

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**NE Kids Make Gains in Health and Education Despite Growing Economic Instability of Their Families**

*2016 KIDS COUNT Data Book ranks NE ninth best state for children, up one place from 2015*

**Lincoln, NE** – Nebraska’s teenagers of Generation Z – the rising cohort that follows the Millennials – made significant gains in education and health indicators despite growing up in the midst of the economic downturn, according to the 2016 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* from the [Annie. E. Casey Foundation](#).

Aided by advantageous federal, state and local policies and investments in prevention, Nebraska’s teens in record numbers have seemingly avoided obstacles that could have derailed their future prospects. Comparing data between 2008 and 2014, teen birth rates fell 39 percent, the percent of teens abusing drugs and alcohol dropped 25 percent and 93 percent of high school students graduated on time – the greatest increase in the nation.

Nonetheless, in 2014 despite having the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest unemployment rate in the nation, 16 percent of children lived in poverty – a 23 percent increase from 2008. Nine percent of Nebraska children live in high poverty neighborhoods and more than one in five children live in families where no member of the household has full-time, year-round employment.

Aubrey Mancuso, executive director at Voices for Children said, “Nebraska’s overall economic ranking is among the top in the country and there is much to be hopeful about with regard to how Generation Z is faring. What is troubling is that we continue to see widely disparate unemployment and underemployment rates and income gaps for families of color. We need to continue working to ensure that all Nebraska families benefit from our state’s economic progress.”

**National and State Rankings for the 2016 *Data Book***

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* 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. It also provides state rankings in overall child well-being as well as in each of the domains.

- Nebraska is ranked ninth in the nation in overall child well-being, an improvement of one place from last year's 10<sup>th</sup> place rank. Nebraska is ranked in the top 50 percent in each of the four domains. Minnesota maintained its first place ranking and Mississippi was again in 50<sup>th</sup> place.
- Nebraska ranked fifth in the economic well-being indicators, a drop from last year's third place. Wyoming ranked first and Louisiana was at the bottom.
- Nebraska improved from 11<sup>th</sup> place in education last year to eighth place this year.
- Nebraska improved five places in its health ranking, coming in at 21<sup>st</sup> place.
- The state's ranking dropped one place from last year to this year in the family and community domain where Nebraska comes in at 21<sup>st</sup> place.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* features the latest national data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation and will be available June 21<sup>st</sup> at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). This information is available on 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.

*Voices for Children in Nebraska is the independent voice building pathways to opportunity for all children and families through research, policy and community engagement. Our policy priorities are guided by research, data and proven best practices that improve child wellbeing. We pay close attention to the impact of race, poverty and geography, and seek to address existing disparities within these issue areas.*

*For more information, call Voices for Children in Nebraska (402) 597-3100, or visit [www.voicesforchildren.com](http://www.voicesforchildren.com).*

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