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The Annie E. Casey Foundation Releases 2014 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*
Maine Improves in Education and Falls Behind in Economic Well-being

Augusta, Maine - The Annie E. Casey Foundation released its annual KIDS COUNT report on child well-being today and ranked Maine 14th among all the states. The special 25th edition of the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* highlights efforts since 1990 to raise awareness locally and nationally about how kids are doing and what policies and programs might lead to improvements in child well-being in the nation.

Demographic, social and economic changes combined with major policy developments have affected the lives of children in both negative, as well as positive ways since 1990. There has been increased access to health insurance for children, with only 5 percent of Maine children being uninsured in 2012 compared to 10 percent in 1990. However, more Maine children face economic hardships today, with 21 percent of children living in poverty in 2012, compared to 13 percent in 1990.

"Maine's economy is not working for our children. Too many kids are living in families where no parent has full time work, where housing costs take up a large portion of the family budget, or where wages don't meet the basic needs of a family," said Claire Berkowitz, executive director of the Maine Children's Alliance (MCA), which produces the state-level Maine KIDS COUNT reports.

"The future of Maine depends on ensuring that the pathways to opportunity are open and accessible throughout the state," Berkowitz added. "When we allow any segment of our community to struggle, particularly our children, that derails progress for all of us."

The 2014 KIDS COUNT report found that Maine has made progress in the areas of education, health, and family and community. More Maine high school students are graduating on time and proficiency rates have improved for 4th grade reading and 8th grade math scores. The teen birth rate is at a historic low and the death rate for children and teens has fallen as a result of medical advances and increased usage of seat belts, car seats and bike helmets.

The report gives states an overall child well-being ranking and then a ranking in four broad domains: Economic Well-being, Education, Health and Family and Community Context. Sixteen different indicators were used to determine each state's rank in these four domains.

VOICES FOR MAINE'S CHILDREN

Economic Well-Being: Maine fell behind in three of the four indicators that comprise this domain. Maine ranks 29th in this domain.

- Lack of parental employment: Over one-third of Maine children now live in households where parents lack full-time, year-round employment. Part-time or sporadic employment does not provide families with the level of income and benefits needed to meet basic needs like rent, food and quality child care.
- Child poverty: In 2012, 54,000 Maine children (21 percent) lived in poverty, defined as a family of four (two parents/two kids) with income below \$23,283. In 1990, nearly 40,000 children (13 percent) lived in poverty.
- Housing costs: Additionally in 2012, 96,000 Maine children (36 percent) lived in households with high housing cost burdens (spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing), up significantly from 77,000 children (25 percent) in 1990.
- Disconnected youth: In 2012, 5,000 or 8 percent of Maine teens ages 16 to 19 were not working and not in school - also referred to as “disconnected youth.” This indicator has remained relatively unchanged since 2008.

Education: Maine showed improvement on all four of the indicators that measure this domain. Maine ranks 14th in this domain.

- Preschool enrollment: An estimated 44 percent of Maine’s three and four year olds were enrolled in preschool, up from 40 percent five years ago. Research shows that when children attend high quality preschool they are more likely to succeed in school later.
- Reading proficiency: With 37 percent of Maine’s 4th graders proficient in reading in 2013 (up from 32 percent in 2005), Maine ranks 18th in the nation on this indicator. Nationally, 34 percent of 4th graders were proficient in reading in 2013, up from 30 percent in 2005.
- Math scores: Maine made significant improvement in 8th grade math scores, with 40 percent of 8th graders proficient, up from 30 percent in 2005. Maine ranks 10th in the nation on this indicator.
- High school graduation rates: Maine showed significant improvement in the percentage of high school students graduating on time. In 2005-06, 76 percent of Maine high school students graduated on time; in 2011-12, that figure rose to 87 percent.

Health: Maine earned its highest marks within the health domain, showing improvement on all four indicators. Maine ranks 3rd in this domain.

- Access to health care: In 2012, most of Maine’s children had access to medical care and preventative services because 95 percent had health insurance coverage. However, 12,000 Maine children still lacked health benefits. In 1990, approximately 30,000 Maine children (10 percent) were uninsured.
- Low birth weight: A baby born weighing less than 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds) is considered low birth weight. Between 2005 and 2012, the percentage of low birth weight babies born in Maine decreased from 6.8 percent to 6.6 percent of live births. Nationally, 8.0 percent of babies were born low birth weight in 2012, down from 8.2 percent in 2005. Maine ranks 8th in the nation on this indicator.
- Child & teen death rate: In 2010, Maine’s child and teen death rate was 27 deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19, down from 2005 when the rate was 32 deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19.
- Teens and substance use: In 2012, 6,000 or 6 percent of Maine teens reported that they abused or were dependent on alcohol or drugs during the last year. This represents a 45 percentage decrease from 2005-2006, when 11,000 or 11 percent of teens reported substance abuse or dependence. Maine ranks second in the nation on this indicator.

Family/Community Context: Maine ranked 6th in this domain, but showed improvement on only one of the four indicators.

- **Parental education:** Higher levels of parental education are strongly associated with better outcomes for children. Maine ranks 4th on this indicator, with 7 percent of Maine children living in households headed by an adult without a high school diploma, compared to 15 percent nationally.
- **Teen birth rate:** Between 2005 and 2012, Maine's teen birth rate decreased significantly from 24 births to 19 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19. The national teen birth rate decreased during the same time, but remains significantly higher than Maine's at 29 births per 1,000 females in this age group. Maine ranks 6th on this indicator.
- **Single-parenting:** In 2012, 85,000 or 34 percent of Maine children lived in single-parent families, a significant increase from 31 percent in 2005 and 20 percent in 1990.
- **Concentrated poverty:** Concentrated poverty is defined as neighborhoods where the poverty rate of the total population is 30 percent or more. During the period 2008-2012, 9,000 Maine children (3 percent) lived in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, up from 3,000 Maine children (1 percent) in 2000. Nationally, 13 percent of children lived in high poverty neighborhoods.

For 25 years the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* has provided reliable data about how kids are doing locally and nationally and what policies and programs might lead to improvements in child well-being in the nation.

"In order for kids to be successful, they need strong families, good schools, access to health care and safe and supportive communities," Berkowitz said. "The Maine Children's Alliance will continue to use state and national KIDS COUNT data to advocate for sound public policies that improve the lives of our state's children and families."

For more information:

The 25th edition *KIDS COUNT Data Book* includes the latest data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. This information will be available on the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#), which also contains the most recent data on hundreds of other measures of child well-being.

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The [Maine Children's Alliance \(MCA\)](#) advocates for sound public policies that improve the lives of children, youth, and families in Maine. For more information, visit us at www.mekids.org or follow us on Twitter @MEChildren and on [Facebook](#).