



**UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, July 21, 2015, 12:01 a.m. EDT**

**Contact:** Samin Dadelahi | [samin@wycf.org](mailto:samin@wycf.org) | 307.721.8300 ext. 23

**Wyoming one of most improved in child well-being according to Annie E. Casey Foundation's *KIDS COUNT Data Book***

LARAMIE – [The Annie E. Casey Foundation's](#) newly released 2015 *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *Data Book* reveals Wyoming as being one of the nation's most improved in child well-being; moving from 19<sup>th</sup> in 2014 to 16<sup>th</sup> in 2015. "While this is excellent news for the state," says Samin Dadelahi of the Wyoming Community Foundation, a grantee partner of the Casey Foundation, "the *Data Book* also indicates there is room for improvement, especially in the area of children's health."

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* is an annual, nationwide examination of the status of children. It focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, and measures four domains: economic; education; health; and family and community. Wyoming saw improvements in three of the four well-being domains, with the glaring exception being children's health, where Wyoming continues to rank in the bottom five.

The health indicators measured by the Casey Foundation – low-birthweight babies; children without health insurance; child and teen deaths; and teens who abuse drugs or alcohol – have seen marginal improvements over the last few years. Anne Ladd, executive director for the Wyoming Business Coalition on health notes that, "Healthcare in Wyoming is complicated by a variety of factors including our shortage of physicians in our most rural areas. The bottom line is that we should and can do more to protect our state's most vulnerable population."

The state saw an improved ranking across all indicators within the education domain for the second year in a row. Its national ranking moved from 24<sup>th</sup> in 2014 to 21<sup>st</sup> in 2015. Linda Barton, director for the Wyoming Afterschool Alliance, credits Wyoming's excellent teachers and high quality out-of-school time programs for contributing to these numbers. "Our state is slowly coming to the understanding that only a continuum of high quality programs for our children is going to change the face of education in Wyoming. You cannot reach targets for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade literacy, if you start in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or even in kindergarten. You have to look at the whole child and make sure that families have access to appropriate resources from the time their children are born until they enter adulthood."

With Wyoming's recent oil and gas boom, it should come as no surprise that the state's ranking for the economic well-being domain was outstanding (2<sup>nd</sup>). However, there are a higher number of children living in poverty as of 2013 (18,000) than there were in 2008 or even 2009 (16,000).

“It is disturbing to think that in a low population state like Wyoming, we can have that many children living at the federal poverty level,” says Dadelahi. In 2013, the federal poverty level was calculated at below \$23,624 for a family of four. Dadelahi says that looking at data over time is more critical to understanding what is happening in Wyoming than looking at any single year.

In the domain of family and community, Wyoming ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation. Sarah McCance, director of the Women’s Foundation, believes this is due to Wyoming’s low unemployment and strong economy. McCance is interested in how family structures are changing in the nation and in Wyoming. “Single parent families are on the rise and most of those are headed by single female heads of household. How is that going to change work supports in this state? Is it going to make access to quality childcare more important?” These are the issues the Wyoming Women’s Foundation is interested in examining at a deeper level.

The family and community domain also indicates that Wyoming has improved in the area of teen births, moving from 47 per 1000 teen births in 2008 to 30 per 1000 in 2013. This is notable to McCance who stated, “Women who put off child bearing until their mid-20’s have a higher level of economic self-sufficiency.”

The Wyoming Community Foundation, the Casey Foundation’s Wyoming KIDS COUNT partner, believes data from the newest report will benefit all of those working to improve the lives of kids and family’s around the state. The 2015 Data Book will be available July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). More information can be found by visiting <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>. A hard copy of the report is available from the WYCF.

### **Wyoming’s 2015 Rankings:**

- Overall: 16<sup>th</sup> (up from 19<sup>th</sup> in 2014)
- Economic Well-Being: 2<sup>nd</sup> (up from 6<sup>th</sup> in 2014)
- Education: 21<sup>st</sup> (up from 24<sup>th</sup> in 2014)
- Health: 45<sup>th</sup> (no change from 2014)
- Family and Community: 7<sup>th</sup> (up from 16<sup>th</sup> in 2014)

### **National 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.
- 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.

- 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.

###

**Contacts:**

**Linda Barton**, Wyoming Afterschool Alliance (component fund of the Wyoming Community Foundation) Phone: 307-335-9922

**Samin Dadelahi**, Wyoming Community Foundation Phone: 307-721-8300 x 23

**Anne Ladd**, Wyoming Business Coalition on Health, (307) 472-5013

**Sarah McCance**, Wyoming Women's Foundation (component fund of the Wyoming Community Foundation) Phone: 307-721-8300 x 30