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Media Contact: Al Passarella | 410.547.9200 ext. 3012 | [apassarella@acy.org](mailto:apassarella@acy.org)

***KIDS COUNT Data Book Reveals Improvements in Health, Education Child Well-Being Indicators***  
*State Policy Changes Have Resulted in Positive Changes for Children, but More are Living in High-Poverty Neighborhoods*

BALTIMORE — Demographic, social and economic changes combined with major policy developments have affected the lives of Maryland’s lower-income children in both positive and negative ways since 1990, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 25<sup>th</sup> edition of its annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book*.

The new *Data Book* uses 16 child well-being indicators across four areas – Economic Well-Being, Education, Health and Family and Community. In Maryland, health and education indicators show steady improvement. Approximately 1.3 million children or 96 percent were insured in 2012—a one percent improvement over 2008. More children are also attending Pre-K with 73,000 children or 50 percent getting additional support to help them succeed.

“These indicators are encouraging and confirm that our work is appropriately focused,” said Al Passarella, research director for Advocates for Children and Youth. “We have made a concerted effort to reach vulnerable youth populations to advise them, direct service providers and their caregivers about healthcare coverage and we have worked with fellow advocates to ensure that Pre-K is a priority.”

However, Passarella said there is more work to be done as there are some worrisome trends.

There was an increase in the number of households who have to spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. In 2012, 500,000 children lived in such households which represented a 6 percent increase over 2005. The number of children living in poverty was 183,000, which represents a 27 percent increase since 2005. The rate of children growing up in financially stressed households has also increased, with 35 percent or 502,000 children living in a neighborhood with households that spend 30 percent or more on their income housing expenses.

“These statistics show that we can never rest easy when it comes to improving outcomes for Maryland’s children,” said Passarella. “Based on these indicators, Maryland ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation; however, when you examine the data in detail our children still need some of the basics that we sometimes take for granted.”

The new *Data Book* examines the more recent national trends between 2005 and 2012 which hold true for Maryland as well:

- **Children continue to progress in the areas of education and health.** All four education indicators covering milestones such as preschool attendance and high school graduation showed steady improvements. Child health also improved across all four indicators, and more children have access to health insurance coverage than before the recession. There were also drops in child and teen mortality and teen substance abuse. The percentage of low-birth weight babies declined slightly.
- **Economic progress still lags, even after the end of the recession.** Three of the four economic well-being indicators were worse than the mid-decade years, which is not surprising given the severity of the economic crisis over the past six years. However, the majority of the indicators in this area improved slightly at the national level since the 2013 *Data Book*, indicating modest but hopeful signs of recovery.

- **Mixed picture on Family and Community indicators.** The teen birth rate is at a historic low. There was a small drop in the percentage of children living in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma. However, there was an increase in the percentage of children living in single-parent families and more children living in high-poverty areas.

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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***Advocates for Children and Youth** is a statewide non-profit focused on improving the lives and experiences of Maryland's children through policy change and program improvement. We champion solutions to child welfare, education, health, and juvenile justice issues, positioning us to influence the full spectrum of youth experiences. This multi-issue platform helps us to improve the entirety of children's worlds—the systems they touch, the people they interact with, and the environment where they live. [www.acy.org](http://www.acy.org)*

***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.*

