



NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE until 12:01 a.m. EDT July 21, 2015

CONTACT: Bett Williams, Chief Communications Officer
803-744-4042 or bwilliams@scchildren.org

South Carolina Improves in Annual KIDS COUNT Rankings of Child Well-Being

Despite Jump, Persistent Poverty Remains Barrier to Child and Family Success

(Columbia, S.C.) – South Carolina was one of five states to show vast improvement in the annual KIDS COUNT® *Data Book* ranking, moving from 45 to 42 in the nation for child well-being. South Carolina has not achieved a ranking higher than 42 since the beginning of the KIDS COUNT project in 1990.

This year, improvements in child health, including the reduction in child and teen deaths and increased access to health insurance, contributed to the improved ranking.

Children's Trust Chief Executive Officer Sue Williams says, "We hope this is the beginning of sustained improvement for children. Investments in maternal health, access to health care, and substance abuse prevention are paying off."

Despite improvements, the sustained well-being of children and families in South Carolina is fragile, especially when it comes to economy and education. Since 2008, there are more children living in poverty, in single-parent families, and in homes where a disproportionate amount of family income is spent simply keeping a roof over their heads. Economic pressures, such as low-wage jobs and lack of secure employment, are significant obstacles for opportunity and upward mobility.

South Carolina has experienced mixed results in educational outcomes. While South Carolina has made recent advances in the Read to Succeed Act, it will be several years of sustained investment before the impacts are seen within this data.

"Education is critically important for future success and family stability," Williams said. "With education, families have more opportunity to succeed and contribute to reducing the stressors that can lead to child abuse and neglect. We applaud and encourage the continued discussion around children's access to affordable, high quality early care and education."

South Carolina's children continue to struggle in key areas of education and economic well-being. For example:

- 59 percent are not attending preschool;
- 72 percent of fourth graders are not proficient in reading;
- 69 percent of eighth graders are not proficient in math;
- 27 percent of children live in poverty.

For children of color, the numbers are even more disparate. Only 13 percent of African-American children are reading proficiently by fourth grade and have math proficiency by eighth grade.

Children's Trust is the KIDS COUNT grantee for South Carolina. 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.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* and South Carolina state profile is available on July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT on the Casey Foundation website at www.aecf.org and on the Children's Trust website at scchildren.org/KidsCount.

###

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Children's Trust of South Carolina is the only statewide organization dedicated to strengthening and supporting public and private prevention efforts that keep South Carolina's children safe. It works to prevent child abuse, neglect and unintentional injuries so every child has the opportunity to thrive in a healthy, nurturing environment. Children's Trust is home to KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Safe Kids South Carolina, Prevent Child Abuse South Carolina and other programs that deliver on this mission. For more information, visit scChildren.org.