



## PRESS RELEASE

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

Contact: Sharon Kayne, Communications Director, NM Voices for Children, 505-401-8709, [skayne@nmvoices.org](mailto:skayne@nmvoices.org)

### **Report: New Mexico Ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in Child Well-Being but Many Long-Term Trends Positive**

National *2023 KIDS COUNT Data Book* also looks at child care affordability and trends in early educator pay

**ALBUQUERQUE** — New Mexico is ranked last in child well-being by the national *2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, a 50-state annual report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that analyzes how children and families are faring. This year, the *Data Book* also includes data and text on the value of child care and the need for national policies to make it more affordable for families while increasing the pay for early educators.

“The data show that the state must keep pushing itself to create opportunities for all New Mexico kids to thrive, but we’ve also seen progress in most indicators, and many recent family-focused state policy changes give us strong reasons to expect that we’ll continue to see improvements in the future,” said Amber Wallin, executive director of New Mexico Voices for Children, which runs the state’s KIDS COUNT program. “For example, the state has recently become a national leader in making child care affordable for more families, an improvement that our families, early educators, and local businesses are seeing, but that does not yet show up in the rankings.”

Most of the data sets in the *2023 Data Book* are from 2021. New Mexico announced a [dramatic expansion of child care assistance](#) in July of 2021. That expansion was made with federal pandemic funding, but during the 2023 legislative session, lawmakers replaced that funding, which was about to expire, with state revenue so families would not lose their child care moving forward.

The national *Data Book* tracks a total of 16 indicators of child well-being, including issues such as child poverty, high school graduation rates, and teen birth rates, that are grouped under four domains – economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. New Mexico has seen consistent improvement over time in most of the indicators. Most dramatically, since 2010, child poverty in the state has seen a 20% improvement, the share of high school students not graduating on time has improved by 38%, the percentage of children without health insurance has improved by 45%, and teen birth rates have improved by 64%.

“As stunning as these improvements are, they are not enough to change our state’s overall ranking because other states are likely seeing better outcomes too. If we were strictly comparing New Mexico to itself from a decade ago, it’s clear we’ve made remarkable progress,” Wallin said. “Besides the expansion of child care assistance and the increase in wages for early educators, New Mexico has laid the foundation for improved child and family well-being in many other areas. Among them are better funding for classrooms, making higher education within financial reach of all youth, the mandating of paid sick leave for all employees, and the ending of predatory lending, which had been allowed to siphon

hundreds of millions of dollars a year from those communities that could least afford it. Then there's the creation, increase, and expansion of tax credits and rebates – most notably the Child Tax Credit – that are targeted toward families earning low incomes.

“In recent years, New Mexico has been a leader in putting children first in public policy. However, COVID-19 caused major challenges for families that blunted the progress New Mexico had been making to improve child well-being,” Wallin added. “We expect the many good policy decisions enacted in recent years, including significant investments that will benefit generations of New Mexicans, to put us back on the path to improvement for New Mexico children that will be reflected in our ranking in the coming years.”

In addition to the overall ranking, the states are also ranked on each of the 16 indicators and on the four domains. Among the indicators, New Mexico ranks highest in children living in households that spend 30% or more of their income on housing (26<sup>th</sup>), children without health insurance (33<sup>rd</sup>), and young children not enrolled in school (38<sup>th</sup>). The state ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in both fourth grade reading and eighth grade math proficiency, and 49<sup>th</sup> in both teens who are neither working nor enrolled in school and in high school students not graduating on time.

Embargoed data profiles for New Mexico are attached separately.

An embargoed edition of the national *2023 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is available here:

<https://www.aecf.org/inner-circle/data-book-media-preview>

#### **RELEASE INFORMATION**

The *2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://www.aecf.org/databook). Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs, and rankings for stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>.

#### **About New Mexico Voices for Children**

New Mexico Voices for Children works to improve the status, well-being, and racial and ethnic equity of New Mexico's children, families, and communities in the areas of health, education, and economic security by promoting public policies through credible research and effective advocacy. NM Voices manages the state's KIDS COUNT program. For more information, visit [www.nmvoices.org](http://www.nmvoices.org).

#### **About the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's young children, youth and young adults 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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

###