



**UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday June 21, 2016, 12:01 a.m. EDT**

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## **Florida Now Ranked 40<sup>th</sup> in Overall Child Well-Being, 37<sup>th</sup> in Child Poverty According to Annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book***

*Florida needs to continue to improve to catch up to other states' gains*

TAMPA, Fla. – According to the 2016 *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *Data Book* from the Annie. E. Casey Foundation, Florida has slipped 3 places in overall child well-being, down to 40<sup>th</sup> place from 37<sup>th</sup> last year. Florida also fell nine spots to 47<sup>th</sup> place in overall children's health, making it now one of the worst performing states in the nation – despite the fact that there has been a 50 percent increase in the percentage of kids with health insurance since 2008.

The *Data Book* is an annual publication that assesses child well-being across the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The 2016 edition focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years and measures child well-being in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community.

"In terms of economic well-being, too many of Florida's children still live in poverty with almost one in four kids living below the poverty line," said Dr. Norín Dollard, director of Florida KIDS COUNT. "Our state leaders are taking notice. In their dashboard report, *Status on Turning the Curve*, the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet reports that the trend of increasing numbers of children living in poverty is worsening."

"We are letting our most vulnerable citizens down and we are letting our state down," added Dr. Dollard. "We need policies that make meaningful investments in the care and education of our children and families. Over the long term these investments enhance the skills of our workforce and create safe and stable communities that are pleasant to live in and also attract prospective employers."

The 2016 *Data Book* isn't all bad news. Across the nation, the teenagers of Generation Z – the rising cohort that follows the Millennials – broke records in education and health indicators. Florida teens are stepping up to the plate and making smart decisions about their lives. More kids graduated high school on time and the state is seeing fewer instances of teen births, with rates down more than 40 percent since 2008, and the percent of teens abusing drugs and alcohol fell 14 percent.

"The news on Florida teens is encouraging," said Dr. Dollard. "We just need to do more to ensure they have opportunities to raise their standard of living compared to adults in the previous two generations. Currently, this isn't the case. Higher education costs, stagnant wages and rising housing costs make it difficult for today's teens to become self-sufficient young adults".

The 2016 *Data Book* will be available June 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at <http://datacenter.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.

*Florida KIDS COUNT (FKC) is part of the nationwide KIDS COUNT Network. The objective of Florida KIDS COUNT is to inform Floridians and their policy makers about the quality of life for Florida's children, and to build leadership and accountability for action on behalf of our children. Visit <http://floridakidscount.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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).*

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