



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

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South Dakota Ranks 21st in Child Well-Being, Indicating Progress Needed to Better Support Children and Families

South Dakota continues to rank in the middle of the pack for children's 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.

Notably, South Dakota's lowest score was in the education domain, where fourth-grade reading proficiency decreased between 2019 and 2022. In the most recent year of data, only one-third of fourth grade students scored at or above proficient in reading. While not a perfect measure, this shift marks a need for ongoing attention to education outcomes.

Another key indicator for child well-being this year is how many children lack health insurance. The most recent data from 2022 show fewer children lacked health insurance compared to the year before. However, the health insurance landscape has since shifted dramatically, with thousands of South Dakota children losing Medicaid or CHIP coverage beginning in 2023, when the continuous enrollment provision ended. Children's Medicaid and CHIP enrollment in South Dakota declined 28 percent since eligibility redetermination began last year, the largest percentage decrease in enrollment in the nation.

"The worry is that such a dramatic decline in children's Medicaid and CHIP enrollment is going to negate the progress made in children's insurance coverage in 2022," said Xanna Burg, Director of KIDS COUNT at South Dakota KIDS COUNT. "State leaders should consider how to reach and enroll children eligible for Medicaid who may no longer be enrolled."

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. Additional highlights from the report findings for South Dakota include:

- **Economic:** The percent of children living below poverty remained the same from 2019 to 2022. About 15 percent of children in South Dakota live in poverty. It is encouraging that the poverty rate did not worsen, but this means the economic situation for many families remains challenging.
- **Education:** High school graduation rates remained steady for the most recent year, with 83 percent of students graduating on time in the 2020-21 school year. 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.

- **Family & Community:** The teen birth rate remains low at 17 births per 1,000, down from 33 per 1,000 a decade before. Teens are at a higher risk for having a preterm or low birthweight baby and are more likely to have limited education and economic resources.

South Dakota should continue to invest in children and families to ensure all children have what they need to thrive. **Investment in child care and early education** supports a family's economic well-being and access to early learning opportunities. Additionally, to get kids back on track academically, we must make sure they arrive at the classroom ready to learn by **ensuring access to low- or no-cost meals, a reliable internet connection, and a safe home environment.**

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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 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. 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.

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.