



UNDER EMBARGO Until June 8, 2026 at 12:01 a.m. ET

Contact: Janice Barlow jls@udel.edu (302) 750-9533

Delaware Ranks 31st in 2026 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* and Struggles with Poor Educational Outcomes

New Scoring Index to Increase Accountability By Showing How Delaware's Policies and Investment Affect Children's Daily Lives; State score of 554 is above national average

NEWARK, DE — Delaware ranks 31st in the nation in overall child well-being, according to the **2026 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book***, a 50-state report of recent data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, analyzing how kids are faring nationwide. The data show Delaware leaders must do more to prepare children to learn so they are ready to earn when they reach adulthood.

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.

By issue area, Delaware ranks 14th out of all states in economic well-being, 39th in education, 30th in child health, and 31st in family and community. Despite Delaware's high economic ranking, the data show Delaware leaders must continue to address persistent challenges in student achievement by investing in early learning, academic recovery, educator supports, and equitable opportunities for children and youth.

For the first time this year, states receive a comprehensive score (from 0 to 1,000) in the *Data Book*, not just a ranking. The scores track 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — over a five-year period from 2019 to 2024. The new scoring system shows whether policies and public investment are actually improving children's lives, not merely how states compare to each other. Delaware received an overall score of 554, above the national score of 547.

State data trends between 2019 and 2024 find:

- The overall score for Delaware remained stable, moving from 552 to 554, with vastly uneven change among the *Data Book's* four domains.
 - Economic Well-Being improved from 569 to 704
 - Education plunged from 531 to 322
 - Health worsened from 586 to 560
 - Family and Community jumped from 524 to 629

"We know what kids need to grow up healthy and connected so they can thrive as adults: stable homes, strong schools, nutritious food, meaningful relationships and opportunities to learn, play and grow," said Janice Barlow, director of KIDS COUNT in Delaware. "Programs that meet these needs are smart investments, fostering long-term gains like employment and economic growth."

In its 37th year of publication, the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* provides reliable statewide numbers to help leaders see where progress is being made, where greater support is needed and which strategies are

making a difference. KIDS COUNT in Delaware encourages lawmakers and officials in Delaware to use this detailed information to unite across party lines and respond with initiatives that invest in young people. By offering a local road map, the *Data Book* equips policymakers, advocates and communities with the information they need to make decisions that help kids and young people thrive.

Despite Delaware's relative strong economic standing, the data show significant work remains to ensure all children are prepared for lifelong success. KIDS COUNT in Delaware encourages state leaders to use these data to guide policy and budget decisions that prioritize children and families. Strategic investments made today will shape Delaware for generations to come.

###

RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2026 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available at <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.

ABOUT KIDS COUNT IN DELAWARE

KIDS COUNT in Delaware, a project of the Center for Community Research and Service within the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Delaware, is a collaborative effort of over forty organizations to enrich local and state discussion concerning ways to secure better lives for all of Delaware's children by providing policy makers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being. Learn more at www.udel.edu/dekidscount.

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.