

PRESS RELEASE

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New Report Shows Poor Child Well-Being in Texas Remains Largely Unchanged in the Short and Long Term

Texas' Overall Child Well-Being Remains Far Below Most Other States

(AUSTIN, TEXAS)—A new national data analysis released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows Texas is still within the bottom 10 states to be a kid and more than 1 in 4 Texas children live in poverty. While the data show slight improvements in other areas of child well-being over the short term and over the last 25 years, including more high school students graduating on time, lower teen birth rates, and greater access to health insurance, there is still significant work to be done now to ensure all Texas children are positioned to thrive.

According to the 25th edition of the national *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, Texas ranks 43rd in overall child well-being relative to other states and hasn't improved much over the last few years—in 2012 Texas ranked 44th and 42nd in 2013. The report also ranks Texas in four broad well-being categories:

- Texas ranked 32nd for economic well-being, with more children living in poverty compared to 2005, and more children whose parents don't have a secure job at 30 percent;
- For education, Texas ranked 34th, with well over half of Texas children still not attending preschool;
- When it comes to Texas' child health care, the state ranked 40th;
- Texas' lowest ranking came in the Family and Community category at 47th, with 19 percent of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods, even with an improving teen birth rate and a smaller percentage of children living in families in which no parent has a high school diploma—23 percent in 2012 compared to 25 percent in 2005.

"It's time for Texas to step up its game when it comes to prioritizing our children," said Frances Deviney, Texas KIDS COUNT director at the Center for Public Policy Priorities. "With so many other states seeing improvements in child well-being, it's clear that this is doable, we just need to commit to our kids' future once and for all."

The poverty rate among children in Texas is particularly troubling and is worsening, as the report shows. Texas' children are the future leaders of America. With Latino and African-American kids making up the majority of our nearly seven million kids, and being more likely to live in poverty, it is critical that Texas creates better education and job opportunities for children of color, or risk becoming a poorer, less competitive state with a less-educated workforce.

“With one of every 11 U.S. kids living in Texas, the cost of not prioritizing our kids is detrimental not only to our state, but our country as a whole,” said Deviney. “Texas has much ground to cover to ensure all kids can do well.”

Texas can act now by fully investing in prekindergarten for our tiniest Texans, raising the minimum wage for hardworking parents, and expanding health care for the working poor, many of whom have children. Research has consistently shown that when parents have health coverage, their kids do as well.

The 2014 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* marks 25 years of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s collecting and analyzing national and state-level child well-being data. Long-term national trends highlighted by the Foundation over the last two decades are reflected in Texas as well, including a disturbingly high rate of child poverty and increasing housing burden, even after the Great Recession. The good news, both on the national level and in Texas, is that the number of children attending preschool is steadily increasing and student achievement in reading and math is improving.

“As we embark on the next 25 years, I urge all sectors to work collaboratively to develop and advance solutions that help all children succeed,” said Patrick McCarthy, the Foundation’s president and CEO.

— CPPP —

For More Information

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