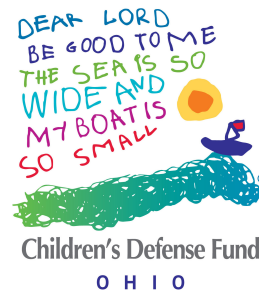


UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, June 13, 2017, 12:01 a.m. EDT

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Ohio Makes Gains in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being

Child poverty on the decline, but more investment needed in child healthcare and education

COLUMBUS, Ohio, June 13, 2017 — Ohio is making headway in providing children with the resources and support they need to thrive. The state ranks 24th in overall child well-being, according to the *2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In particular, the economic well-being of Ohio's children has improved. The percentage of Ohio kids living below the federal poverty line has decreased, fewer children live in families where no parent has full-time, year-round work, and fewer children are in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Despite this progress, there are areas of concern. More than half a million children still struggle with poverty. Fifteen percent – almost 400,000 kids – are living in high-poverty areas.

“We’re pleased to see fewer children living below the poverty line, but the number of children that remain is still unacceptable. Meanwhile, the state health and education rankings have worsened,” said **Ashon McKenzie**, policy director of Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio. “So we’ve got to keep our foot on the gas.”

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. Ohio ranks:

- **22nd in economic well-being.** The percent of teens ages 16 to 19 not working or in school has consistently dropped since 2010 and stands at 29 percent, a bright spot for Ohio.
- **23rd in health.** The percent of teens who abuse drugs and alcohol also has decreased steadily, with an overall decline of 29 percent between 2010 and 2015.
- **27th in education.** Ohio saw an increase in the percent of eighth graders lacking proficiency in math, a contributing factor to the state’s middle-of-the-pack ranking in the education domain.
- **30th in the family and community domain.** Nine percent of children in Ohio live in families where the head of household does not have a high school diploma, a decrease since 2010.

The *2017 Data Book* shows that Ohio has had mixed results in the health domain, causing a four-place drop in Ohio's ranking to 23rd. While only 4 percent of children in the state lack health insurance — a 33 percent decline from 2010 — the state was stagnant in its rate of low-birthweight babies and saw an increase in the child and teen death rate.

In education, the *2017 Data Book* highlights the need for broader and deeper investment into early childhood education. Ohio has seen a slight rise since 2010 in the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds not attending school. “Science has taught us that the first few years of development can position a child for success in school and life. Supporting early childhood education opportunities at the local, state and federal levels enables children to reach critical milestones that lead to lifetime success,” McKenzie explained.

“This information exists to inform our state’s policy decisions. We can take the steps we need to erase poverty, expand access and opportunity, and develop a healthier and better-educated generation of Ohioans,” said McKenzie. “We call on policymakers to use this evidence as they finalize state budget decisions and continue to craft solutions for our children and for our state.

Release Information

The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available June 13 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at 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.

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About the Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio

The Children’s Defense Fund’s mission is to ensure every child receives a *Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

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. KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.