



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

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Utah Ranks in the Top Ten in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being *State continues as a leader in child economic well-being and family*

SALT LAKE CITY, June 13, 2017 — Improvements have been achieved across almost all key areas of well-being for children in Utah according to the *2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The state is ranked seventh nationally in overall child well-being, landing in the top ten for both child economic well-being and the family and community context. This data points to the fact that children in Utah are benefiting from state policies aimed at helping them succeed.

Boosted by the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid and a push for outreach, Utah has dramatically increased access to health insurance for children: Between 2014 and 2015, 20,000 fewer children lacked coverage. This progress has helped Utah recover from a fall to 27th place in child health last year, and the state now ranks 19th nationally. However, at 7 percent, the percentage of children without insurance is still above the national average and more can be done to provide kids with the health and security proven to better position them for success later in life.

"Data shows that when we make positive investments in kids, we see positive results," said Terry Haven, deputy director of Voices for Utah Children. "The whole point of KIDS COUNT is to use the data to identify a problem, implement policies to alleviate the problem, and improve the data trends to make positive changes for kids. Our kids need policymakers to take note and act."

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. Utah ranks:

- **Fifth in economic well-being.** At 20 percent, Utah has one of the nation's lowest percentages of children who have no parent with full-time, year-round employment. However, the percentage of children living in poverty remained unchanged at 13 percent between 2014 and 2015.
- **15th in education.** The state saw decreases in the percentage of eighth graders scoring below proficient in math, fourth graders who were below proficient in reading, and in the number of 3- and 4-year-olds not attending school.
- **Third in the family and community domain.** Just 5 percent of children in Utah live in high-poverty areas, which is well below the national average of 14 percent. The teen birth rate has fallen to 18 births per 1,000 females.
- **19th in health.** The percentage of teens abusing drugs and alcohol remained at 5 percent for the third consecutive year. The child and teen death rate also hovers at the national average of 25 deaths per 100,000 children.

Along with critical gains in health, the *2017 Data Book* shows that investments in early childhood education are paying off. Utah exceeds the national average for its percentages of fourth graders meeting proficiency in reading, eight graders meeting proficiency in math and high schoolers graduating on time. Utah also saw a decrease in the percentage of children ages 3 and 4 who are not in school, a trend that is likely to continue as positive policies such as SB 101 — which makes it possible to offer scholarships for quality preschool to families living in intergenerational poverty — are implemented. Positive policies such as this will have profound impacts on children’s lives.

Supplementing the national *Data Book* is *Measures of Child Well-Being in Utah*, an annual publication from Voices for Utah Children that presents county-level data to local policymakers and planners. *Measures of Child Well-Being in Utah* also provides information at the state-level on racial and ethnic disparities, and it highlights emerging trends. This state *Data Book* will be released on the same day.

“The KIDS COUNT rankings are a good way to determine which states are near the top, which are in the middle, and which states are near the bottom in terms of overall child well-being,” says Haven. “We use this data to examine trends within our state, to determine if we are improving, and to gauge if the policy changes we make are helping or hindering our children. The data calls on lawmakers to take note and implement or protect sound policies.”

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.

About Voices for Utah Children

At Voices for Utah Children, we believe that every child deserves the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. And to achieve this vision, we make sure all kids are ready to learn and they and their families are healthy and economically secure. For more information, visit utahchildren.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. KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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