



WYOMING KIDS COUNT

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

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Thousands of Wyoming's Kids May Go Uncounted by Census

2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book notes census data undercount could slow gains in children's well-being

LARAMIE, Wyoming — An estimated nine percent — 4,000 — of Wyoming's kids under the age of five are at risk of not being counted in the upcoming 2020 U.S. Census Bureau's count, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Without an accurate count, Wyoming programs that support youth and families by using state and federal funds, may not have the resources needed. Furthermore, because of Wyoming's small population, undercounting in Wyoming drastically skews our state's data, significantly impacting state-level planning by policymakers and community leaders.

"The basis of informed decision making is having consistent access to reliable information," says Samin Dadelahi, Chief Operating Officer at the Wyoming Community Foundation. "The census provides structural significance to our democracy — mandated by the Constitution and collected every 10 years. It gives us the ability to understand changes over time and helps frame other demographic data that is collected annually."

According to the Casey Foundation, the undercount of young children has gotten worse with every census since 1980. Low-income children, children of color and kids living in immigrant families stand to be disproportionately undercounted. The 2020 census outreach efforts face a myriad of challenges, including a lack of leadership, the first-ever digital survey and the potential of suppressed participation due to a question specific to citizenship status.

The annual *2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which relies on the census and other data sources, takes a look at child well-being across the nation. It uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being, and family and community. According to the *Data Book*, Wyoming ranks 18th in overall child well-being. The state has improved its ranking in the Economic Well-Being domain (11th in 2017 to 6th in 2018) but remains incredibly low in the Health domain (49th). Wyoming ranks:

- **#6 in economic well-being.** The number of children living in poverty in Wyoming has decreased from 18,000 (2015) to 15,000 (2016). Wyoming is ranked number five in the percentage of teens not working or attending school. This is a positive change from 2015, reducing the number from 3,000 (2015) to 2,000 (2016).
- **#25 in education.** While the number of Wyoming fourth-graders who scored below proficient in reading has stayed steady at 59 percent, the number of eighth-graders who

scored below proficient in math has dropped slightly from 65 percent (2015) to 62 percent (2016).

- **#7 in the family and community domain.** Wyoming took a jump in the right direction, moving from #15 (2017) to #7 (2018). Just five percent of children live in families where the household lacks a high school diploma, and one percent of children live in high-poverty areas.
- **#49 in health.** Wyoming's low health ranking is largely a result of two indicators: high rates of drug and alcohol use by children, as well as low child health insurance enrollment. Wyoming ranks among the bottom 10 states for having the highest percentage of teens who abused drugs or alcohol in the last year. The number of children without health insurance is staggering compared to other states – twice as high as the rest of the nation. Wyoming is one of the only states with declining enrollment in Medicaid/CHIP and one of the few states that did not expand Medicaid with the Affordable Care Act.

Accurate data collection is the foundation of the research and analysis behind creating good policies that lead to child well-being. People working with children and on their behalf — have long relied on the census as a consistent and stable data source.

Dadelahi says “The National Data Book uses data derived from the census to create state rankings and those rankings get people talking! Wyoming is understandably worried to be 49th in Health.” Dadelahi asks that people go online www.aecf.org/databook or contact the WYCF for a hard copy of the National Data Book and review the information. She encourages people to talk to their local leaders and legislators about what we need to do to create positive changes for youth in Wyoming starting with the best way of ensuring an accurate census.

“Wyomingites are known for a ‘pull yourself up by your bootstraps’ approach to life, but we also know the importance of helping each other out,” says Dadelahi. “There are programs that support families who may be struggling. Those programs depend on accurate census data to anticipate needs.”

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.

The Wyoming Community Foundation

The Wyoming Community Foundation (WYCF) supports charitable causes across the state by connecting donors to causes most important to them. WYCF granted \$6.4 million in 2017. As the KIDS COUNT partner of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, WYCF shares research and data valuable to Wyoming's families and kids.

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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