



PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Sharon Kayne, Communications Director, NM Voices for Children
505-361-1288 (direct), 505-401-8709 (c), skayne@nmvoices.org
OR: Marie-Pier Frigon, Communications Assistant, mfrigon@nmvoices.org

***KIDS COUNT*[®]: NM Ranks 50th in Child Well-being for Third Time State Makes Some Improvement in Child Poverty, Among Other Indicators**

ALBUQUERQUE— New Mexico is once again ranked 50th out of the 50 states for child well-being by the *2019 KIDS COUNT[®] Data Book*, released June 17 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This is the third time the state has ranked last in the nation. New Mexico fell to 50th in 2013, then again in 2018.

Louisiana ranked 49th this year, bumping Mississippi up to 48th. New Hampshire ranked first.

“It’s disappointing, but not terribly surprising to see New Mexico ranked at the bottom again, given the last ten years,” said James Jimenez, executive director of New Mexico Voices for Children, which runs the state’s KIDS COUNT program. “It is going to take sustained investment to undo the damage from a decade of underfunding all of our child-serving programs and services like health care, child care and K-12 education. We started making progress in 2019, but clearly much more needs to be done.”

Using the most recent data available, the *Data Book* ranks the 50 states on 16 indicators of child well-being that are organized under four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. The indicators include everything from the child poverty rate and young children not attending preschool to child and teen death rates and the teen birth rate, among others. Most of the data in this year’s report are from 2017, the most recent year available.

As it did in 2018, New Mexico ranked 50th in the education domain, but this year the state fell to 50th in the family and community domain, dropping from 49th. The state ranked the same this year as last in the other two domains, economic security (49th) and health (48th).

There were some bright spots in the data. The state’s child poverty rate dropped slightly from 30 percent in the 2018 *Data Book* to 27 percent in this year’s report. That pulled our ranking in that measure up to 48th from 49th. New Mexico’s teen birth rate continued to improve.

Our teen birth rate in the new *Data Book* is 28 births for every 1,000 females ages 15 to 19 (per 2017 data). That’s less than half what it was in the 2012 *Data Book* (60 births per 1,000 female teens; 2009 data). And while the share of New Mexico children who lack health insurance did

not change from last year's *Data Book* (5 percent; 2016 data), the *number* of children without insurance dropped slightly (2017 data) and the state's rank improved to 27th, up from 30th.

Child advocates hope to see bigger improvements in the future.

"We made some real strides toward increasing our investments in children during the 2019 legislative session," said Amber Wallin, deputy director for NM Voices. "However, it takes some time before improvements in public policy show up in measurable changes to child well-being. Our ranking is also dependent upon how well other states are doing and most states made the kinds of investments during the recession that led to quicker, more robust recoveries than New Mexico did," she added.

One of the policies enacted this year that historically has shown to improve child well-being was an increase in the state's Working Families Tax Credit, which benefits more than 200,000 children each year. In addition, a large infusion of funding — about \$450 million — was appropriated to the state's K-12 schools. While that's a significant increase, it only brings the state back to the same funding level it had prior to the great recession in 2008, on a per-student, inflation-adjusted basis.

Two EMBARGOED fact sheets are attached. One includes all of the most recent data on the 16 indicators of child well-being. The other includes data and rankings for New Mexico going back to the first *Data Book*, which was issued in 1990.

An EMBARGOED copy of the *2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is available by request.

NOTE: NM Voices for Children, which issues the New Mexico KIDS COUNT Data Book every January, is holding its 7th Annual KIDS COUNT Conference in Albuquerque on Wednesday, June 26. Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham will give the keynote address and Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller will give opening remarks. More information about the conference is available [here](#). For press passes, please contact Sharon Kayne.

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New Mexico Voices for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.
625 Silver Ave. SW, Suite 195, Albuquerque, NM 87102; 505-244-9505 (p); www.nmvoices.org