT data and rankings represent the most recent information available but do not capture the impact of the past year:

- **ECONOMIC WELL-BEING:** In 2019, 16% (32,000) of Delaware children lived in households with an income below the poverty line.
- **EDUCATION:** In 2017–2019, 49% (11,000) of Delaware's young children were not in school.
- **AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE:** In 2019, 5% (10,000) of Delaware children did not have health insurance.
- **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT:** In 2019, 38% (73,000) of Delaware children lived in single-parent families.

Survey data from the last year add to the story of Delaware's children and families in this moment:

- During the pandemic, in 2020, 14% of households with children in Delaware sometimes or often did not have enough food to eat in the past two weeks. However, by March 2021, this figure had fallen to 12%, suggesting the beginnings of a recovery. Furthermore, racial and ethnicity disparities in this measure shrunk in this household measure.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is the most extraordinary crisis to hit families in decades,” said Lisa Hamilton, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Deliberate policy decisions can help them recover, and we're already seeing the beginnings of that. Policymakers should use this moment to repair the damage the pandemic has caused — and to address long-standing inequities it has exacerbated.”

Investing in children, families and communities is a priority to ensure an equitable and expansive recovery. Several of the Annie E. Casey 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.
- **States that have not done so should expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.** The American Rescue Plan offers incentives to do so.
- **States should strengthen public schools and pathways to post-secondary education and training.**

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 KIDS COUNT in Delaware

KIDS COUNT in Delaware, a project of the Center for Community Research and Service within the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Delaware, is a collaborative effort of over forty organizations to enrich local and state discussion concerning ways to secure better lives for all of Delaware's children by providing policy makers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being. Learn more at www.dekidscount.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.

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