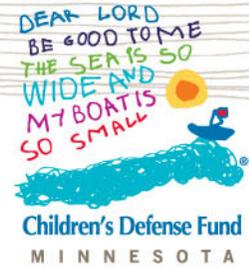


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Minnesota Ranks #1 State in the Nation for Child Well-Being

Disparities Persist Despite Minnesota's Top Ranking

ST. PAUL – Minnesota ranks number one for the second year in a row in overall child well-being in the 2016 **KIDS COUNT® Data Book** released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. State and local investments and policy changes in recent years to increase health care access and improve economic stability have made a positive difference particularly in the economic well-being and health indicator rankings. However, not all Minnesota children share equally in those investments and positive outcomes. For far too long, Minnesota has continued to have some of the greatest disparities in health, education and economic outcomes for its children of color when compared to other states.

The *Data Book* examines overall child well-being and bases its state rankings on 16 indicators in four categories: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. This year, Minnesota ranked 3rd in economic well-being (up from 5th last year), 1st in health (up from 2nd last year), 6th in education (same rank as the past two years), and 4th in family and community (same rank as last year). This is the seventh year Minnesota has ranked number one since the rankings started in 1990.

Despite Minnesota's high rankings in this year's *Data Book*, when the data is examined by race and ethnicity, it is evident that children of color and American Indian children in Minnesota experience greater barriers to success. Those barriers include being more likely to live in economically insecure families and neighborhoods and less likely to attend preschool, meet reading and math standards, and graduate high school on time. The changing demographics of children across the state and country illustrate the urgent need to address disparities in economic, health and education outcomes that threaten the future workforce. In Minnesota, all of the child population growth during the past decade is due to increases in the number of children of color who already account for nearly 30 percent of the state's total child population. Since 2008, the base year for data comparisons in the *Data Book*, the total number of children who are Asian, Black, Hispanic or Latino, and of two or more races has grown by 14 percent while the number of White children has decreased by four percent.

"It's evident that recent state and local investments that support children and families, especially policies and programs that increase family economic success and health care coverage and access, are paying off in improved outcomes for many Minnesota children," said Bharti Wahi, executive director of Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota (CDF-MN), the Minnesota KIDS COUNT grantee. "However, we cannot be content with a high ranking that masks chronic inequities for children of color in our state. We need to increase access to opportunity and reduce systemic barriers so that all Minnesota children have access to their basic needs and opportunities that help them thrive."

The 2016 *Data Book* focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, highlighting the fact that increased employment and post-recession economic gains have not yet reached low-income families and families of color. Minnesota and most states across the country have seen increased access to children's health coverage and improved key outcomes for teenage children including lower rates of teens abusing drugs and alcohol, rates of teen births, and rates of child and teen deaths. However, highlights from the *Data Book* also make it clear that more work needs to be done to ensure children, especially children of color, live in economically secure families and can access resources that support healthy development:

- 65,000 more Minnesota children lived in low-income¹ families in 2014 than in 2008. Nearly three-quarters of Black and American Indian children, nearly two-thirds of Hispanic or Latino children and almost half of Asian children, compared to less than a quarter of White children live in low-income households. Minnesota Asian children have the highest rate of living in low-income households of the 20 states with a large enough Asian child population to be ranked and only Wisconsin has a higher rate of Black children living in low-income households of the 28 states with large enough black child population

to be ranked. Low-income children face disparities in education, health and development similar to children in poverty.

- While Minnesota has one of the lowest uninsured rates for children at 4 percent (49,000 children), the rate for American Indian children is four times higher (16 percent) and the rate for Hispanic or Latino children is three times higher (12 percent). Although the number of uninsured children, including American Indian and Hispanic or Latino children, has declined in recent years due to significant investment and outreach to increase enrollment in health care programs, disparities in access to coverage persist.
- More than 75 percent of Minnesota children have at least one parent who has regular, full-time, year-round employment, according to the *Data Book*. While this rate has increased and the unemployment rate in Minnesota has fallen to pre-recession levels, the jobs that are available are increasingly part-time and in sectors that pay lower wages, according to the most recent Job Vacancy Survey. The median wage for available jobs in Minnesota in the fourth quarter of 2015 was \$13.54 per hour. According to CDF-MN analysis, a single parent with two children would need to earn at least \$19 per hour to meet basic needs. Moreover, historically Minnesota has had some of the worst racial gaps in unemployment in the country. As of April 2016 the overall unemployment rate in Minnesota is 3.7 percent and the unemployment rate for African Americans is 12 percent, Latinos is 5 percent and Whites is 2.9 percent.
- The number of children attending preschool in Minnesota has remained relatively unchanged from 2007 to 2014 and nearly half of all states have a higher rate than Minnesota of children attending preschool. All of Minnesota's early education programs, including Child Care Assistance, Head Start, early learning scholarships, and school-based preschool, are severely underfunded so not all eligible children are able to access these programs.

“Ensuring that all Minnesotans benefit now from our robust, growing economy is vital to our future workforce and prosperity,” said Stephanie Hogenson, policy and research director at CDF-MN. “While the legislature this past session did agree to invest in expanded tax credits that will improve economic stability for thousands of low-income working families, they didn’t do enough to level the playing field for all children. To continue to be a leader in child well-being and secure future prosperity for our state we must adhere to the research and best practices that demonstrate improved outcomes for all of our children by supporting two-generation programs and policies that improve family economic security and contribute to creating a better educated and healthier workforce, such as job training and higher paying jobs, affordable child care, raising the Minnesota Family Investment Program cash grant and creating a paid family and medical leave insurance program. We know what works; we just need the stamina to continue making the right choices that improve outcomes for all Minnesota children.”

The 2016 *Data Book* will be available online on June 21, 2016 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. 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. CDF-MN also produces its own annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state and county-level data. The 2016 Minnesota *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be released this fall.

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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.

The Children’s Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

ⁱ Low-income is defined as twice the poverty rate (\$48,016 annually in 2014) and is a closer estimate to the cost of a family’s basic needs budget.