

Alaska Children’s Trust

Contact: Kaila Pfister, kpfister@alaskachildrenstrust.org, (907)248-7376

UNDER EMBARGO Until June 10, 2024 at 12:01 a.m. ET

28% of Alaska Children Live in Households with a High Housing Cost Burden, Children in Poverty Rate Increased: Alaska Ranks 41st in Child Well-Being Nationwide in 2024 KIDS COUNT Data Book as Alaska Children’s Trust Urges Alaskans to Ask Those Running for Office to Focus on Kids

50-State Comparative Data Shows Little Change for the Economic Well-Being of Children and Families in Alaska. Alaskans Must Vote for Kids and Ensure Elected Officials Enact Policies that Promote Kids’ Future Success, Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds.

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA — Alaska ranked 41st in nationwide rankings for overall child well-being, according to the **2024 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how kids are faring in post-pandemic America. The data shows Alaska leaders must do more to ensure concrete supports for families, as many are struggling with economic well-being and access to basic necessities like housing and food.

The data shows that almost one-third of Alaska children (32%) have parents who lack secure employment and 28% of Alaska children live in households with a high housing cost burden. Parents and children rely on support like access to affordable and reliable food, healthcare, child care, and housing, yet these needs are going unmet in many households. 14% of Alaska children live in poverty as of 2022, a statistic that rose by 2%, or by almost 2,000 children, since 2021.

“This data shows us that the needs of children and families are not being prioritized. Children are 24% of Alaska’s population but represent 100% of our future. Despite this, they are often not the focus of policy discussions. For too long, our election campaigns have focused on resource development, while our state’s greatest resource, our children and youth, continue to struggle,” said Trevor Storrs, President & CEO of Alaska Children’s Trust, Alaska’s member of the KIDS COUNT network. “With local, state, and federal elections coming up, Alaska Children’s Trust and our partners want to refocus conversations around changing the statistics for kids. When policymakers realize how critical building a bright future for kids is to Alaskans, we can ensure every family has the concrete supports they need to thrive.”

Each year, the *KIDS COUNT 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.

--	--	--

The data gives us a baseline to look at how Alaska is doing compared to other states as well as look at changes over time to state-level data. KIDS COUNT 2024 ranks Alaska as 41st in the nation, dropping us into the bottom fifth of all states for child well-being.

In each of the four KIDS COUNT domains, there are four indicators, many which fluctuated and changed Alaska’s overall ranking:

- **Economic well-being:** The four indicator areas are children in poverty (14% of Alaska children live in poverty), children whose parents lack secure employment (32%), children in households with a high housing cost burden (28%), and teens not in school and not working (8%).
- **Education:** The four indicator areas are young children (ages 3 and 4) not in school (62%), fourth graders are not proficient in reading (76%), eighth graders are not proficient in math (77%), and high school students not on track to graduate on time (22%).
- **Health:** The four indicator areas are low birth-weight babies (6.9%), children and teens without health insurance (8%), child and teen deaths per 100,000 (46), children and teens (ages 10 to 17) who are overweight or obese (31%).
- **Family and Community:** The four indicator areas are children living in high-poverty areas (7%), children in single-parent families (34%), children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma (6%), and teen births per 1,000 (17).

This past legislative session, Alaska saw many bills that would increase families’ access to concrete supports and help change many of these indicators, particularly in the economic well-being area, for the better. Bills passed by the legislature this session included increased flexibilities for School-Based Medicaid, implementation of broad-based categorical eligibility for the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), and expanding the eligibility for child care assistance. However, other legislative efforts designed to provide economic support to families floundered, including implementing paid family leave and putting limits on insidious payday lending practices.

“For children to thrive, we need our elected officials to prioritize bills that support families. This year, Alaskans will vote not only for President and Vice President, but also in state and local elections. All 40 seats in the Alaska House of Representatives and 10 in the State Senate are up for reelection, in addition to Alaska’s seat in the U.S. House of Representatives and several local elections. Children and youth cannot vote – but their needs must be represented,” said Jen Griffis, Vice President of Policy & Advocacy at Alaska Children’s Trust. “This is a pivotal opportunity for Alaskans to tell candidates that kids matter. That’s why we’re urging Alaskans to [Vote for Kids](#) – to vote in the best interest of children, youth, and families.”

For policymakers, Alaska Children’s Trust recommends the following focus areas:

--	--	--

- **Economic Well-Being:** Shore up supports for families so they do not experience poverty, a close-linked indicator for reports of child abuse and neglect. Concrete supports for families like eliminating predatory payday lending, increasing access to affordable child care, supporting paid family leave, increase affordable housing opportunities across the state, and increasing the ability for Alaskan’s to efficiently access the right support at the right time to help meet immediate needs and encourage long-term economic stability for families.
- **Education:** Alaskans need to get our education system back on track for children by permanently increasing the amount of per student funding, a policy that will support all of Alaska’s public education options - neighborhood schools, charter schools, and correspondence programs. Additionally, we must make sure students arrive at the classroom ready to learn by **ensuring access to low- or no-cost meals, a reliable internet connection, and a place to study and time with friends, teachers and counselors.**
- **Department of Education and Early Development should provide guidance to schools and districts so they can better address chronic absence, so more students return to learn.** Improving attendance tracking and data will inform future decision-making. Policymakers should embrace [positive approaches](#) rather than criminalizing students or parents due to attendance challenges, because they may not understand the consequences of even a few days missed.
- **Out of School Time:** Alaskan s need increased access to out-of-school time through stabilized funding and inclusive policies. Policymakers should recognize the benefits of out- of- school time programs as places to provide tutoring, mental health supports, and connection to caring adults. Including these afterschool and summer programs as part of broader education reform and funding strategies will help to expand access to programs that benefit youth and support parents.

###

RELEASE INFORMATION

The *2024 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available at www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/kids-count. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org. 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 or call the Alaska Children’s Trust Director of Communications, Kaila Pfister, for assistance (907)248-7378.

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.

--	--	--

ABOUT THE ALASKA CHILDREN'S TRUST

Alaska Children's Trust (ACT) is the statewide lead organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. For over thirty years, we have invested resources across Alaska to ensure children live in safe, stable, and nurturing environments. ACT is the Alaska chapter of the KIDS COUNT network. Learn more about [ACT here](#), explore the data (on June 10) [here](#), or learn about the Vote for Kids campaign [here](#).

--	--	--