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2015 National KIDS COUNT Data Book:

13,000 More WV Children Live in Poverty Now than in 2008 or One in Every Four Kids

As a result, WV Drops Six Spots in the National Child Well-Being Ranking to 43rd

CHARLESTON, W. Va. – According to the newly released 2015 *KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book* from [the Annie. E. Casey Foundation](#), **there are 13,000 more W.Va. kids living in poverty than there were in 2008. That number represents more than one in every four (or 27 percent) of the state’s entire child population.** Nationally, nearly a third of children are living in families where no parent has full-time employment. **In W.Va., 38 percent of kids are in the same situation.** And even when parents are working full time, wages and benefits are often not sufficient to adequately support a family.

The 2015 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, measures child well-being in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. Today, the Casey Foundation reveals that the rising tide of recovery in the form of increasing employment and concentrated wealth has left stagnant pockets of low-income, struggling communities and families, where a child’s future is anchored in scarcity and hardship.

“The 2015 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows that West Virginia ranks 43rd in the country for child well-being, a significant drop from last year’s ranking of 37th,” said Margie Hale, executive director of West Virginia KIDS COUNT. “More importantly, our child poverty rate has continued to climb since the Great Recession and has now jumped to 27 percent of all West Virginia kids. Since 2008, the number of children living in poverty has risen by almost 15 percent from 87,000 to 100,000. That’s the highest child poverty rate we’ve seen in more than a decade. West Virginia has to do better for our children, and we can. We need to continue to increase our state minimum wage, and we must implement policies such as a state earned income tax credit, paid sick leave and increased childcare supports, which we know help lift kids and families out of poverty.”

“Although we are several years past the end of the recession, millions of families still have not benefited from the economic recovery,” said Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation.

“While we’ve seen an increase in employment in recent years, many of these jobs are low-wage and cannot support even basic family expenses. Far too many families are still struggling to provide for the day-to-day needs of their children, notably for the more than 16 million kids who are living in poverty. We can and must do better: we can make policy choices to lift more families into economic stability.”

National and State Rankings for 2015 *Data Book*

For the first time in a decade, a non-New England state ranks number one for overall child well-being. Minnesota holds the top spot, followed by New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Iowa, and Vermont. Arizona, Nevada, Louisiana, New Mexico and Mississippi rank lowest. 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, Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota.

- The biggest improvements in overall rankings compared to last year's *Data Book* are seen in Alaska, Minnesota, Wyoming, South Carolina and Missouri. **The biggest drops in overall rankings are seen in West Virginia, Indiana, Rhode Island, Virginia, Arkansas and Vermont. West Virginia was ranked 37th in the 2014 rankings of child well-being and this year the state is 43rd.**

Southeast, Southwest and Appalachian states are the poorest and are at the bottom of the overall rankings. With the exception of California, the 15 lowest-ranked states were in these regions.

Poverty is Persistent in Many Neighborhoods

As the number of children living in low-income families expands, at an even more desperate economic level, one in five children is still stranded in poverty.

- Since 2008, the number of children living in poverty has risen by almost 3 million, from 13.2 million to 16.1 million today. **Since 2008, the number of children living in poverty in W.Va. has risen by almost 15 percent from 87,000 to 100,000 today.**
- At a rate of 22 percent in 2013, the rate of child poverty is still several percentage points higher than before the recession, when it was 18 percent. **In, W.Va., the rate of child poverty is 27%, which is four percentage points higher than it was before the recession (23%).**

Recovery sidesteps children of color

Race is one of the strongest factors influencing a child's economic stability. Data show the economic recovery of the past five years has bypassed many children of color. Rates of unemployment at the close of 2014 were in single digits for all races except African Americans. African Americans were also the only group for whom unemployment remains higher than before the recession.

- African-American children are twice as likely as the average child to live in high-poverty neighborhoods and to live in single-parent families.
- American Indian children are twice as likely to lack health insurance coverage.
- Latino children are the most likely to live with a household head who lacks a high school diploma.

"The national averages belie the stark reality that millions of children, particularly African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians live on the precipice of poverty. Today, as the economy recovers, we see a widening gap between the living standards of many children of color and other kids," said Laura Speer, associate director for policy reform and advocacy. "The good news is when we've invested in the right strategies and policies, we have made a difference for kids."

Solutions that provide opportunity for all children

National and state level policies have proved that investments in health and education can create lasting positive differences for children. The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which provides low-cost health coverage to children, was implemented 15 years ago and has drastically reduced the number of children without health insurance. In addition, tax credits and food stamps have helped to lift people out of poverty; however even with these supports, millions of low-income families still struggle with basic provisioning for their children.

The Casey Foundation offers a number of recommendations to make good on the American promise of opportunity for all children. The Foundation promotes a two-generation strategy that simultaneously addresses the needs of children directly while providing tools and resources to their parents. Three critical strategies include:

- Provide parents with multiple pathways to get family-supporting jobs and achieve financial stability.
- Ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and enriching elementary school experiences.
- Equip parents to better support their children socially and emotionally and to advocate for their kids' education.

The Casey Foundation recommends policies that result in higher pay, paid sick leave, flexible scheduling and expanded unemployment benefits that will result in higher family income, reduced parental stress and an increased capacity of parents to invest in their kids. Detailed recommendations can be found in the 2014 report, [Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two-Generation Approach.](#)

The 2015 Data Book will be available July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at <http://databook.kidscount.org>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices.

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West Virginia KIDS COUNT's vision is to make West Virginia a great place to be a kid. Founded in 1990, KIDS COUNT provides the most trusted information about the well-being of children and builds alliances to advocate for what kids need. The non-profit organization's signature program is the KIDS COUNT Data Book, an annual, county-by-county report of child well-being in West Virginia. To learn more about the organization's mission, history and programs, go to www.wvkidscount.org.

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.