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**Twenty-fifth Edition of *KIDS COUNT Data Book* Highlights Improvements in Health, Safety, Education and Decline in Teen Birth Rate Since 1990**

*National, State Policy Changes Have Resulted in Positive Changes for Children, but More are Living in High-Poverty Neighborhoods and in Single-Parent Families*

BALTIMORE — 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 [25<sup>th</sup> edition of its annual \*KIDS COUNT Data Book\*](#). The good news is that there has been steady improvement in the numbers 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 has fallen as a result of medical advances and increased usage of seat belts, car seats and bike helmets.

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

“With advances in neuroscience, as well as solid research on what works, we now know more than ever before about how to give children a good start and help them meet major

developmental milestones throughout childhood,” said Patrick McCarthy, the Foundation’s president and CEO. “On several fronts, we’ve seen the difference that smart policies, effective programs and high quality practice can make in improving child well-being and long term outcomes. We should all be encouraged by the improvements in many well-being indicators in the health, education and safety areas,”

“But we must do much more,” McCarthy said. “All of us, in every sector—business, government, nonprofits, faith-based groups, families—need to continue to work together to ensure that all children have the chance to succeed. We should strengthen our commitment and redouble our efforts until every child in America develops to full potential. We simply cannot afford to endanger the futures of the millions of low-income children who don’t have the chance to experience high-quality early childhood programs and the thriving neighborhoods that higher-income families take for granted.”

**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.

- **Children continue to progress in the areas of education and health.** All four education indicators covering milestones such as preschool attendance and high school graduation showed steady improvements. Child health also improved across all four indicators, and more children have access to health insurance coverage than before the recession. There were also drops in child and teen mortality and teen substance abuse. The percent of low-birthweight babies declined slightly.
- **Economic progress still lags, even after the end of the recession.** Three of the four economic well-being indicators were worse than the mid-decade years, which is not surprising given the severity of the economic crisis over the past six years. However, the majority of the indicators in this area improved slightly at the national level since the 2013 *Data Book*, indicating modest but hopeful signs of recovery.
- **Mixed picture on Family and Community indicators.** The teen birth rate is at a historic low. There was a small drop in the percent of children living in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma. However, there was an increase in the percent of children living in single-parent families and more children living in high-poverty areas.

At the state level, Massachusetts, Vermont, Iowa, New Hampshire and Minnesota rank highest for overall child well-being, while Arizona, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico and Mississippi rank lowest. Three southwestern states — Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico — are once again in the bottom five for the overall rankings. Other state highlights:

- While three New England states rank within the top five for overall well-being among the 50 states, the top five states in the area of economic well-being are in the heartland and Plain States regions — North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska.
- The biggest improvements in overall rankings compared to last year's *Data Book* are seen in Iowa, Utah, Illinois, Indiana and Tennessee. The biggest drops in overall rankings are seen in Wyoming, New Hampshire (moving from #1 to #4), New Jersey, Montana and Oklahoma.
- Forty-nine states and the District of Columbia saw improvements since 2005 in math proficiency, but a considerable gap lies between Massachusetts with only 45 percent of its eighth-graders not proficient in the subject, and Alabama with 80 percent.

“The Foundation’s partnership with state and national advocates for children has thrived since our first *Data Book* and has brought steady attention to how kids are faring, said Laura Speer, Casey’s associate director for policy reform and advocacy. “The *Data Book* highlights the achievements of advocates across the country that have been critical in advancing increased investment in effective programs and services to help ensure that kids get the best possible start in life.”

The [2014 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.

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