



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

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Florida Progress on Child and Family Well-Being Greatly Impacted by Pandemic's Toll on Employment, Housing and Emotional Health

Data Show Floridians Continue to Face Poverty, Housing Uncertainty, Food Insecurity and Emotional Instability, But Hopes for Recovery Remain, Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds.

TAMPA, FLORIDA — Florida was showing improvement on children living in poverty and children living with employed parents immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic but still lagged behind the national average, 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.

The *Data Book* is released annually to track child well-being in the United States. In December, the Foundation identified challenges faced by kids and families during the crisis — food and housing insecurity, lack of access to health care and mental health concerns — and urged immediate action from Congress. The *2021 Data Book* updates this pandemic-period assessment while providing its annual state rankings to present a comprehensive picture of child well-being.

“We were making progress in Florida, albeit slow,” said **Florida KIDS COUNT Director Dr. Norín Dollard**. “But what we have learned from the pandemic is we need drastic action surrounding areas affecting our most vulnerable populations so we can better address their inequities in healthcare, education, and economic and family well-being.”

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, 737,000 (18%) of Florida’s children lived in households with an income below the poverty line, a significant improvement over 2010. Since the pandemic, the Children’s Home Society (CHS) predicts that one in four children in Florida will be in poverty, which would add 210,000 impoverished children. CHS data also shows that kids in poverty are seven times more likely to experience child neglect and three times more likely to experience abuse.

- **EDUCATION:** In 2019, 48% of young children were not in school. In addition, Florida state economists projected that 43,875 (1.5%) fewer students were enrolled in public schools than predicted for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- **AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE:** In 2019, 343,000 children did not have health insurance. According to the Children’s Health Care Report Card, this is the second highest number in the nation and alone, the state accounted for 7.6% of the national increase in the number of uninsured children from 2016 to 2019.
- **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT:** In 2019, 352,000 children lived in high poverty areas — resulting in extremely impoverished communities where children face a much greater likelihood of academic challenges, health risks and other obstacles.

Household Pulse Survey data from the last year add to the story of Florida’s children and families in this moment:

According to the report:

- More than one in eight adults with children in the household (13%) reported a lack of health insurance in March, 2021. This figure was 17% for Latinos, and 13% for Black households.
- Nearly one in four adults living in households with children (24%) said they felt down, depressed or hopeless, with 37% of Black / African American respondents and those of Whites (21%) most affected.
- One in five households with children (20%), said 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. One third of Black (33%) and 30% of Latino households faced this disastrous challenge as compared to their White counterparts (11%).
- Fifteen percent of adults with children said that in the most recent week, their household sometimes or always did not have enough to eat. The percentages for Black households (37%) was three times that of their White (10%) and Latino counterparts (9%).

“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 postsecondary 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 Florida KIDS COUNT

Florida KIDS COUNT is part of a nationwide KIDS COUNT Network, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The objective of Florida KIDS COUNT is to inform Floridians and their policy makers about the quality of life for Florida's children, and to build leadership and accountability for action on behalf of our children.

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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