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The 25th Edition of *KIDS COUNT Data Book* finds some gains in economic well-being and education of Hawai‘i’s children, but concerns remain

The 2014 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, marks 25 years of bringing attention to national and state-level data on the well-being of children. According to the data presented in the annual report, Hawai‘i ranks 25th out of 50 states on overall child well-being.

The report presents data on 16 indicators in four areas essential to child well-being: economic well-being, education, health, and the family and community context. Recent trend data (many from 2005 – 2012) presented in the *Data Book* show how children did mid-decade prior to the economic recession, compared to how they are faring in the aftermath. Certain conditions for Hawai‘i’s children have improved during the period examined, however, others have worsened.

- Three of the four economic conditions – children living in poverty, children whose parents lack secure employment, and children in households with a high housing cost burden – worsened since the pre-recession period. However, two conditions (children in poverty and children in households with a high housing cost burden) have remained stable since the 2013 *Data Book*, and two conditions (children in families where parents lack secure employment and teens not in school and not working) improved slightly from the previous year. Hawai‘i has among the highest rates of children in households with a high housing cost burden, and continues to hover near the bottom third in the economic domain.
- Gains in the education domain have continued, with improvements in all four indicators. Despite steady improvements in reading and math proficiency and the on-time high school graduation rate over the past several years, Hawai‘i continues to rank near the bottom third on these three indicators and in the education domain as a whole.
- Hawai‘i is doing relatively well in the health domain, ranking 22nd in the nation. The health conditions measured – child and teen death rate, percent of low-birth weight babies, percent of children without health insurance, and percent of teens who abuse substances – have remained somewhat stable, showing little to no change over the period examined. Hawai‘i has among the smallest share of children without health insurance and among the lowest death rates, ranking 2nd and 7th, respectively, in the nation on these indicators.

- Hawai‘i is also doing well in the area of family and community well-being, ranking 13th out of 50 states. Despite this ranking, there has been a worsening on two indicators, with an upward trend in the share of children living in single-parent families and children living in high-poverty areas.

KIDS COUNT began tracking the well-being of our nation’s children in the early 1990s, with the Center on the Family at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa serving as Hawai‘i’s KIDS COUNT affiliate since 1994.

“The well-being of our children is the most important indicator of how well our state is doing in terms of long-term economic success and how well we will do in the future,” said Ivette Rodriguez Stern, the Hawai‘i KIDS COUNT Project Director. “The good news is that we’re no longer slipping in rank where it comes to the overall well-being of Hawai‘i’s children, as had been the case in recent years. We’re now somewhere in the middle and while we’re doing well in the areas of health and in the family and community context, we’re ranked much lower where it comes to the economic well-being of our children and education.” Stern added, “Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs in the data. Two of the four economic conditions improved slightly since the previous year – perhaps speaking to economic recovery – and gains in the education domain have continued. But these gains must continue in the years ahead in order for child outcomes to improve and for our state to stay strong, stable and globally competitive.”

Over the past two decades, the nation has gained significant knowledge on how to give children a good start and help them meet major milestones throughout childhood. The report addresses this knowledge and policies that set children up for success throughout life. “One of the things that we clearly know from the research is that a focus on the early years is critical in order to promote healthy child development and to give children a strong foundation for success,” said Dr. Marianne Berry, Director of the Center on the Family. “Children who have access to high quality early care and learning experiences tend to have better outcomes across domains, with life-long benefits. Efforts to improve the overall well-being of Hawai‘i’s children must, therefore, consider investments in providing our young children with high quality care and education.”

The [KIDS COUNT Data Book](#) features the latest data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. This information is available in the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#), which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of measures of child well-being. Data Center users can create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and view real-time information on mobile devices.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state-by-state rankings will be embargoed until 12:01 a.m. EDT, July 22, 2014. Supplemental materials such as the national news release, 2014 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* fact sheet, state releases, state profiles, and *Data Book* will be available at www.aecf.org on July 22.

The Center on the Family is a unit within the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. The Center’s mission is to enhance the well-being of Hawai‘i’s families through interdisciplinary research, education,

and community outreach. For more information about the Center, visit www.uhfamily.hawaii.edu.

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