Colorado Child Well-Being Inches Up in National Rankings
Despite Continued Increase in Number of Children Living in Poverty

Gains in health push Colorado to 21 among states, but progress is offset by troubling economic trends

DENVER—Improvements in child health and family and community indicators pushed Colorado up one place to 21st among states in overall child well-being, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 2013 KIDS COUNT® Data Book. However, the gains were tempered by the worsening economic well-being of Colorado families in the wake of the Great Recession.

The annual nationwide examination of the status of children found that the economic health of Colorado families continues to decline. Colorado’s economic well-being ranking fell three spots to 19th from the 2012 Data Book to this year’s. In 2011, 18 percent of all Colorado children under 18 lived in poverty—an increase of 37,000 kids since 2005. The findings in the national Data Book mirror those of the Children’s Campaign’s annual statewide analysis, KIDS COUNT in Colorado!, which was released in March.

In addition, the number of Colorado children living in high-poverty areas increased from 20,000 in 2000 to 97,000 in 2007-2011. That’s the fastest increase in the country. Research shows that high concentrations of childhood poverty negatively impact all children in a community, even those living in middle-class families.

“It’s troubling to see more Colorado children living in families that can’t make ends meet, even as the economy begins to recover,” said Chris Watney, President and CEO of the Colorado Children’s Campaign. “When you compound the effects of a family’s poverty with life in an entire neighborhood that is struggling, it results in an environment where children are not able to thrive.”

The 2013 KIDS COUNT Data Book ranks each state based on their performance across 16 child well-being indicators, divided equally under for key domains—Economic Well-Being, Education, Health, and Family and Community.

Colorado’s 2013 rankings among all states:

- Overall: 21 (up from 22 in 2012)
- Economic Well-Being: 19 (down from 16 in 2012)
• Education: 9 (no change from 2012)
• Health: 42 (up from 45 in 2012)
• Family and Community Context: 21 (up from 25 in 2012)

Highlights from the 2013 national *Data Book:*

**Education**
- Since 2005, the percentage of 4th graders scoring below proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has decreased but remains high. In 2011, 61 percent of all Colorado 4th graders were not proficient. Also, the percent of 8th graders scoring below proficient in math declined from 68 percent to 57 percent during the same time period.
- Preschool enrollment among 3- and 4-year-olds in Colorado improved. Between 2009 and 2011, 49 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in preschool, up from 41 percent in 2005-2007.

**Child Health**
- Colorado has seen some improvements in child health, most notably in the number of children who are uninsured. Since 2008, the number of uninsured children in Colorado declined by 57,000. In 2011, 9 percent of Colorado kids were uninsured, compared to 14 percent in 2008.

**Family and Community Context**
- Since 2005, Colorado’s teen birth rate dropped by 23 percent, which is faster than the national average.
- In 2011, 13 percent of all Colorado kids (163,000 children) lived in families where the household head lacked a high school diploma—a slight decline since 2005.

Despite improvements on some indicators, Colorado continues to have wide disparities based on race and ethnicity. While more Colorado 4th graders scored proficient in reading on the 2011 NAEP, disparities persist. In 2011, 49 percent of non-Hispanic white 4th graders were below proficient, compared to 82 percent of their black and Hispanic peers. Hispanic children are also less likely to be enrolled in preschool at ages 3 and 4 and more likely to live in a family where the household head lacks a high school diploma.

Nationally, the Casey Foundation found that America’s children are showing some signs of improvement despite an ever-growing poverty rate. The 2013 *Data Book* also examines how America’s youngest children are faring, adding to the ongoing national conversation on early childhood education. In particular, younger children are disproportionately affected by the lingering effects of the recession: Nationally, the poverty rate among children younger than 3 is 26 percent; among 3- to 5-year-olds, it is 25 percent — higher than the national average for all kids.

For the first time in *Data Book* history, Mississippi moved out of the No. 50 spot for child well-being, now occupied by New Mexico. In addition, three southwestern states—Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico—are now in the bottom five for the overall rankings.
The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* features the latest data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. This information is available in the newly redesigned *KIDS COUNT Data Center*, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of measures of child well-being. Data Center users can create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and view real-time information on mobile devices.

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*The Colorado Children’s Campaign is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research and advocacy organization focused on improving the quality of and expanding access to child health, K-12 education and early childhood experiences. For more information, please visit [www.coloradokids.org](http://www.coloradokids.org).*