



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

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Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being Show Pennsylvania at 22nd

HARRISBURG, PA — Pennsylvania ranks 22nd overall in child well-being, according to the **2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how children and families are faring. When looking specifically at economic well-being, the state ranks 22nd, while it ranks 20th in health.

The health domain looks at the percentage of children who lack health insurance, child and teen death rates, the percentage of low birth-weight babies and obesity among 10–17-year-olds. The *Data Book* reports that Pennsylvania's rate of uninsured children is 4%. Approximately 126,000 children do not have access to affordable, quality health care coverage through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. In addition, Pennsylvania is ranked 23rd for the percentage of low birth-weight babies.

"For children to have the healthiest start possible, they need to be insured as early as possible," said Kari King, President and CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. "By age 3, children should have 12 well-child visits, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics schedule. These regular, preventive doctor visits or pediatrician visits are important for tracking a child's growth and development, providing immunizations, and identifying and addressing delays or concerns."

King said no child should be without health insurance. Pennsylvania families who rely on Medicaid for coverage for themselves and their children may have recently noticed a significant change: the Medicaid redetermination process that began April 1 through which the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services determines whether enrollees still qualify. This change comes about with the end of the public health emergency. During this unwinding process, it is imperative that children no longer eligible be connected to CHIP to avoid gaps in coverage and to ensure that children who remain eligible for Medicaid keep their coverage without experiencing inappropriate terminations or disruptions that often affect children more than the adult population.

The *Data Book* also reports that too many parents cannot secure child care that is compatible with work schedules and commutes. The *Data Book* reports that in 2020–21, 12% of children birth to age 5 in Pennsylvania 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 for child care near their home, they often can't pay for it. Pennsylvania's average annual cost of center-based child care for a toddler was \$11,346, or 10% of the median income for a married couple and 35% of a single mother's income in the state.

During the pandemic, policymakers supported sustaining the child care industry and continuous health care coverage, but a long-term solution is needed at the local, state and national levels, as most of this support was through one-time stimulus funding.

At the federal level, Congress should reauthorize and strengthen the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act and increase funding for public pre-kindergarten and Head Start. State policymakers must make additional investments in the state budget to attract and retain the child care workforce so that parents can find care when and where they need it.

“High-quality child care and healthy child development go together to set up children to thrive later in life. Policymakers must prioritize investments in these areas to ensure families are stronger coming out of the pandemic and supported as they contribute to Pennsylvania’s economy,” said King.

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.

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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 PENNSYLVANIA PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children is a strong, effective and trusted voice to improve the health, education and well-being of children and youth in the commonwealth. Since 1992 its public policy victories have helped countless children learn, thrive and succeed, regardless of circumstances. PPC is statewide, independent, non-partisan and non-profit. Learn more at www.ppartnerships.org.

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 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.

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