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**Contact:**

Adam Muhlenhof, Longleaf Strategies

[adam@longleafstrategies.com](mailto:adam@longleafstrategies.com)

334.625.0175

Angela Thomas, VOICES for Alabama's Children

[athomas@alavoices.org](mailto:athomas@alavoices.org).

334.368.0627

## **Child Well-Being in Alabama Receives Highest Ranking in Report's History**

*Children faring better than ever before, but still lagging behind the rest of the country*

**MONTGOMERY, Ala.** — While opportunities for Alabama's children still lag behind the country in many areas, the state has made significant improvements in child well-being over the last few years, according to a new report released today by the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#).

The *2018 KIDS COUNT<sup>®</sup> Data Book*, which was first published in 1990, uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains: health, education, economic well-being and family and community. Alabama is ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> nationally for overall child well-being, the highest ranking the state has ever received.

"Alabama has made great strides over the last few years, however, we still have a great deal of work to do," said **Rhonda Mann, interim executive director of VOICES for Alabama's Children, which is the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT grantee in Alabama.** "With the Alabama legislature set to embark on a new quadrennium, we encourage candidates and lawmakers to study this year's *KIDS COUNT* Data Book and ask, what would it take for us to make gains next year in the areas that need it the most and prioritize policies to make sure all children have an opportunity to succeed. If we are not implementing new policies to move the needle then child well-being isn't improving regardless of the state's ranking."

This year's *Data Book* reveals that Alabama ranks among the best nationally in two of the report's health indicators. Alabama leads the country with the fewest number of teenagers (aged 12 to 17) who abused alcohol or drugs in the past year (4 percent). Alabama ranks second nationally with only 2 percent of all children lacking access to health insurance. The state ranks in the bottom nationally for the health domain's remaining indicators, low-birthweight babies and child- and teen-deaths.

In addition, this year's *Data Book* reports:

- Since 2010, Alabama has reduced the percentage of children living in poverty by 11 percent. However, 25 percent of children continue to live in poverty. Significantly more than the national average (19 percent).
- Compared to 2010, Alabama has 80,000 fewer children living in households where no parent has full-time, year-round employment – a decrease of nearly 19 percent.
- While more Alabama children are proficient in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math than they were in 2009, the state continues to struggle – 79 percent of students are not proficient in eighth-grade math and 69 percent are not proficient in fourth-grade reading.
- The rate of teen births for 10- to 19-year-olds is down to 28 per 1,000 – a decrease of 39 percent compared to 2010 when the rate was 44 per 1,000.

“The *KIDS COUNT* Data Book is an important tool, not only because it highlights how Alabama is doing compared to other states nationally, but because it provides policymakers with a benchmark to measure how far our state has come and prioritize where we need to do more. In a sense it is a roadmap for lawmakers,” **said Rhonda Mann**. “The *KIDS COUNT* findings are only as good as the data it relies upon for accuracy. If state lawmakers are to make educated decisions on how to improve child well-being in our state, their work begins with ensuring a complete count of children in the next census that begins in 2020.”

#### **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).

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#### **About VOICES for Alabama’s Children**

VOICES for Alabama’s Children is a statewide nonprofit that works to ensure the well-being of Alabama’s children through research, public awareness and advocacy. For more information, see [www.alavoices.org](http://www.alavoices.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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.