The Annie E. Casey Foundation Releases 2013 KIDS COUNT Data Book
Maine Leads Nation in Children’s Health yet Behind in Economic Well-being

Augusta, Maine - The Annie E. Casey Foundation released its annual KIDS COUNT report on child well-being today and ranked Maine 13th among all the states. Maine ranked 1st in child health and 6th in the overall well-being of families and the communities in which they live. “Maine leads the nation in child health and we are proud of that ranking. Good public policy at the state and federal level, coupled with hard work at the community level, has provided Maine children with health insurance and access to preventative medical care services,” said Ned McCann, executive director of Maine Children’s Alliance (MCA), which produces the state-level Maine KIDS COUNT reports.

The annual KIDS COUNT report found, however, that Maine ranks 20th in both education and economic well-being, with nearly one in five children living in poverty. “The economic recovery has not yet reached young children across the nation and in Maine. A growing number of children, particularly under age five, live in poverty. Family economic hardship can negatively affect children’s physical and mental health, academic achievement, and social and emotional well-being,” said Claire Berkowitz, MCA’s Research & KIDS COUNT Director.

The 2013 KIDS COUNT report adds to the national conversation on early childhood education with its examination of how America’s youngest children are faring. Younger children are disproportionately affected by the lingering effects of the recession. The poverty rate among children younger than five is higher than the national average for all kids. More than half of the nation’s three and four year olds (54 percent) do not attend preschool. The percentage is even higher in Maine where 57 percent of three and four year olds were not enrolled in preschool.

When compared to our neighboring New England states, Maine continues in its leadership ranking for Health and for Family/Community, but is outperformed by four of the five other states in Economic Well-being, Education and Overall.

New England State Rankings Across the Four Domains & Overall

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<th>State</th>
<th>Economic Well-being</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Family and Community Context</th>
<th>Overall Rank</th>
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Economic: Maine fell behind in three of the four indicators that comprise the economic domain.

- **Lack of parental employment:** One third of Maine children now live in households where parents lack full-time, year-round employment. Part-time or sporadic employment does not provide families with the level of income and benefits needed to meet basic needs like rent, food, and quality child care.
- **Child poverty:** In 2011, 50,000 Maine children (19 percent) lived in poverty, defined as a family of four (two parents/two kids) with income below $22,811.
- **Housing costs:** Additionally, 104,000 Maine children (38 percent) lived in households with high housing cost burdens (spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing), up significantly from 90,000 children (33 percent) in 2005.
- **Disconnected youth:** The only economic indicator that saw significant improvement was the percentage of Maine teens ages 16 to 19 not working and not in school, also referred to as “disconnected youth.” In 2011, 4,000 or 6 percent of older Maine teens were disconnected from school and work, down from 8 percent in 2008.

Education: Maine ranked 20th in education, showing improvement on three of the four indicators that measure this domain.

- **Preschool enrollment:** With only 43 percent of Maine’s three and four year olds enrolled in preschool, Maine ranks 29th on this indicator. Research shows that when children attend high quality preschool they are more likely to succeed in school later.
- **Reading proficiency:** With only 32 percent of Maine’s 4th graders scoring at or above proficient in reading in 2011 (down from 35 percent in 2005), Maine now ranks 31st in the nation on this indicator. Thirty-seven states saw increases in 4th grade reading proficiency during this time period, while Maine and Minnesota tied for the largest proficiency decreases.
- **Math scores:** Maine made significant improvement in 8th grade math scores, with 39 percent of 8th graders scoring at or above proficient, up from 30 percent in 2005.
- **High school graduation rates:** Maine showed significant improvement in the percentage of high school students graduating on time. In 2005-06, 76 percent of Maine high school students graduated on time; in 2009-10, that figure rose to 83 percent.

Health: Maine earned its highest marks within the health domain, showing improvement on all four indicators.

- **Access to health care:** In 2011, most of Maine’s children had access to medical care and preventative services because 95 percent had health insurance coverage. However, 14,000 Maine children still lacked health benefits.
- **Low birth weight:** A baby born weighing less than 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds) is considered low birth weight. Between 2005 and 2010, the percentage of low birth weight babies born in Maine decreased from 6.8 percent to 6.3 percent of live births, while the national rate, 8.1 percent in 2001, remained almost unchanged.
- **Child & teen death rate:** In 2010, Maine’s child and teen death rate was 27 deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19, down from 2005 when the rate was 32 deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19.
- **Teens and substance use:** In 2011, 6,000 or 6 percent of Maine teens reported that they abused or were dependent on alcohol or drugs during the last year. This represents a 45 percentage
decrease from 2006, when 11,000 or 11 percent of teens reported substance abuse or dependence. Maine ranks first in the nation on this indicator.

Family/Community Context: Maine ranked 6th in family and community well-being, showing improvement on two of the four indicators.

- **Parental education**: Higher levels of parental education are strongly associated with better outcomes for children. Maine ranks 2nd on this indicator, with 6 percent of Maine children living in households headed by an adult without a high school diploma, compared to 15 percent nationally.

- **Teen birth rate**: Between 2005 and 2010, Maine’s teen birth rate decreased significantly from 24 births to 21 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19. The national teen birth rate decreased during the same time, but remains significantly higher than Maine’s at 34 births per 1,000 females in this age group.

- **Single-parenting**: In 2011, 88,000 or 34 percent of Maine children lived in single-parent families, a significant increase from 31 percent in 2005.

- **Concentrated poverty**: During the period 2007-2011, 3 percent of Maine children lived in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, up from 1 percent in 2000. Nationally, almost 12 percent of children live in high poverty neighborhoods. Concentrated poverty is defined as neighborhoods where the poverty rate of the total population is 30 percent or more.

For more information:
The 24th annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* includes the latest data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. This information will be available on the newly redesigned KIDS COUNT Data Center ([http://datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org)), which also contains the most recent data on hundreds of other measures of child well-being.

Follow the Annie E. Casey Foundation on this issue on Twitter @aecfkidscount and on Facebook at [http://www.facebook.com/KIDSCOUNT](http://www.facebook.com/KIDSCOUNT).

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*The Maine Children's Alliance (MCA) advocates for sound public policies that improve the lives of children, youth, and families in Maine. For more information, visit us at mekids.org or follow us on Twitter @MEChildren and on Facebook.*