

CONTACT: Chrissy Tonkinson
Phone: (402) 597-3100
Email: ctonkinson@voicesforchildren.com



EMBARGOED
FOR RELEASE 12:01 a.m. EDT, July 22, 2014

National Kids Count Report Shows Increase in Children Living in Poverty in Nebraska

State Education and Health Figures Improved While Economic Well-Being Indicators Show Need For Action

LINCOLN, NE -- Demographic, social and economic changes combined with major policy developments have affected the lives of lower-income children in both positive and negative ways since 1990, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 25th edition of its annual [*KIDS COUNT Data Book*](#).

The indicators for Nebraska show education and health scores are up but there are worrisome trends in child poverty scores. In Nebraska, 18 percent of children live in poverty, up from 15 percent in 2005. In addition, the number of children living in high-poverty areas increased to 7 percent, more than doubling since 2000, among other troubling indicators related to economic stability.

Carolyn Rooker, Executive Director of Voices for Children in Nebraska, said the new *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows the need for heightened attention to the issue of child poverty and the need to address what our state and communities can do to reduce the numbers.

"Our Nebraska economy is strong and parents are working hard, but the upward trend in child poverty numbers is very troubling," Rooker said. "They indicate that working families are not able to earn enough to meet all of their children's basic needs without assistance. As the KIDS COUNT report shows, the effects of economic insecurity can have enormous consequences for our children."

The new national *KIDS COUNT Data Book* reinforces other studies that also indicate that working families are struggling, including the Voices for Children [Family Bottom Line](#) Report and [online budget tool](#) released earlier this year. That report shows what Nebraska families need to earn to meet all their basic needs without assistance.

While child poverty numbers are cause for concern, the KIDS COUNT report does show improving indicators for child well-being in the areas of education and health. Nebraska has seen a reduction in the number of

children not attending preschool, the number of fourth graders not proficient in reading, the number of eighth graders not proficient in math and the number of high school students not graduating on time. Additionally, Nebraska saw improvements in the number of low-birth weight babies, the number of children without health insurance, the number of child and teen deaths per 100,000 and the number of teens who abuse alcohol or drugs.

Nebraska followed the national trend lines in much of the *KIDS COUNT Data Book*.

Nationally, there has been steady improvement in the number of children attending preschool and a decline in the number of schoolchildren not proficient in reading and math.

There also is a positive trend in parental education that benefits kids: A smaller percentage of children live in families in which no parent has a high school diploma – from 22 percent in 1990 to 15 percent in 2012. In addition, the teen birth rate is at a historic low and the death rates for children and teens have fallen as a result of medical advances and increased usage of seat belts, car seats and bike helmets.

Worrisome national trends include a rise in the official child poverty rate as defined by the federal government.

Although the percentage dropped from 18 to 16 percent from 1990 to 2000, the rate had reached 22 percent by 2010 and has remained at roughly that level. In 2012, nearly 16.4 million kids were living in poverty. The percentage of children living in single-parent families has risen significantly – in 1990, 25 percent of children lived in a single-parent household and by 2012 the figure had risen to 35 percent. Since 1990, the rate of children growing up in poor communities has also increased, with 13 percent of children living in a neighborhood where the poverty rate is 30 percent or more.

The national KIDS COUNT report also pointed to national racial disparities in child well-being. The [Race for Results](#) report released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation earlier this year showed Nebraska ranked below average in the well-being of children of color.

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.

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.

Founded in 1987, Voices for Children in Nebraska has been the outspoken, independent voice for Nebraska's vulnerable children for over 25 years. Voices for Children in Nebraska works cooperatively with community groups and individuals to tell the whole story of Nebraska's children through research, analysis, and advocacy.

Kids Count in Nebraska is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Since 1948, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has worked to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families in the United States. For more information, call Voices for Children in Nebraska at (402) 597-3100, email voices@voicesforchildren.com or visit <http://voicesforchildren.com>.