



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

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Mississippi Continues to Improve Education Rank Despite Being Ranked 49th in Overall Child Well-Being in 2024 KIDS COUNT Data Book

50-State Data Show Academic Outcomes, Poverty Impacts Chronic Absenteeism

Mississippi ranks 49th in overall child well-being, according to the **2024 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that analyzes how children and families are faring. 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 doing. Mississippi has improved in half of these 16 indicators.

“Despite the state’s overall ranking of 49, we are encouraged that Mississippi ranks 30th in education. This is Mississippi’s highest ranking in the education domain in decades. While there is room for improvement in specific indicators, most notably among eighth graders who are not proficient in math, we are pleased to note that the consistent increased investment in Pre-K is better preparing students for kindergarten. One notable improvement is the percentage of Mississippi’s high school students not graduating on time. In 2021-2022 this was 12%, compared to 15% in the previous reporting period,” notes Linda Southward, Executive Director of the Children’s Foundation of Mississippi.

Regarding the areas of improvement, Dr. Ray Morgigno, Interim State Superintendent of Education, comments: “Mississippi’s momentum in education is the result of strong policies and dedicated, effective educators. The progress of our students has made the state a national leader in improving academic outcomes. While the pandemic disrupted student learning, state and federal funds helped our schools provide additional academic support to help our students exceed pre-pandemic achievement levels.”

Among the areas of concern, children who live in households with higher housing cost burdens have gotten worse, along with an increase in the percentage of low birth-weight babies, yet the percentage of teen birth rates and children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma has improved.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation report contends that the pandemic is not the sole cause of lower test scores. Students who don’t advance beyond lower levels of math are more likely to be unemployed after high school. The United States’ reading and math scores overall, have scarcely budged in decades.

“Kids of all ages and grades must have what they need to learn each day, such as enough food and sleep and a safe way to get to school, as well as the additional resources they might need to perform at their highest potential and thrive, like tutoring and mental health services,” said Lisa Hamilton, president, and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Based on the data from this year’s *KIDS COUNT Data Book* and outcomes from current programming, the Children’s Foundation of Mississippi makes the following recommendations:

- Expand access to intensive tutoring for students who are behind in their classes and missing academic milestones. Research has shown the most effective tutoring is in person, high dosage, and tied directly to the school.
- Increase access to dual-enrollment and dual-credit courses in high school
- Expand the availability of mental health professionals who offer services to children and youth, especially in underserved communities, which include schools.
- Continue to support equitable broadband access.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The *2024 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 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 CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION OF MISSISSIPPI

The Children's Foundation of Mississippi is a nonprofit focused on improving the policies and systems that affect the well-being of children in our state. We were founded in 2019 to serve as a convener, facilitator, advocate, and catalyst for positive change. In addition to signature initiatives, the Children's Foundation of Mississippi is the home of Mississippi KIDS COUNT, the premier data resource for child well-being in the state of Mississippi. For more information, please visit childrensfoundationms.org.