

PRESS RELEASE

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New Mexico Bumped Up to 49th in the Nation in Child Well-being 2021 national *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows pre-pandemic improvement

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — New Mexico is no longer ranked last for child well-being by the national *2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*. The *Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has New Mexico ranked at 49th – up from 50th last year. The higher ranking correlates with improvements the state was seeing in child well-being prior to the start of the pandemic.

This year’s ranking is based on the most recent comprehensive data, most of which are from 2019, so this ranking does not reflect the hardships many families have faced since the pandemic began.

“It’s encouraging to see that child well-being in New Mexico was improving before the pandemic hit,” said James Jimenez, executive director for New Mexico Voices for Children, which is part of the national KIDS COUNT network. “We’re cautiously optimistic that investments the state made in children and families beginning in 2019 – as well as throughout the pandemic – helped offset some of the health and financial problems caused by the pandemic.”

The national *Data Book* tracks a total of 16 indicators of child well-being, including issues such as child poverty, fourth grade reading scores, child and teen death rates, and teen birth rates, that are grouped under four domains – economic well-being, education, health, and family and community.

“We saw some marked improvement in many of the indicators and two of the four domains, some of which are pretty significant when looking at the long-term trends,” said Emily Wildau, KIDS COUNT coordinator for NM Voices.

Some of the long-term improvements from 2010 include big decreases in child poverty (17% improvement), high school students not graduating on time (32% improvement), children without health insurance (45% improvement), and teen birth rates (55% improvement). (See data sheets, attached separately, for more information.)

While families with children in all states have faced financial and educational challenges since the pandemic began, states ranking in the bottom 20 on the 16 indicators – like New Mexico – have tended to fare worse during the pandemic as well. Some pandemic-specific data are

included in this year's *Data Book* on indicators such as a family's lack of confidence in paying rent or mortgage and access to a computer and internet.

"We hope our lawmakers note these pre-pandemic improvements and continue to make the kinds of investments in education, health care, and more, that can have significant impacts on child well-being," said Wildau. "However, we cannot forget that many of our families continue to face challenges, so our investments need to be long-term as well as robust."

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.

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New Mexico Voices for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.
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