



UNDER EMBARGO Until June 14, 2023, at 12:01 a.m. ET

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Nebraska Ranks 8th In Child Well-Being but Inaccessible, Unaffordable Child Care Pushes Parents to the Breaking Point

Child Care Challenges Cause Parents to Miss, Quit or Scale Back Work According to National Data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

OMAHA, Neb. (June 14, 2023) — According to the *2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* – a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation – Nebraska ranks 8th in child well-being nationwide.

Each year, the *Data Book* presents national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — and ranks the states according to how children are faring overall.

This year's *Data Book* highlights challenges in accessing affordable child care. Despite our relatively high ranking, parents in Nebraska must frequently miss work or even quit their jobs due to lack of stable child care, while those who can find care are paying dearly for it. These child care challenges cost the American economy billions of dollars a year and can stymie women professionally.

The *Data Book* reports too many parents cannot secure child care that is compatible with work schedules and commutes. In 2020-21, **6% of** Nebraska children ages birth to five lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care.

And women are five to eight times more likely than men to experience negative employment consequences related to caregiving.

Even if parents can find an opening at child care near their home, they often can't pay for it. Nebraska's median cost of center-based child care for one toddler was \$10,422, 10% of the median income of a married couple and 31% of a single mother's income in the state.

"Nebraska's high overall ranking is driven by its number one ranking in economic well-being, which is mostly due to the state's low unemployment rate," said Josh Shirk, research coordinator at Voices for Children in Nebraska. "However, a growing portion of money earned by families at work is going toward child care expenses.

“For instance, the 10% of income that a typical married couple spends on child care in Nebraska ranks 26th in the nation. For a typical single mother, the share of income spend on child care in Nebraska rises to 31%, ranking 23rd in the nation. And yet, paradoxically, despite the high cost of child care, the many wonderful and dedicated child care workers in our country and state are not paid well.”

While the cost of care burdens families, child care workers are paid worse than 98% of professions. Median national pay for child care workers was \$28,520 per year or \$13.71 an hour in 2022, less than the wage for retail (\$14.26) and customer service (\$18.16) workers.

The failings of the child care market also affect the current and future health of the American economy, costing \$122 billion a year in lost earnings, productivity and tax revenue, according to one study. All these challenges put parents under tremendous stress to meet the dual responsibilities of providing for their families and ensuring their children are safe and nurtured.

“Affordable and accessible child care is a necessary precursor to any kind of functional economy,” said Juliet Summers, executive director of Voices for Children in Nebraska. “Parents should never have to choose between putting food on the table and ensuring their children are safe and cared for. Simultaneously, workers who provide care shouldn’t have to choose between supporting their own families and the calling to create loving environments for our youngest children to flourish.”

Transitioning from a faltering child care system to creating a flourishing one will take new thinking and investing at the local, state, and national levels. An executive order issued by President Biden in April is aimed at expanding access, lowering costs, and raising wages. It could prove to be a helpful framework, but more is needed:

- Federal, state, and local governments should invest more in child care. State and local governments should maximize remaining pandemic recovery act dollars to fund needed child care services and capacity. Congress should reauthorize and strengthen the Child care and Development Block Grant Act and increase funding for public pre-kindergarten and Head Start. Nebraska legislators should pass an enhanced state level Child and Dependent Care tax credit and extend eligibility for child care subsidy assistance so that families can afford care.
- Public and private leaders should work together to improve the infrastructure for home-based child care, beginning by lowering the barriers to entry for potential providers by increasing access to start-up and expansion capital.
- To help young parents, Congress should expand the federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, which serves student parents.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The *2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available 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.aecf.org.

ABOUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEBRASKA

Founded in 1987, Voices for Children in Nebraska is the independent voice building pathways to opportunity for all children and families through research, policy, and community engagement. Our policy priorities are guided by research, data and proven best practices that improve child wellbeing. We pay close attention to the impact of race, poverty and geography, and look to address existing disparities within these issue areas.

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s young people by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling

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