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## North Dakota Ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in National Rankings for Child Well-Being

2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book *reveals that an inaccurate census in 2020 threatens to worsen existing challenges*

**FARGO, N.D.**—In today’s release of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book, North Dakota ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in the nation for overall child well-being. Although North Dakota ranks well in economic, family, and community indicators, several challenges exist with respect to education and health that could harm children if there is an undercount in the 2020 Census.

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — economic well-being, family and community, education and health — that represent what children need most to thrive. In the 2018 Data Book, North Dakota ranks:

- **First in economic well-being.** North Dakota continues to lead the nation in the economic well-being of children. Among states, North Dakota has the lowest percentage of children in families with a high housing cost burden (19 percent); the fifth lowest percentage of children without secure parental employment (22 percent); the fifth lowest child poverty rate (12 percent); and the fifth lowest percentage of teens not attending school and not working (5 percent).
- **Fourth in the family and community domain.** When compared with other states, children in North Dakota fare well in terms of family and community indicators. Six percent of North Dakota children live in families where the head of household lacks a high school diploma and 26 percent of children live in a single-parent family. The national averages are 14 percent and 35 percent, respectively. In addition, North Dakota saw declines in the teen birth rate and in the percentage of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods.
- **31<sup>st</sup> in education.** Despite a minor improvement in the on-time high school graduation rate, two-thirds of fourth-graders are not proficient in reading, 60 percent of eighth-graders are not proficient in math and 68 percent of North Dakota three- and four-year olds are not enrolled in prekindergarten programs.
- **32<sup>nd</sup> in health.** North Dakota saw a slight improvement in the percentage of babies born with a low birth weight and the child and teen death rate dropped to 23 per 100,000 (a rate lower than the national average). However, the uninsured rate for children in North Dakota has risen to 8 percent since 2010 and remains twice the national average. About 5 percent of teens abused alcohol or drugs in the past year.

“Trends are shaped by many forces, but these data provide us an opportunity to better understand the challenges facing children and families in our state and to strategically invest in their futures,” said Olson. “And, it is important to understand that making sure we know how many children we have in North Dakota — having an accurate count in the 2020 Census — is critical to ensuring that we have the resources necessary to address those challenges.”

Unfortunately, children under age five are historically one of the most difficult age groups to count in the census. Those most likely to be missed tend to live in hard-to-count areas with high poverty rates, lower educational attainment, high unemployment, high mobility, temporary or unconventional housing arrangements, language barriers, and a distrust of outsiders. In North Dakota, approximately 4,000

young children live in these hard-to-count areas, which is nearly 8 percent of all young children in the state.

When children aren't counted, state and local infrastructures face losing millions of federal dollars for supports. Much of the federal funding allocated to North Dakota relies on census-derived data for distribution. Census-derived data are used to distribute more than \$1.45 billion a year to North Dakota, including \$331 million directly to children for programs covering health (Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Program), education (Title I, Head Start, Special Education), food security (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, National School Lunch Program, and WIC), foster care and child care.

"With the challenges our state is facing, it is critical to have an accurate census in 2020, specifically an accurate count of children in North Dakota," said Olson. "We count on our children to build North Dakota's future and therefore we must count all children in 2020 so we can direct funding to meet their needs."

### **Release Information**

The *2018 KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *Data Book* will be available June 27 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://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](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

### **About North Dakota KIDS COUNT**

The North Dakota *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> program is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and supported by the Center for Social Research at North Dakota State University. Our mission is to provide the information necessary to inform discussions and decisions to improve the health and well-being of children in North Dakota. You can see more at <https://www.ndkidscount.org> or search for @ndkidscount on Facebook.

### **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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.