

# CHILDREN NOW

UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, June 13, 2017, 12:01 a.m. EDT

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## California ranks 37<sup>th</sup> in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being

*State ranks highest on children's health, lowest on economic well-being*

**OAKLAND, Calif., June 13, 2017**—Children Now urged California policymakers to stand behind policies that have improved the health of the state's children today, as the Annie E. Casey Foundation released the *2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* showing the state ranks ninth in the nation for children's health and 37<sup>th</sup> in overall children's well-being.

Children Now President Ted Lempert said this progress on health is linked to the state's implementation of the Affordable Care Act and the Health4AllKids law allowing all children, regardless of immigration status, to receive full Medi-Cal coverage. However, the recent passage of the American Health Care Act in the U.S. House of Representatives and immigrant families' fear of deportation puts these gains for children's health at risk.

"Thanks in large part to Medi-Cal, only 3 percent of California's children are uninsured. We are proud of the significant progress that California has made to support children's health," Lempert said. "It would be reckless for policymakers to undo these gains."

Despite the progress in children's health, California families continue to face significant economic pressures. The state fell near the bottom in economic well-being and family and community domains with more than 1.9 million California kids — one in four children — living in poverty. Additionally, 17 percent of the state's children live in high--poverty areas.

"It's disappointing that in a state known for innovation, with tremendous financial and intellectual resources, California is not doing better by our kids," Lempert said. "We hope California's dismal ranking serves as a call to action for policymakers to put more of our resources to work for kids by investing in quality programs proven to improve their future success."

The policies that led to the improvement in California children's health are just one step in the right direction to ease the economic pressures, like health care costs, on California children and families. Lempert said additional investments across all systems that serve children are necessary to lift children out of poverty.

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — that represent what children need most to thrive. California ranks:

- **Ninth in health.** The health of California's kids stands out as a result of the state's prudent investments in health coverage for kids. Between 2010 and 2015, the percentage of children without health insurance decreased nearly 70 percent.
- **38<sup>th</sup> in education.** Education persists as an aspect of child well-being that has seen mixed results in California. The state has experienced slight improvements in the

percentage of fourth graders reading at their level, but the state ranks 38<sup>th</sup> in the nation for education.

- **42<sup>nd</sup> in the family and community domain.** There have been slight improvements in each indicator of this domain. Thirty-four percent of children live in single-parent families. That is one percentage point below the national average of 35 percent. The teen birth rate is 19 per 1,000 women — a 41 percent drop since 2010.
- **46<sup>th</sup> in economic well-being.** Although California has made slight improvements in this indicator, the state has a long way to go. More than 20 million California kids live in poverty. Additionally, nearly 1 in 3 kids lives in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment. That number decreased 11 percent between 2010 and 2015, yet it's still higher than the national average of 29 percent.

“While California has one of the strongest economies in the nation, our state’s future fiscal strength is dependent on breaking down the barriers to economic opportunity for our children,” Lempert said. “The state needs to make smart investments in programs that support working families and give kids a strong start, like high-quality child care.”

### **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).

### **About Children Now**

Children Now is a nonpartisan, multi-issue research, policy development, and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting children's health and education in California and creating national media policies that support child development. Learn more about us at [www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.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.

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