



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

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Progress for South Carolina Children and Families Stalled

Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Across 50 States Show South Carolina Struggles with Education, Poverty and Housing

COLUMBIA, S.C. — South Carolina continues to rank No. 41 nationally in child and family well-being, 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 pandemic. Education, poverty and the high cost of housing are ongoing challenges that have led to little improvement for South Carolina in the annual index of well-being measures.

The annual KIDS COUNT data and rankings represent the most recent information available but do not capture the impact of the past year. The *Data Book* shows simply returning to a pre-pandemic level of support for children and families would fail to address persistent racial and ethnic disparities.

Across the United States, this year's *Data Book* shows nearly a decade of progress could be erased by the COVID-19 pandemic unless policymakers act boldly to bolster an economic recovery. In addition, South Carolina children and families did not fare as well as those in neighboring states Georgia (38) and North Carolina (34).

"We must continue investing in South Carolina children and families if we are to recover from the setbacks of the pandemic," said Sue Williams, CEO of Children's Trust, South Carolina's member of the KIDS COUNT network. "We want our state to be a place where all children can thrive, families have what they need to provide stable and loving homes for their children, and communities have the resources to wrap around families in times of crisis and hardship."

To supplement the national report, Children's Trust updated its recent data snapshot: "COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on South Carolina Children's Well-Being," which showed:

- **ECONOMIC INSECURITY:** 46% of South Carolinians suffering from unemployment also reported having a child in the household.
- **EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES:** 82% of households with children reported that the pandemic affected their children's education.
- **HEALTH CARE:** 15% of children have a parent with no health insurance.
- **MENTAL HEALTH:** 57% of caregivers reported that their current level of stress/anxiety compounded with other lack of social determinants is much higher than usual due to COVID-19.
- **HOUSING INSECURITY:** 64% of renter-occupied households with children and 45% of owner-occupied households with children lack confidence in their ability to make next month's housing payment.

Investing in children, families and communities ensures 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. 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 and other workers and expanding state tax credits would benefit parents and children.
- **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 Children's Trust of South Carolina

Children's Trust is the only statewide organization focused on preventing child abuse and neglect in South Carolina. It leads and supports a network that shares our belief that all children should thrive, live in secure families, and be surrounded by supportive communities. Children's Trust coordinates the state's efforts for the Strengthening Families Program; Triple P (Positive Parenting Program); S.C. Adverse Childhood Experiences Initiative; Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting; Child Abuse Prevention Month; and KIDS COUNT. For more information, visit scChildren.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.