



**UNDER EMBARGO until Wednesday, June 27 at 12:01 a.m. ET**

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### ***KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> Data Book Ranks Alaska Worst in the Nation in Children's Health**

*Potential 2020 Census Undercount Jeopardizes Kids' Well-Being; Alaska's Risk Is Second-Highest in America*

**ANCHORAGE**, Alaska — The 2018 *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> Data Book released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows Alaska's kids and families are hurting. While an improved economy has resulted in more positive trends in other parts of the country, statistics are not improving in Alaska.

The Data Book draws from numerous sources and measures child well-being in four domains. Alaska ranked last (50<sup>th</sup> of the 50 states) in health, 48<sup>th</sup> in education and 41<sup>st</sup> in economic well-being – but a bit better, 20<sup>th</sup>, in the family and community domain – for an overall state ranking of 46<sup>th</sup>.

“All families, no matter their education, economic status, family structure or where they live, can raise thriving children,” said Alaska Children's Trust Executive Director Trevor Storrs. “Unfortunately, many of our hard-working families across Alaska are struggling.”

In economic well-being, the report shows 14 percent of Alaska's children live below the poverty line and 28 percent live in homes with a high housing cost burden. For additional context, the state-based KIDS COUNT report released recently by the Alaska Children's Trust revealed that 20 percent of Alaska kids live in households that don't have enough food or energy. When families are unable to provide the basic needs, children are at risk of experiencing adversities that can negatively impact them lifelong.

On the education front, as the recent state-based KIDS COUNT report showed, more than a quarter of Alaska's children are chronically absent from school. The national Data Book reveals that test scores showed only 28 percent of fourth-graders are proficient readers and 29 percent of eighth-graders are completing math proficiently. According to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, only 30 percent of kindergarteners were ready to start school when they arrived.

And on health 10 percent of Alaska kids have no health insurance, the largest percentage in the country. “Alaska's health care costs are the highest in the nation,” said Storrs. “Those troubling statistics, combined with the large number of children going uninsured, put our children and families at high risk.”

### **Likely Census Undercount Is Concerning**

The Data Book is designed to give community leaders accurate information to create realistic solutions. One big concern nationally and locally is the number of children who are not counted in the census. An undercount of young children in the upcoming decennial census would shortchange child well-being over the next decade by putting at risk hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funding for programs that are critical to family stability and opportunity. Alaska receives more than \$600 million per year in federal funding for these types of programs.

Nationally, about 4.5 million kids under five live in hard-to-count census tracts. Alarming, the figure in Alaska is 26,000 young children or 47 percent of the number of kids under five who live here. That's the second-highest percentage in the country, behind only New Mexico.

"If we don't count children, we render their needs invisible and their futures uncertain," said Casey Foundation President and CEO Patrick McCarthy. "A major census undercount will result in overcrowded classrooms, shuttered Head Start programs, understaffed hospital emergency rooms and more kids without health care."

To read the full report and additional statistics on how poverty, employment, and basic needs affect Alaska's children, log on to our website to access the latest [KIDS COUNT ALASKA Report](#).

### **Release Information**

The *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 27 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 Alaska Children's Trust**

Alaska Children's Trust (ACT) is the statewide lead organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. ACT has operated as Alaska's KIDS COUNT partner since 2016. The goal of the data is to have timely information available in order to make positive changes in the lives of Alaska's families.

### **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.