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UNDER EMBARGO Until Monday, June 17 at 12:01 a.m. ET

Georgia ranks 38th in the Nation for Child Well-Being, Families Continue to Struggle with Economic Uncertainty

After 30 years, the KIDS COUNT® Data Book continues to provide the most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States

ATLANTA— When the Annie E. Casey Foundation released the first-ever annual *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* in 1990, Georgia ranked 48th in the nation for child and family well-being. According to the 30th edition of the *Data Book*, released today, Georgia ranks 38th.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* looks at Georgia across four domains—education, economic well-being, health, and family and community—to measure progress and identify areas where this state struggles. The 2019 report reveals that over the past 30 years Georgia has become a better place for children to grow up stronger, healthier, and safer. Children also are better prepared for school, because enrollment is up in early education systems. However, economic well-being continues to sag, as more children and families live in poverty.

“If you want to peer into Georgia’s future, you need only measure the health and well-being of our children,” said Robert W. Woodruff Foundation President P. Russell Hardin. “The annual KIDS COUNT data is our report card and should be required reading for everyone who cares about our state. It is encouraging to see that our state’s ranking has improved, but as long as one in five children are born into poverty, we have more work to do to ensure that all of Georgia’s children have the opportunity to succeed.”

Georgia Division of Family and Children Services Director Tom C. Rawlings agrees that Georgia has made great strides, because investments—from early care and learning and education, to child welfare and health care—coupled with sound policies, public and private partnerships, and collaboration around statewide priorities are moving families from a place of dependency and need toward self-sufficiency.

“Our role,” said Rawlings, “is to identify the most vulnerable families in every community—whether they’re coping with issues of child abuse and neglect or struggling with unemployment and the need to develop work skills to get into the work force. Working with our partners, our ultimate goal is to raise these families up to a point where they can thrive. Economic development is truly what we’re all about—ensuring that our children are well educated to become our workforce of the future, and ensuring that those vulnerable families are strong enough to get over the stresses of their lives and contribute to their communities.”

Georgia ranks 34th in education

Significantly more children in Georgia are proficient in reading and math today than 30 years ago. Two-thirds of Georgia children scored below proficient in fourth grade reading in 2017, an improvement from the three-quarters who scored below proficient in 1992. And 69 percent of children scored below proficient in eighth grade math in 2017, compared with 86 percent who scored below proficient in 1990.

The percentage of Georgia's children not attending pre-school has decreased from 60 percent to 45 percent since 1990. However, the significant increase in population in Georgia means that, although a higher percentage of children are attending pre-school, the total number not attending is higher in 2019 than it was 30 years ago.

The proportion of Georgia's youth, age 16 to 19, who are not in school and not working, has dropped from 11 percent in 1990 to 9 percent today.

Georgia has made positive strides in education outcomes over the past 30 years, a result of increased investment in our education systems. The data indicate that continuing those investments is critical to maintaining our positive trajectory.

Georgia ranks 40th in economic well-being

Today 28 percent of Georgia's children are living in homes where no parent has full-time, year-round employment, compared with 30 percent in 1990. And yet more than 500,000 of Georgia's children live in poverty. At 21 percent, Georgia's child poverty rate is higher than it was in 1990.

More children are living in homes with a high housing cost burden, because families are spending more than 30 percent of their household income on housing. In 1990, 27 percent of Georgia's children lived in households with this burden, compared with 30 percent—750,000 children—today.

Georgia ranks 34th in health

In 1990, 13 percent of Georgia's children did not have health insurance. Today only 7 percent lack coverage. Still, Georgia's child uninsured rate remains higher than the national average of 5 percent.

Georgia's child and teen death rate was 52 per 100,000 in 1990. Today that rate is 28 per 100,000, which indicates improvements in safety and health care over the past three decades. And according to the most recent data, fewer teens abuse drug and alcohol, cut in half from 6 percent in 1990 to 3 percent today.

Despite these positive health trends, Georgia's low birthweight rate has increased significantly since 1990, at a 30-year high of 9.9 percent.

Georgia ranks 38th in Family and Community

In 2017, 13 percent of Georgia's children were growing up in families where the head of household did not have a high school diploma, down from 27 percent in 1990. Georgia's teen birth rate has also significantly decreased during the past 30 years. Georgia had one of the highest teen birth rates in the nation in 1990 at 76 per 1,000 females age 15 to 19. Today, Georgia's rate is 22 per 1,000, closing in on the national average of 19 per 1,000.

Georgia ranks 38th in the Nation for Child Well-Being (cont.)

Despite these improvements, more of Georgia's children—13 percent, more than 330,000 children—are living in high-poverty areas today than 11 percent in 1990.

“The data confirm that Georgia's investments in children and families are paying off,” said Georgia Family Connection Partnership Executive Director Gaye Smith. “Our children, however, still face significant obstacles to opportunities that will help them become productive citizens. As our state's population grows larger and more diverse, we must continue to work together to build a strong social infrastructure and evaluate our progress, and we must continue to invest in our most valuable resource—children and families—so we can enjoy the collective prosperity that comes from having vibrant, healthy families and communities throughout Georgia.”

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Release Information

The *2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at aecf.org. Additional information is available at 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 Georgia Family Connection Partnership

Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) is a public-private partnership created by the State of Georgia and investors from the private sector to assist communities in addressing the serious challenges facing children and families. GaFCP also serves as a resource to state agencies across Georgia that work to improve the conditions of children and families. Georgia KIDS COUNT provides policymakers and citizens with current data they need to make informed decisions regarding priorities, services and resources that impact Georgia's children, youth, families and communities. Georgia KIDS COUNT is funded, in part, through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. For more information, visit gafcp.org.

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 aecf.org.