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### **Kids Today Are Less Likely to Die or Give Birth than Kids 25 Years Ago *But Poverty is on the Rise, Says 25th Edition of Kids COUNT Data Book***

*Salt Lake City, UT*—The Annie E. Casey Foundation has completed twenty-five consecutive years of tracking children’s well-being across four domains: economics, education, health, and family and community. Voices for Utah Children is proud to have partnered with the foundation and has been the KIDS COUNT grantee in Utah for almost 20 years. The 25th edition of the foundation’s *Kids COUNT Data Book* shows that Utah children are less likely to give birth during their teen years and more likely to survive to adulthood than children twenty-five years ago. However, today’s Utah children are more likely to live in poverty.

Over twenty-five years, Utah has seen some major shifts in children’s wellbeing:

- The Utah teen birth rate dropped by 52 percent, from 48/1,000 females ages 15-19 in 1990 to 23/1,000 in 2012.
- The Utah child and teen death rate dropped by 37 percent, from 38 deaths/100,000 children and teens ages 1-19 in 1990 to 24/100,000 in 2010.
- The percentage of Utah children in poverty rose by 25 percent, from 12 percent in 1990 to 15 percent in 2012.
- The percentage of children living in households that spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing rose by 55 percent, from 22 percent in 1990 to 34 percent in 2012.

Similar trends were observed at the national level. The Casey Foundation attributes the fall in child death rates nationwide over the past quarter century to medical advances and improved safety measures, such as more widespread use of seat belts, car seats and bike helmets. According to the Utah Youth Risk Behavioral Survey, 27 percent of Utah high school students never or rarely wore seatbelts in 1991, compared to 8 percent in 2011.

“Utah policymakers have passed a number of safety-related bills over the past two decades that are saving children’s lives,” said Terry Haven, Deputy Director for Voices for Utah Children. As examples, she cited graduated drivers licensing and primary enforcement of child restraints, booster seats and seatbelts for minors.

In Utah and nationally, higher proportions of children are living in poverty today than 25 ago.

“Poverty is the single greatest threat to a child’s well-being,” said Haven. Since the Utah legislature passed the Intergenerational Poverty Mitigation Act in 2012, Voices for Utah Children has been working with the Department of Workforce Services to reduce poverty through two-generation strategies.

After ranking third in the nation in overall child well-being in 2009, Utah’s ranking dropped for five consecutive years, bottoming out at 14th in 2013. This year, Utah finally began to recover lost status, rising back to 11th place.

Utah’s strongest KIDS COUNT domain is family and community, with Utah ranking second behind New Hampshire. Utah’s weakest domain is education; the state ranked only 29th among the fifty states for education, due to lower high school graduation rates and lower preschool enrollment rates than the national averages. Between 2005 and 2012 the nation improved in the percentage of students graduating on time, while Utah worsened slightly.

To become the highest-ranking state for overall child well being in the nation, Utah would need to

- prevent 60 teen and child deaths,
- prevent 600 low birth weight births,
- prevent 1,000 births to teenagers,
- bring 18,000 children out of poverty,
- offer preschool to 24,000 additional children,
- employ the underemployed parents of 38,000 children,
- help the parents who lacking high school diplomas of 45,000 children obtain their degrees,
- provide health care coverage to 81,000 uninsured children
- provide housing to 160,000 additional children in affordable homes.

Voices for Utah Children is the KIDS COUNT grantee for Utah. A copy of the full report can be found on the Casey Foundation [website](#).

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