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2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book Fact Sheet

BALTIMORE — The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* focuses on trends over the last six years (roughly 2010-2015) – a period in which the country continued its economic recovery. This year's *Data Book* shows that after climbing for several years, the child poverty rate in 2015 continued the drop that had begun between 2012 and 2013, landing at 21 percent. This year's data also shows children experienced gains in reading proficiency and a strong improvement in the number of children with health insurance. However, it also found that unacceptable levels of children living in poverty and in high-poverty neighborhoods continue to persist, as well as an increasing number of children in single-parent families, which pose risks to children and are associated with diminished prospects later in life.

Trends between roughly 2010 and 2015 Using the Sixteen Indicators of the KIDS COUNT Index

Four domains comprise the KIDS COUNT index to capture what children need most to thrive: (1) Economic Well-Being, (2) Education, (3) Health and (4) Family and Community. Each domain includes four indicators, for a total of 16. These indicators represent the best available data to measure the status of child well-being at the state- and national-level.

Economic Well-Being

- Percentage of children in poverty (income of \$24,036 for a family of two adults and two children in 2015)
- Percentage of children whose parents lack secure employment (no full-time, year-round work)
- Percentage of children living in households with a high housing cost burden (spend more than 30 percent of pretax income on housing)
- Percentage of teens not in school and not working (ages 16 to19)

Education

- Percentage of young children not in school (ages 3 to 4)
- Percentage of fourth graders not proficient in reading
- Percentage of eighth graders not proficient in math
- Percentage of high school students not graduating on time*
(New data uses average cohort graduation rate. Previous Data Books used average freshman graduation rate.)

Health

- Percentage of low-birthweight babies
- Percentage of children without health insurance
- Child and teen death rate (per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19)
- Percentage of teens who abuse alcohol or drugs (ages 12 to17)

Family and Community

- Percentage of children living in single-parent families
- Percentage of children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma
- Percentage of children living in high-poverty areas
- Teen birth rate (per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19)

National Trends Since 2010

Comparing data over the last five years reveals positive and negative developments in child well-being nationally. Broadly speaking, children experienced gains in in the Economic Well-Being and Health domains, but setbacks in the Education and Family and Community domains.

Economic well-being:

Although families have not fully recovered from the great recession, all four Economic Well-Being indicators improved. Fewer children are living in poverty, more parents are employed and fewer families are living with a housing cost burden. Nonetheless, in 2015, one in five children continued to live in poverty.

In 2015, the year of our most recent data, the national unemployment rate was 5.3 percent, but has since declined to 4.5 percent. Given these gains in employment – one of the key factors to improving the economic well-being of families – we expect to see ongoing progress in the Economic Well-Being domain data moving forward.

Education:

Meanwhile, two of the four Education indicators — which cover preschool enrollment through high school graduation — showed some improvement. Notably, with 83 percent of high school students graduating on time in 2014-15, the U.S. high school graduation rate is at an all-time high. However, two Education indicators have worsened over the past five or so years; for example, a larger share of 8th graders scored below the proficient math level in 2015 than in 2009.

Health:

Similarly, child health continued to improve, with gains in three indicators and no change in the fourth. The largest improvement was in the rate of children without health insurance. Fewer children lacked access to health insurance coverage in 2015 than before the recession. This drop in the number of uninsured children is largely attributed to expanded public health coverage.

Family and Community:

Trends in the Family and Community domain were mixed. The teen birth rate continued its dramatic decline, reaching a new all-time low. And, a smaller percentage of children were living with parents who lack a high school diploma. However, the percentage of children living in single-parent families was higher in 2015 than in 2010.

Especially troubling is the number of children growing up in a high-poverty neighborhood. At the national level, 14 percent of children lived in areas where poverty rates were at or above 30 percent in 2011–15. This is an increase from 13 percent in 2008–12 and 9 percent in 2000.

Racial Gaps in Child Well Being

Despite tremendous gains during recent decades for children of all races and income levels, inequities among children remain deep and stubbornly persistent.

On nearly all of the measures that the *Data Book* tracks, African-American, American Indian and Latino children continued to experience negative outcomes at rates that are higher than the national average. African-American children were significantly more likely as the average child to live in high poverty neighborhoods and to live in single-parent families. American Indian children were twice as likely to lack health insurance coverage, and Latino children were the least likely to live with a household head who has at least a high school diploma. On the bright side, African-American children were more likely, than the national average, to have health insurance coverage, attend school when young and to live in families where the household head had at least a high school diploma. American Indian families with children were less likely to experience a high housing cost burden than average U.S families with children. Both American Indian and Latino children were more likely to be born at a healthy birthweight and Latino children and teens also had a lower death rate than the national average.

State Rankings

The *Data Book* composite index of overall child well-being combines data across the four domains: (1) Economic Well-Being, (2) Education, (3) Health and (4) Family and Community. The composite scores are translated into a single state ranking which is used to rank states on how children are faring. All indicators are equally weighted in the domain and overall rankings.

In this year's report, New Hampshire ranked first among states for overall child well-being, followed by Massachusetts and Vermont. Louisiana, New Mexico and Mississippi were the three lowest-ranked states.

Top Five States Overall: New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, Minnesota, Iowa

Bottom Five States Overall: Arizona, Nevada, Louisiana, New Mexico, Mississippi

Economic Well-Being: Top five states: North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, New Hampshire*, Utah*

Bottom five states: California, Arkansas*, New Mexico, Louisiana, Mississippi

Education: Top five states: Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Vermont

Bottom five states: Alaska, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico

Health: Top five states: Minnesota, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont*, Washington

Bottom five states: Arkansas, Montana*, Mississippi, Louisiana, Wyoming

Family and Community: Top five states: Vermont, New Hampshire, Utah, Minnesota, North Dakota*

Bottom five states: Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Mississippi

* not in top or bottom 5 last year

Mississippi has been ranked 50th in 20 of the 28 KIDS COUNT *Data Book* that have been published since 1990. The bottom five states are fairly consistent across domains with a few exceptions:

- California is ranked 5th from the bottom in Economic Well-Being. This is extremely troubling considering that nine million children, or one in eight children in the country, live in the state.
- Nevada ranked 49th in Education.

- Wyoming ranked 50th in Health.
- Texas ranked 47th in Family and Community.

Note on comparing this year's overall state rankings to previous years: The data source for "high school students not graduating on time" has changed and therefore the 2017 Overall Index Rankings and the 2017 Education Domain Rankings should not be compared to prior year rankings. Whether a change in ranking is due to this methodological change or real changes in children's well-being cannot be determined.

Note on data sources: The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses the most up-to-date estimates from federal statistical agencies including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Center for Education Statistics and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. For more information, see the Definitions and Sources section at datacenter.aecf.org

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The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state-by-state rankings and supplemental data is embargoed until 12:01 a.m. EDT, June 13, 2017, and can be viewed at www.aecf.org/databook at that time. Users can download the complete *Data Book*, access hundreds of other measures of child well-being and view real-time information by visiting the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.