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Wisconsin ranks 13 in the nation for child well-being; children of color left behind

Wisconsin's children of color face some of the greatest racial disparities in the nation

MADISON, WIS.— Wisconsin ranks number 13 in overall child well-being in the latest *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](http://www.caseyfoundation.org). While the ranking indicates that Wisconsin's children are faring better than 37 other states, it's critical to note that Wisconsin's children of color face some of the greatest racial disparities in the nation.

“Wisconsin has a lot of work to do to improve outcomes for children of color,” said Ken Taylor, executive director of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF). “African-American, Latino, and Native American children are facing greater barriers to success. Those barriers include high poverty rates, lack of reading and math proficiency, and low graduation rates.”

According to [Race for Results](http://www.raceforresults.org), a report released by WCCF in 2014, the overall well-being of Wisconsin's African American children is the *worst* in the nation. The report found gaping disparities between Wisconsin's white children and their non-white peers. Children of color in Wisconsin are more likely to live in poverty and lack access to the basic resources needed to succeed in life.

Taylor says that it's imperative that racial disparities are addressed in Wisconsin, and that state and local government, non-profits, faith-based organizations, the private sector, schools, and communities begin working together to address systemic racism and the inequities kids of color face. Too many children in Wisconsin are being left behind, threatening the future success of the state.

In addition to specifically working to address racial disparities, there is still much room for improvement in Wisconsin. The 2016 *Data Book*, which measures child well-being in four domains of economic well-being, education, health, and family and community, ranked neighboring states Minnesota and Iowa much higher than Wisconsin. In fact, Minnesota topped the list and Iowa wasn't far behind receiving the third overall ranking.

“Clearly Minnesota and Iowa are making investments in areas that support economic success for families, such as education, health care, and workforce development,” said Taylor. “Perhaps we could agree on a collective goal to reduce childhood poverty and learn more about what works for our neighbors.”

According to the *Data Book*, the percentage of children living in poverty, although still below the national average, continues to grow faster than the national rate of growth. In addition, poverty is disproportionately affecting communities of color. While overall child poverty rates suggest that nearly one in five children live in poverty, that number varies from about one in ten white children to about one in three Latino children and one in two African American children.

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families offers a number of recommendations for how policy makers can strengthen families and give children the opportunity to succeed.

1. Implement the [Early Childhood and Advisory Council](#)'s three recommendations that promote evidence based, high impact, smart investments in early care and education, including doubling the number of children in high quality Youngstar programs.
2. Accept federal funding for [Medicaid expansion](#) so more children and adults have access to affordable health care and the state can reduce its spending on healthcare and redirect money to programs that support children and families.
3. Increase the [Earn Income Tax Credit](#) for childless adults. This strategy will help reduce poverty by serving as a powerful work incentive and help those who are struggling to get by on low wages, some of whom may helping support children who do not live them.
4. Increasing Wisconsin's [minimum wage](#) so more families can work their way out of poverty and provide children with the economic support they need. Increasing the wage will also save the state money by decreasing dependency on BadgerCare and other public

The 2016 *Data Book* will be available June 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at 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.

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The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families is a multi-issue policy research and advocacy organization promoting statewide policies that ensure a safe and health future for every child in Wisconsin. For more information, visit www.wccf.org.

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