

**UNDER EMBARGO until**  
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**CONTACT:** Linda O'Neal  
**OFFICE:** 615-741-2633

## Tennessee Sees Gains for Kids, Ranking 35<sup>th</sup> in the Nation for Overall Child Well-Being

**NASHVILLE, Tenn., June 13, 2017** — Tennessee's improvements for children in education, health and economic well-being placed the state at 35<sup>th</sup>, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2017 *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *Data Book* released today.

The *Data Book* ranks states in measures of child well-being across four domains and within 16 indicators. The annual report provides data over a five-year period as well as year-to-year. Tennessee ranks 26<sup>th</sup> in health, 33<sup>rd</sup> in education, 35<sup>th</sup> in economic well-being and 40<sup>th</sup> in family and community in this year's *Data Book*.

"The 2017 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* reflects substantial progress during the administration of Governor Bill Haslam," said Linda O'Neal, executive director of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, the state KIDS COUNT affiliate.

"The economic development and business recruitment gains contributed to economic well-being ranking improvements," O'Neal said. "The educational strategies related to the state's "Drive to 55" and "Tennessee Promise" have significantly contributed to improved outcomes for children and families, highlighting the importance of a two-generation strategy for the state's long-term prosperity."

The state has begun to reap the benefits of Tennessee Promise, signed into law in 2014 to provide tuition-free community college or college of applied technology (TCAT). The free-tuition program has given a greater number of high school graduates the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education, and has reduced the number who are neither in school nor working.

The state is being recognized nationally for *Building Strong Brains: Tennessee's ACEs Initiative*. These efforts, with support from the governor and first lady Chrissy Haslam and funding by the legislature, are creating innovative strategies to prevent and mitigate the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Health continues to be the state's highest ranking. During the 1990s, the state was on the forefront of health reform with the creation of the TennCare program. However, as other states have expanded coverage to their neediest working families, between 2010 and 2015 Tennessee dropped in ranking from ninth to 16th for children without health insurance.

“Uncertainty about the future of health care coverage threatens the improvements the state has made in reducing the number of children who do not have health insurance,” said O’Neal. “Tennessee’s failure to extend coverage to parents by leveraging federal Medicaid expansion funds still leaves 62,000 children without health care coverage.”

In education, Tennessee’s children have improved in math and reading proficiency between 2010 and 2015. However, 61 percent of children ages 3 and 4 did not attend school between 2013 and 2015.

Addressing the state’s education ranking, O’Neal added, “We commend the state’s commitment to improving the quality of its pre-K programs. Efforts are also needed to expand quality pre-K so more children have opportunities to develop critical social, emotional and cognitive skills during the early years.”

### **Release information**

*KIDS COUNT National Data Book* is available June 13 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Statewide and county-by-county data on Tennessee child well-being indicators are available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>. **Information on Tennessee’s spending on children** is at <http://www.tn.gov/tccy/topic/rm-resource-mapping>. For more information, contact (615) 741-2633 or a TCCY regional coordinator.

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### **About Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth**

The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, an independent state agency created by the Tennessee General Assembly, is the Casey Foundation’s KIDS COUNT partner in the state. Each year the Commission also publishes KIDS COUNT®: The State of the Child in Tennessee, which should be released in late July. The Commission’s primary mission is to advocate for improvements in the quality of life for Tennessee children and families. KIDS COUNT is an initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to disadvantaged children.

### **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.