BOISE, ID — The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 2013 KIDS COUNT® Data Book shows that across the United States, children continued to see setbacks in their economic well-being, but have seen gains in the areas of education and health. The Data Book assesses states on 16 indicators of child well-being, organized into four categories: Family and Community, Education, Economic Well-Being, and Health. Idaho ranks 20th overall in child well-being—the same ranking it received last year. A deeper look into the data, however, reveals several notable trends.

Out of the four categories, Idaho ranked strongest in Family and Community, at 10th in the nation. In Idaho, 26% of children live in single-parent families, compared to 35% nationwide and Idaho ranks 2nd for this specific indicator. Idaho has also experienced a positive trend with teen births, which have declined significantly between 2005 and 2010. Idaho is losing ground in the percentage of children living in areas of concentrated poverty, which increased from 1% in 2000 to 4% in recent years. Also, 11% of children live in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma.

Idaho’s weakest domain is education, in which it ranks 29th. Since 2005, Idaho has seen significant improvements in preschool attendance and the percentage of eighth graders who are proficient in math, however, progress on both of these indicators stalled during the most recent years with available data. Idaho currently ranks 46th for preschool participation (with 65% of 3 to 4 year-olds not attending) and 20th for eighth grade math scores (with 63% not proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress). While national reading scores improved significantly during the seven-year period examined, Idaho’s fourth-grade reading scores were stagnant and the state ranks 26th in this indicator.

“We know that Idaho’s children need to read well by fourth grade so that they can succeed in school and go on to have productive careers. Children who are not reading proficiently by this measure tend to fall behind and stay behind,” said Lauren Necochea, Director of Idaho KIDS COUNT. She continued, “Investment in an educated work force is our most powerful tool to drive economic development. By 2018, it is projected that 61% of jobs in Idaho will require postsecondary
education. Currently, only 35% of adults ages 25 to 34 in Idaho have an associate’s degree or higher.”

In one area of education, Idaho has steadily improved. The percentage of students not graduating on time decreased from 20% to 16% between 2005-06 and 2009-10.

Idaho’s children and families continue to struggle in economic terms. In 2011, one in five children in Idaho lived in poverty and 31 percent lived in households where neither parent had secure, full-time employment — an increase from 26 percent in 2008. One in 10 teens ages 16 to 19 were neither working nor attending school. Idaho ranks 23rd in the nation for economic well-being.

In the health domain, Idaho ranked 28th, with some areas of progress. Idaho continued to improve in the percentage of children covered by health insurance, although the state still ranks a low 38th on this indicator. Additionally, fewer teens are abusing alcohol or drugs (a decrease from 10% to 7% between 2005-06 and 2010-11). Idaho did not see a significant change in the percentage of low-birthweight babies or child and teen death rates.

The report includes the latest data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. This information will be available June 24 at 12:01 a.m. in the KIDS COUNT Data Center, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of other measures of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices. See Idaho KIDS COUNT for additional data and policy reports specific to Idaho.

###

Idaho KIDS COUNT is a nonprofit organization bringing data and research to conversations that affect Idaho's children. Idaho KIDS COUNT is a member of the national KIDS COUNT Network, and receives funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Launched in 1994, Idaho KIDS COUNT is a program of Mountain States Group, Inc., a 501(c)3 community resource organization.