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Health Measures Drive Low Ranking for South Carolina Children

Annual Report Released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation Shows Alarming Trends for Infants Born at Low Birth Weight

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Several critical health indicators show opportunities for South Carolina to improve the health and well-being of its youngest citizens, 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. Statistics for children born at low birth weight are particularly alarming.

In South Carolina, 10% of babies born weighed less than 5.5 pounds at birth, putting them at higher risk for short- and long-term complications. A tiny baby may have a harder time gaining weight and fighting infections. In the long term, people born smaller are more likely to develop diabetes, obesity, heart problems and high blood pressure. All these outcomes put stress on families and have immeasurable costs to society. To improve maternal and infant health, Children's Trust invests in evidence-based programs, like home visiting.

"Home visitors work one-on-one with parents, connecting pregnant moms to quality prenatal care and giving infants a strong and healthy start," said Sue Williams, CEO of Children's Trust, South Carolina's member of the KIDS COUNT network. "Investments in home visiting programs drive the outcomes we want for our mothers and babies." Children's Trust administers the federal investment for home visiting in our state, delivering Healthy Families America, Parents as Teachers and Nurse-Family Partnership. Only 10% of eligible families receive home visiting services.

The annual ranking in the *Data Book* uses indicators from four key domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community — to produce an overall child well-being ranking for each state. South Carolina persistently sits in the lowest fourth of states, with this year's ranking being 41st.

In the health domain, South Carolina is ranked 47th. In addition to the high number of low birth-rate babies, obesity rates are also alarmingly high — 40% of children (10 to 17 years-old) in the state have a Body Mass Index at or above the 85th percentile. The child and teen death rate is also concerning at 41 deaths per 100,000, which ranks 43rd in the nation.

The *2023 Data Book* also explores the lack of affordable and accessible child care and its effects on families and employers. With almost 15% of South Carolina children birth to age 5 living in families in which someone quit, changed or refused a job due to child care problems, the state ranks at the fifth-worst in the nation. National indicators show that more than half of working parents report being late to work or leaving early at least once in the past three months for lack of child care. A quarter of parents reported that at some point they have been fired for it.

“If we want our state to prosper and for us to build on our economic development successes, ensuring affordable and quality child care must be a priority for the state,” added Williams. “Even if parents can find an opening at a child care near their home, they often can’t pay for it.” The average annual price of center-based child care in South Carolina for a toddler is \$8,658, which is 30 percent of the median income of a single mother in our state.

As Children’s Trust develops its priorities for the upcoming 2024 legislative session of the General Assembly, the organization expects to focus on these issues.

For more data and information, Children’s Trust has produced [several county-level data profiles](#): child well-being, adverse childhood experiences and child maltreatment. Those are available at scchildren.org.

Organizations and individuals who want to work toward building better futures for children and families are encouraged to visit scChildren.org and sign-up for our mailing list.

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 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 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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

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