

## CENTER *for* PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

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### **Texas ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> in Nation for Child Well-Being, down from 41<sup>st</sup> place in 2015**

*While 2016 KIDS COUNT Data Book finds improvements in health and education, Texas families continue to struggle financially*

AUSTIN – Texas ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> in overall child well-being, according to the 2016 *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *Data Book* from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

“While we have seen large improvements in child health insurance coverage, high school graduation and teen birth rates, we cannot lose sight of the fact that Texas continues to rank in the bottom 10 states nationally for several areas of child well-being,” said Frances Deviney, Ph.D., Associate Director of the Center for Public Policy Priorities.

Despite rising employment numbers, 25 percent of Texas children lived in poverty in 2014—the same rate as in 2013. Although unemployment rates are low, 29 percent of children live in families where no member of the household has full-time, year-round employment. While navigating their own family challenges, an increasing number of young people are also growing up in neighborhoods that lack the resources they need to thrive. With 19 percent of Texas children affected, the state ranks 46<sup>th</sup> nationally for the percent of children living in high-poverty areas.

#### **Key Trends**

The 2016 *Data Book* measures child well-being in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. Texas continues to rank in the bottom 10 states for several child well-being indicators.

#### **Lowest rankings:**

- Health insurance (Rank: 49<sup>th</sup>, tied for last with Alaska)
  - 11 percent of children are uninsured
  - 784,000 children are uninsured in Texas, more than three times the number in neighboring states New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana combined.
- Teen birth rate (Rank: 46<sup>th</sup>)
  - Teen birth rate is 38 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19, compared to 24 births nationally.
- Children living in high-poverty areas (Rank: 46<sup>th</sup>)
  - 19 percent of children in Texas live in high-poverty areas, compared to 14 percent nationally.

#### **Largest improvements:**

- The number of children without health insurance has decreased by more than 400,000 since 2008.
- The teen birth rate in Texas is half of what it was in 1990.

- Texas has improved to 19<sup>th</sup> place in high school graduation, compared to its 35<sup>th</sup> place ranking in 2007/2008. However, challenges in college and career readiness remain.

### **Key Recommendations**

- Texas' school finance system needs updating and modernizing to effectively educate kids for the future. It is the role of the Texas Legislature and state leadership to proactively address educational challenges, so that the state will not continuously face challenges in the courts.
- Closing the health care coverage gap would immediately impact hundreds of thousands of Texans, providing access to critical physical and mental health care and strengthening families' financial security.

“Instead of waiting for a crisis or a lawsuit to spur action on behalf of kids, this report shows that state legislators need to work proactively to solve problems and create opportunities for Texas children,” said Frances Deviney, Ph.D., Associate Director of the Center for Public Policy Priorities.

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.

*At the Center for Public Policy Priorities, we believe in a Texas that offers everyone the chance to compete and succeed in life. We envision a Texas where everyone is healthy, well-educated, and financially secure. We want the best Texas - a proud state that sets the bar nationally by expanding opportunity for all. CPPP is an independent public policy organization that uses data and analysis to advocate for solutions that enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential. We dare Texas to be the best state for hard-working people and their families.*

*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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