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Pennsylvania Makes Modest Progress in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being

(HARRISBURG, PA) July 22 – Pennsylvania ranks 16th in the nation for its overall child well-being, up from 17th a year ago, according to the latest 2014 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* issued today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The commonwealth's slight improvement in the national rankings comes one year after Pennsylvania fell three spots, sliding from 14th in 2012 to 17th in 2013. Last year marked the first time in five years that the commonwealth had dropped in the national KIDS COUNT rankings.

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children President and CEO Joan Benso called Pennsylvania's newest ranking "a hopeful indication that we have reversed the slide we saw last year, but also a sobering reminder that we still have to step up our investments in proven programs that benefit our youngest citizens."

"We know one of the best investments in any economic climate is an investment in our children," Benso said. "They are the single greatest resource we have as a commonwealth, and ensuring their success benefits every one of us. If our kids grow up healthy, well-educated and ready for the challenges of adulthood, it has a beneficial ripple effect for every Pennsylvanian."

The data book released today uses 16 indicators to rank each state within four domains that represent what children need most to thrive. Pennsylvania now ranks:

- **17th in economic well-being, the same ranking as last year.** The economic well-being domain examines data related to child poverty, family employment, housing costs and whether older teens not in school are working.
- **7th in education, up from 8th last year.** The education domain looks at preschool opportunities, reading and math proficiency, and whether high school students graduate on time.
- **23rd in the family and community domain, up from 25th last year.** This domain examines the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas, single-parent households and education levels among heads of households, as well as teen birth rates.
- **25th in health, down from 22nd last year.** The health domain looks at the percentage of children who lack health insurance, child and teen death rates, low-birth weight babies, and alcohol or drug abuse among teens.

(MORE)

This year marks the 25th edition of the KIDS COUNT® Data Book, which was first published in 1990 as a way to help states use data to improve public policy that impacts children.

“With advances in neuroscience, as well as solid research on what works, we now know more than ever before about how to give children a good start and help them meet major developmental milestones throughout childhood,” said Patrick McCarthy, the Foundation’s president and CEO. “On several fronts, we’ve seen the difference that smart policies, effective programs and high quality practice can make in improving child well-being and long term outcomes. We should all be encouraged by the improvements in many well-being indicators in the health, education and safety areas.”

The 2014 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* can be found online at www.aecf.org.

CONTACT: Michael Race
717-236-5680
mrace@papartnerships.org

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