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**Twenty-fifth Edition of *KIDS COUNT Data Book* Credits National and State Policies for Improvements in Health, Safety, Education and Decline in Teen Birth Rate Since 1990**

*Minnesota ranks among top five states in the report's child well-being index, but index doesn't tell the story of disparities in economic stability and education for children of color in the state*

St. Paul, Minn. — Demographic, social and economic changes combined with major policy developments at the state and national level have affected outcomes of lower-income children in both positive and negative ways since 1990, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 25<sup>th</sup> edition of its annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book*. While there have been steep increases in child poverty and children in single-parent families, the good news is that in Minnesota and in the nation there have been steady improvement in the number of children attending preschool and a decline in the number of schoolchildren not proficient in reading and math.

Minnesota maintained its more than decade-long reign in the top five for overall child well-being, according to the report's child well-being index. Like their Midwest peers, Minnesota children overall fare well compared to other states in the economic indicators in the report, including the percentage of children living in poverty (15 percent) and the percentage of children who have no parent with full-time employment (24 percent). However, like most states and the nation, Minnesota saw an increase in the number of children in poverty since before the Great Recession with 25 percent more poor children in 2012 than in 2005. Additionally, when breaking down the economic indicators by race and ethnicity, the economic disparities for children of color and American Indian children in Minnesota are some of the worst in the country. For instance, while 15 percent of all Minnesota children lived in poverty in 2012, the rates were much higher for children of color with 46 percent of African-American children, 38 percent of American Indian children, 30 percent of Hispanic or Latino children, and 20 percent of Asian children living in poverty.

“At first glance it's impressive that Minnesota has consistently ranked among the top five states in the *KIDS COUNT* child well-being index,” said Stephanie Hogenson, Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota (CDF-MN) Research and Policy Director. “But when you dive deeper into the data and examine child outcomes by race and ethnicity it becomes evident that for children of color and Native American children in Minnesota the path to success is steeper.” Hogenson adds, “As the number of children of color in Minnesota continues to rapidly increase, it's imperative that the state recognize this stark reality and work collaboratively to ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed because we can't afford to lose one child to poverty, poor health or crime.”

(MORE)

Other worrisome trends are the steep increase of children living in single-parent families and in high poverty neighborhoods across the country and in Minnesota. The percentage of Minnesota children living in single-parent families has risen by 61 percent – in 1990, this figure stood at 18 percent and by 2012, the figure had risen to 29 percent. The rate of Minnesota children growing up in poor communities has increased by 50 percent since 1990, with 6 percent of children living in a neighborhood where the poverty rate is 30 percent or more in 2012. Regardless of family economic status, children who live in high poverty neighborhoods face greater barriers to success because of lack of availability of resources such as high-performing schools, quality medical care and safe community spaces.

On the bright side, in Minnesota and the nation, the teen birth rate is at a historic low and the death rates for children and teens has fallen, because of medical advances and increased usage of seat belts, car seats and bike helmets. Moreover, federal and state policies have increased access to preschool. Federal policies such as the creation of Early Head Start and increased access to Head Start, as well as Minnesota policies, such as state funding of Head Start have helped decrease the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds not attending preschool from 64 percent in 1990 to 51 percent in 2011. Still, Minnesota children from low-income families are less likely to attend preschool than their high income peers and, as a result, are less likely to be prepared for school, which sets them up to fall further behind as their academic career progresses.

“Looking back at the last 25 years of data on Minnesota children it is evident that investments in children, like funding for early childhood education and access to health care, improved outcomes for children and our state as a whole,” said Peggy Flanagan, CDF-MN Executive Director. “Since 1990 we have come to better understand how to give children a good start and ensure successful passage into adulthood. It’s crucial to our state and nation’s economy that we take what we have learned to ensure future investments in programs and policies that help all children succeed.”

To examine the more recent trends between 2005 and 2012, the new *Data Book* uses 16 indicators across four areas – Economic Well-Being, Education, Health and Family and Community. Minnesota ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in Economic Well-Being, up from 6<sup>th</sup> last year; 6<sup>th</sup> in Education, up from 7<sup>th</sup> last year; 17<sup>th</sup> in Health, down from 15<sup>th</sup> last year; and 5<sup>th</sup> in Family and Community, which was the same rank as last year.

The [KIDS COUNT Data Book](#) features the latest data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. This information is available in the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#), which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of measures of child well-being. Data Center users can create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and view real-time information on mobile devices. [CDF-MN](#) also produces its own annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state and county-level data. The 2014 Minnesota *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be released this fall.

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*Children’s Defense Fund-Minnesota is a non-profit child advocacy organization that does research, advocacy, youth development, and outreach to ensure a level playing field for all Minnesota children. For more information about CDF-MN, a grantee of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, visit [www.cdf-mn.org](http://www.cdf-mn.org) or follow us on Twitter at @cdfmn or on Facebook at Children’s Defense Fund-MN.*