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New report shows more economic stability is needed for South Dakota families.

Prior to the pandemic, South Dakota was making progress in many areas of child well-being, according to the *2021 KIDS COUNT Data Book* developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. A highlight of the news is that more teens are staying in school or working than were a decade ago. However, thousands of families still struggle to afford housing, and many make poverty-level wages.

“One of my concerns is that even though the poverty rate is dropping, there are still 31,000 children whose families struggle to make ends meet,” said Xanna Burg, KIDS COUNT Coordinator with South Dakota KIDS COUNT. “That’s like every 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grader in the state living in poverty.”

Poverty and other data used in the report rankings are from the year or two before the pandemic. It will take a few years to get a complete picture of the hardship families faced the past year, but the data shows that many families are struggling. Survey data from last year adds to the story, showing 16 percent of households with children were unsure they could pay their next rent or mortgage payment.

Unfortunately, Black, Indigenous, and other families of color reported even higher uncertainty for making housing payments last year. The reality for families of color has been shaped by generations of discriminatory policies and limited access to the economic resources that other families have had. To move South Dakota forward, now is the time to invest in solutions that ensure all children grow up in families with the support and resources needed to thrive.

Highlights from the report findings for South Dakota include:

- **Economic:** More than 1 in 5 children (45,000) lived in households that paid more than 30 percent of their income on housing, showing little progress over the last decade.
- **Education:** Nearly two-thirds of fourth graders did not read at grade level, showing no progress from two years before.
- **Health:** More children are going without health insurance in South Dakota leaving 18,000 South Dakota children without adequate access to health care.
- **Family and Community:** The teen birth rate continued to drop to a record low in 2019.

South Dakota KIDS COUNT recommends policymakers support early childhood education investments to help young children get on track for learning to read. Continued support for programs like SNAP and Medicaid can help families get the food and health care they need.

This KIDS COUNT report is an annual report detailing data for 16 different measures in four categories for all 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico. The Foundation recommends states leverage new opportunities created by the American Rescue Plan, such as incentives to expand Medicaid in South Dakota where it hasn’t happened yet. The report can be found at <https://www.aecf.org/databook>.

About South Dakota KIDS COUNT

South Dakota KIDS COUNT is a leading resource for data on child and family well-being in the state and is dedicated to providing current, relevant, and reliable data to shape the issues affecting South Dakota children and families. More information can be found at sdkidscount.org. South Dakota KIDS COUNT is a project of the Montana Budget & Policy Center, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization providing in-depth research and analysis on budget, tax, and economic issues. The Montana Budget & Policy Center also leads the KIDS COUNT work in Montana and North Dakota. More information can be found at www.montanabudget.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. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Kids Count* report can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

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