



**EMBARGOED UNTIL JUNE 13, 2017, 12:01 AM (EDT)**

**Contact:** Adam Muhlenhof, [Longleaf Strategies](http://LongleafStrategies.com), (334) 625-0175; [adam@longleafstrategies.com](mailto:adam@longleafstrategies.com)  
Kayla Farnon, [VOICES for Alabama's Children](http://VOICESforAlabama'sChildren.org), (334) 213-2410; [kfarnon@alavoices.org](mailto:kfarnon@alavoices.org)

## **Measures of Health of Alabama Children Greatly Improving; State's Progress Lags Behind the Rest of the Country in Other Areas**

**Montgomery, Ala., June 13, 2017** — Alabama has made some strides in efforts to improve the well-being of its children, particularly in the area of health, but the state still ranks behind most of the country, according to a national report released today by [the Annie E. Casey Foundation](http://theAnnieECaseyFoundation.org).

The findings are part of the *2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, which uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains: health, education, economic well-being and family and community. The annual report ranks Alabama 44<sup>th</sup> in the nation in overall child well-being.

For 25 years, [VOICES for Alabama's Children](http://VOICESforAlabama'sChildren.org), the KIDS COUNT grantee in the state, has worked to promote policies to positively impact the lives of children.

"The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows that some policies, such as the state's focus on college and career readiness and the expansion of high-quality pre-K, are helping Alabama's children move in the right direction," said Melanie R. Bridgeforth, MSW, executive director of VOICES for Alabama's Children. "At 44<sup>th</sup> in the nation, it is clear that we still have a long way to go to ensure that every child has an opportunity to succeed."

This year's *Data Book* reveals that, since 2010, Alabama saw significant improvements in several indicators:

- Children without health insurance has decreased by half. Today, only 3 percent of Alabama's children lack health insurance;
- The teen birth rate decreased by 32 percent;
- Children living in families where no parent had full-time, year-round work decreased by 11 percent; and
- Eleven (11) percent of high schoolers did not graduate on time, well below the national average of 17 percent.

Data from the report also show numerous areas where Alabama could improve its opportunities for children and thus its overall ranking. For example, the state still lags far behind the rest of the country in math and reading proficiency. Despite a relatively steady

decline since 2010, 27 percent of the state’s children continue to live in poverty, and 29 percent of Alabama children live in families that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

“Every year, this report, along with our *Alabama Kids Count Data Book*, identify opportunities where we can bolster the health, education and economic well-being of children in Alabama,” said Bridgeforth. “This research has guided VOICES for Alabama’s Children’s work for 25 years and will continue to be a roadmap for improving child well-being moving forward.”

### **Release Information**

The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available June 13 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://www.aecf.org/databook), which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

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### **About VOICES for Alabama’s Children**

VOICES for Alabama’s Children is a statewide nonprofit that works to ensure the well-being of Alabama’s children through research, public awareness, and advocacy. For more information, see [www.alavoices.org](http://www.alavoices.org).

### **About the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.