

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

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## ***Backed by Sound Policies, Nebraska Children Experience Marked Progress in Well-Being***

2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book *shows improvements in economic well-being and education despite obstacles to health care access*

**OMAHA, Neb., June 13, 2017** — Nebraska continues to be a great place to be a kid. The state ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in the nation in overall child well-being, according to the *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, released today by [the Annie. E. Casey Foundation](#).

Nebraska ranks sixth in the nation in children's economic well-being, dropping down one place since last year's Data Book, despite improvements in all but one indicator in this area. The percentage of teens not attending school nor working jumped 50 percent from 2010 to 2015. Nebraska also ranks 10th in education, with one of the lowest percentages in the country of high school students not graduating on time.

Nebraska's data reflect national trends. The *2017 Data Book* shows that government policies have helped drive positive outcomes for children and families across the country. With the support of policies such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, fewer children overall live in poverty, more parents have jobs and more families are able to bear the cost of housing.

Overall, Nebraska has benefited from these programs and the state's numbers reflect that. However, the state needs to be better at supporting our children's health, as evidenced by a 25<sup>th</sup> place ranking in that domain. Nebraska has seen no improvements in the percentage of low-birthweight babies between 2009 and 2015 and has not seen any reductions between 2013 and 2015 in the rate of child and teen deaths, or the percentage of children without health insurance.

"While we are proud of Nebraska's upward trends in education and economic well-being, we are concerned that our health ranking will trend further downward should the American Health Care Act (AHCA) be passed," says Aubrey Mancuso, executive director at Voices for Children. "The AHCA would dramatically affect one in three children in Nebraska who currently receive health care through Medicaid, resulting in the rationing of health care for kids. This is an unacceptable outcome for our children and we must demand our state and federal lawmakers consider the significant role Medicaid plays in overall child well-being."

Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, adds: “We must use reliable data to inform policy decisions that ease poverty and create the next generation of healthier and better-educated citizens. We call on policymakers to use this evidence to continue and expand what’s working, and to find additional solutions that make a measurable difference for children.”

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. Nebraska ranks:

- **Sixth place in economic well-being.** The economic well-being domain continues to be a strength in Nebraska with the state performing better than the nation as a whole in the following indicators: percentages of children in poverty, families where no parent has full-time employment and children in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.
- **10<sup>th</sup> place in education.** Nebraska has the third lowest percentage of high schoolers not graduating on time in the country but is ranked 37<sup>th</sup> in the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds not attending school, which is 59 percent.
- **16<sup>th</sup> place in the family and community domain.** Our state sees better than national rates in three of the four indicators in this domain with particular bright spots in low percentages of children living in high poverty areas (7 percent) and of children in families where the head of household lacks a high school diploma (9 percent). The teen birth rate has steadily declined since 2010 and is consistent with the national rate.
- **25<sup>th</sup> place in health.** Nebraska has seen a 17 percent decline in the percentage of children without health insurance between 2010 and 2015. While our percentage of uninsured kids is consistent with the nation, 41 states experienced greater improvements in this indicator. Our child and teen mortality rate and the percentage of teens who have abused drugs or alcohol both exceed the nation.

### 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 Voices for Children in Nebraska

Voices for Children in Nebraska is the independent voice building pathways to opportunity for all children and families through research, policy, and community engagement. For more information, call Voices for Children in Nebraska (402) 597-3100, or visit [www.voicesforchildren.com](http://www.voicesforchildren.com).

### 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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