



UNDER EMBARGO until Wednesday, June 27 at 12:01 a.m. ET

2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book Reveals Improved Outcomes for Florida’s Children
Report warns of decade of damage from inaccurate census

TAMPA, FL — Florida showed improvement in children living in high-poverty areas, teen births and proficiencies in reading and math, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, just released from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The state earned an overall ranking of 34 in child well-being.

“Our rankings in each of the four domains of economic well-being, education, health, and family and community are slowly moving in the right direction,” said Florida KIDS COUNT Director Dr. Norín Dollard. “Following statewide expansions of health insurance programs, more kids than ever have access to the health care they need to thrive. But further investments are needed to reach the Florida children who lack coverage.”

And the *Data Book* warns that a potential undercount in the 2020 Census could put the state’s children at risk.

“If we don’t count children, we render their needs invisible and their futures uncertain,” said Casey Foundation President and CEO Patrick McCarthy. “A major census undercount will result in overcrowded classrooms, shuttered Head Start programs, understaffed hospital emergency rooms and more kids without health care.”

Troubling disparities persist among children of color and those from low-income and immigrant families.

If missed in the national count, children of color, low-income children and children in immigrant families stand to suffer the most if vital programs face reductions in funding. Research shows that by 2020 the majority of children in the United States will be children of color.

The annual *Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being. According to the rankings, Florida:

- **42 in Economic Well-Being.** For the first time in several years, there have been some significant inroads into reducing child poverty and improvements in parents’ ability to get full employment. However, many families struggle to make ends meet, and 39 percent of children live in households that spend roughly a third or more of their monthly incomes on housing, which reduces discretionary spending on children and the amount of time available to parents to spend with their children.
- **24 in Education.** Florida is also above the national average for preschool enrollment, and notable gains have been achieved in third-grade reading, an important predictor of academic success. The Florida Department of Education recently announced that when the Nation’s Report Card (National Assessment of Educational Progress) was released in April, Florida was the only state to have improved significantly on three of the four NAEP education measures in 2017. The largest improvement was found in High School Students graduating on time.

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- **34 in Health.** The observed improvements in getting Florida’s children covered is substantial and efforts to continue to expand access to healthcare is much needed. Florida lags behind the national average in three of the four indicators of the health domain. More investments in programs are needed to reduce the number of low birth-weight babies, child and teen deaths, and teens who abuse alcohol or drugs.
- **34 in Family and Community.** There were improvements in two of the four indicators in this domain. Florida’s teen birth rate continues to fall and resources that support evidence-based pregnancy prevention programs need to continue. Although the number of children living in poverty statewide has started to decrease, the number of children living in concentrated poverty was unchanged over the five-year window. To address these issues, continued emphasis is needed to expand educational and vocational supports for Florida’s parents so families can thrive.

Release Information

The *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 27 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

About Florida KIDS COUNT

Florida KIDS COUNT is part of a nationwide KIDS COUNT Network, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Florida KIDS COUNT is in the [Department of Child & Family Studies](#) at the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences, University of South Florida. The objective of Florida KIDS COUNT is to inform Floridians and their policy makers about the quality of life for Florida's children, and to build

leadership and accountability for action on behalf of our children. Using selected key well-being indicators and general demographic profiles, Florida KIDS COUNT provides a consistent and reliable source of information that is adaptable to a variety of uses such as policy analysis, grant and proposal writing, needs assessments and public education.

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About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

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.

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