



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

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**Contact:** Larry Joseph | 312-516-5556 | [ljoseph@voices4kids.org](mailto:ljoseph@voices4kids.org)  
Anne Klassman | 773-294-4154 | [aklassman@voices4kids.org](mailto:aklassman@voices4kids.org)

**National *KIDS COUNT Data Book* Report Shows Disturbing Trends in Child Poverty**  
*Positive and negative trends in well-being for Illinois children*

CHICAGO — Indicators of child well-being in Illinois shows both encouraging and disturbing trends over the past decade, according to the 25<sup>th</sup> edition of the national *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Trends in well-being in Illinois—both positive and negative—closely parallel nationwide trends.

Encouraging developments include more children with health insurance coverage, a long-term decline in births to teen mothers, and lower mortality rates for children and teens. Indicators related to child poverty and family economic security show more troubling trends.

- **Child poverty:** In 2012, the child poverty rate in Illinois was 21 percent, compared with 16 percent in 2005. (In 2012, the official federal poverty level was about \$23,000 for a married couple with two children and \$18,500 for a single parent with two children.)
- **Parental employment:** In 2012, 29 percent of Illinois children lived with parents who lacked secure employment (working at least 35 hours per week, at least 50 weeks per year). This figure was an improvement over 2010 (32 percent), but still substantially higher than the pre-recession level (26 percent). Insecure parental employment is associated with lower household income, higher incidence of poverty, and increased family stress.
- **Concentrated poverty:** The number of Illinois children living in areas of concentrated poverty has increased 32 percent since 2000. (Areas of concentrated poverty are defined as census tracts with poverty rates of 30 percent or more.) Research indicates that as neighborhood poverty rates increase, undesirable outcomes for children rise and opportunities for success are less likely.

On most indicators presented in the *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, Illinois is close to or somewhat better than the U.S. average. On indicators related to family economic well-being, Illinois is close to the Midwest average. For example, the state's child poverty rate in 2012 (21 percent) was lower than those in Michigan (25 percent), Ohio (24 percent), Missouri (23 percent), and Indiana (22 percent) but higher than the rates in Minnesota (15 percent), Iowa (16 percent), and Wisconsin (18 percent).

Gaylord Gieseke, president of Voices for Illinois Children, expressed concern that child poverty rates

remain well above pre-recession levels: “We continue to see the lingering effects of the recession on children and families. A large body of research tells us that growing up in poverty, especially in early childhood, can harm children’s health, their cognitive and social-emotional development, their academic achievement, and their economic opportunities as adults.”

Gieseke emphasized the importance of maintaining and strengthening effective programs that alleviate child poverty, especially the federal and state earned income tax credits, the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the state’s Child Care Assistance Program. She noted, “Illinois must renew its commitment to expanding early learning opportunities for children in low-income families.”

The *Illinois Kids Count* 2015 report, to be published by Voices for Illinois Children early next year, will provide more detailed data and analysis on child poverty, with particular emphasis on changing geographic patterns of poverty within the state.

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.

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*Voices for Illinois Children is a champion for the full development of every child in the state, working with families, communities, and policymakers on child-related issues. Voices’ Kids Count work is part of a nationwide network of state-level projects supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For the most recent Illinois Kids Count 2014 report, “Child Health Matters,” visit [www.voices4kids.org](http://www.voices4kids.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.*