



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

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## **South Dakota Ranks 23<sup>rd</sup> in Child Well-Being, but Accessible and Affordable Child Care Still a Challenge for Families**

South Dakota continues to rank in the middle of the pack for children's 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. This year's report looks specifically at how children and families are doing now compared to just before the pandemic. Notably, the lack of affordable and accessible child care in South Dakota makes it challenging for parents to return to and stay in the workforce. At the same time, child care businesses struggle to recruit and retain a workforce.

In South Dakota, a child care worker earning the median wage (\$11.97 per hour) and working full time falls below poverty level for a family of three. Child care workers in South Dakota deserve wages that reflect the value of their work. However, providers are often in a bind to raise wages without passing that cost onto parents. The cost of center-based child care for a toddler is already out of reach for many parents, costing on average more than \$7,100 per year, nearly the equivalent of tuition at a community college.

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 edition of the *Data Book* uses the year just prior to the pandemic as a comparison year for most indicators. Data that stayed the same before and after the pandemic can be interpreted as a win because many families experienced added economic hardships and heightened mental health challenges during the pandemic. Historic investments in programs and policies that support children and families kept the trends from worsening further. Unfortunately, many of the programs and policies implemented during the pandemic have ended or returned to pre-pandemic funding levels. "I hope people see this data and realize how important investments and policies were during the pandemic. Those extra programs and investments mattered and made sure more families and children had what they needed during a challenging time," said Xanna Burg, Director of KIDS COUNT with South Dakota KIDS COUNT. "I also hope policymakers see this data and take action to continue supporting children's well-being so trends can keep moving in the right direction."

Additional highlights from the report for South Dakota:

- **Economic:** The percent of children living below poverty remained the same from 2019 to 2021. About 15 percent of children in South Dakota live in poverty. It is encouraging that the poverty rate did not worsen, yet this means the economic situation for many families remains challenging.
- **Education:** There was not a large decline in high school graduation rates, at 84 percent of students graduating on time in 2019-20. However, large disparities exist for students of color. Black, Indigenous, and other youth of color are less likely to graduate on time because of generations of added barriers and unequal access to high-quality education.
- **Health:** About 8 percent of children lack health insurance, the same rate as in 2019. The leveling off of the share of uninsured children follows a sharp increase the year before.

One area of continued investment and policy change is to support a child care system that works for children, families, and businesses. The Annie E. Casey Foundation calls on lawmakers to consider specific policies that strengthen the child care system:

- 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.
- 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](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 in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at [datacenter.aecf.org](http://datacenter.aecf.org).

## **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](http://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](http://www.montanabudget.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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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