



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
MĀNOA

CONTACT: Ivette Rodriguez Stern or Kathleen Gauci
Hawai'i KIDS COUNT Project
Center on the Family
(808) 956-3760
istern@hawaii.edu

Hawai'i Remains in the Middle of the Pack for Overall Child Well-being

The 30th KIDS COUNT Data Book reveals that despite improvements over the past decade, gains in some areas may be slipping

HONOLULU – Hawai'i once again ranks 24th out of 50 states on overall child well-being, according to the *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The *2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is the 30th edition of an annual data study that examines trends in child well-being across areas that represent what children need most to thrive.

While all four indicators of child economic well-being tracked by the report have improved since 2010, conditions have shown little to no improvements in more recent years, with the state's rank for this domain slipping from 30th in 2018 to 34th in 2019.

"Hawai'i now ranks in the bottom third when it comes to the economic well-being of our children," said Ivette Rodriguez Stern, Hawai'i KIDS COUNT project director.

Of concern is the large proportion of children living in households with a high housing cost burden. Hawai'i ranks among the bottom five states on this indicator, with nearly two in five children living in these households.

"Affordable housing remains a challenge in Hawai'i. High housing costs present a significant challenge to low-income families that already have limited resources. When families are paying too much for housing, they have a harder time meeting other basic needs, such as child care, food and health care, and they can't save or build financial stability," said Stern.

Hawai'i has also slipped its ranking in the education domain — going from 37th in 2018 to 40th in 2019 — signaling the ongoing need for greater investments in our children's education. Despite improvements over the past decade, the state continues to rank in the bottom third on reading and math proficiency and ranked 33rd in the on-time high school graduation rate.

“Hawai‘i has been making small, positive changes to improve the education system for our keiki,” said Deborah Zysman, executive director of the Hawaii Children’s Action Network. “But, this data shows that it is not nearly enough. We need to think bigger. It’s time for Hawai‘i lawmakers to commit to sustainable funding for public education and substantially invest in quality childcare and preschool.”

The annual *Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — economic well-being, education, health and family and community. Findings in other domains include:

- With nearly all Hawai‘i’s children covered by health insurance, the state ranks among the top 10 states in the health domain. The percent of low birth-weight babies, the child and teen death rate and the percent of teens who abuse alcohol or drugs have all remained relatively stable during the period examined.
- Hawai‘i is similarly doing well in the family and community context, ranking 15th in this domain. With only seven percent of children living in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma, Hawai‘i ranks among the top 10 states on this indicator. Following the national trend, the teen birth rate has also seen a dramatic 42 percent decline during the period examined.

The Casey Foundation calls on elected officials and representatives to provide the tools proven to help families lift themselves up economically, including a refundable state earned income tax credit and other child tax credit programs that allow working parents to keep more of what they earn.

The Casey Foundation also reminds us to ensure that the 2020 census counts all children, including those under 5 years old and those from hard-to-count areas. With roughly 39 percent of Hawai‘i’s young children living in hard-to-count census tracts, an undercount of young children would short-change child well-being over the next decade by putting at risk hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funding for programs that are critical to family stability and opportunity.

Release Information

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook. 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 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.

About the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa serves approximately 20,000 students pursuing more than 225 different degrees. Coming from every Hawaiian island, every state in the nation, and more than 100 countries, UH Mānoa students thrive in an enriching environment for the global exchange of ideas. For more information, visit <http://manoa.hawaii.edu> and <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/media/>. The Center on the Family is a unit within the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. The Center serves as the KIDS COUNT grantee in Hawai'i. Its mission is to enhance the well-being of Hawai'i's families through interdisciplinary research, education and community outreach. For more information about the Center, visit www.uhfamily.hawaii.edu.

###