



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

UNDER EMBARGO until Wednesday, June 27 at 12:01 a.m. EDT
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Undercount of Young Children in 2020 Census Threatens Well-Being of Youth Across Illinois

2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book ranks Illinois 22nd nationally for child well-being, but warns an inaccurate census could affect Illinois' most vulnerable communities for a decade

CHICAGO — Voices for Illinois Children is urging state and local officials to safeguard improvements in the well-being of Illinois children by fully funding staffing and outreach efforts for the upcoming census in 2020.

According to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, obstacles to an accurate census count — including budget constraints, a new online census form and proposed questions about citizenship — are compounded by the fact that more than 150,000 Illinois children under the age of 5 live in “hard-to-count” census tracts.

“Much of our efforts to improve the lives of Illinois children could be undermined with an inaccurate census count in 2020,” said **Tasha Green Cruzat**, president of Voices for Illinois Children. “Low-income children, particularly low-income children of color, and children in immigrant families stand to be most hurt by an inaccurate count and subsequent reduction in federal funds for education and health programs.”

Census data is used to allocate federal funds for hundreds of child-focused federal programs annually. Illinois receives more than \$5 billion per year for the 10 largest programs that enable children to thrive, including Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), as well as Head Start, grants to Title I schools and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).

As a state, Illinois has made progress in key areas related to children’s health and education yet continues to face challenges in improving family economic security. The *2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book* places Illinois at 22nd in the nation for overall child well-being. This ranking puts Illinois ahead of neighboring Midwestern states like Indiana and Missouri, but far behind top-five states Minnesota and Iowa. Sixteen indicators are used to rank each state across four areas — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being. Illinois ranks:

- **24th in health.** Illinois is a leader in providing children access to health insurance, ranking tied for second place nationally with only 2 percent of children uninsured. Yet, the percentage of low-birth weight babies has risen slightly to above 2010 levels and the child and teen death rate has steadily increased over the last three years.
- **13th in education.** Illinois’ commitment to early childhood education is evident in its top five national ranking for the preschool attendance of three- and four-year-olds. However, rankings of 30th in both fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math proficiency indicates that the state still has work to do to ensure all children are given the support they need to meet educational standards.
- **27th in economic well-being.** Too many Illinois children live in families struggling with economic security. More than 500,000 children live in poverty. Almost one in three Illinois children lives in a household with a high housing cost burden.

- **27th in the family and community domain.** Mirroring national trends, the Illinois teen birth rate continued to fall to an all-time low (19 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19). But too many Illinois children — 11 percent — live in areas of concentrated poverty, and this percentage has not improved since 2010.

“The information in the 2018 Data Book underscores the need to have reliable data driving the decisions we make about programs and investments,” said **Anna Rowan**, *KIDS COUNT* manager at Voices for Illinois Children.

Rowan noted the recommendations of the Annie E. Casey Foundation to achieve a more accurate census:

- **Maximize the Census Bureau’s capacity:** Federal legislators need to fully fund the census outreach effort, and the administration needs to appoint a qualified and permanent director to lead the agency to provide support for a more accurate census than in 2010.
- **Fund state and local outreach:** State and local governments and community organizations need to invest in educational outreach around the census to ensure that the most vulnerable communities are counted.
- **Expand the pool of trusted messengers:** Broaden the circle of people (from child care providers to members of the clergy) and organizations (from public schools to libraries) who can provide outreach in their communities to reach hard-to-count households and encourage participation among people most likely to be missed.
- **Address the digital divide:** Provide online access for all families to participate in the census, either in local libraries or schools.
- **Address privacy and confidentiality concerns:** Given the growing distrust and fear of online data breaches, it is critical that government officials ensure the protection of respondents’ data.

Release Information

The 2018 *KIDS COUNT*® *Data Book* will be available June 27 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 www.datacenter.kidscount.org.

About Voices for Illinois Children

Voices for Illinois Children champions the full development of every child in Illinois to assure the future well-being of everyone in the state. We work with families, communities and policymakers across multiple issue areas to help children grow up healthy, happy, safe, loved and well-educated. For more information, visit www.voices4kids.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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