National rankings put Oregon families in bottom 10 for economic stability

Latest data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows Oregon children and families in economic decline despite improving economy

Portland, OR – June 24, 2013 – A national report released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation reveals that five years after the end of the recession, Oregon remains one of the hardest-hit states in the economic downturn. The annual KIDS COUNT® Data Book, which ranks the states in terms of child well-being, lists Oregon as #41 out of 50 for the economic stability of children and families, citing high rates of child poverty, underemployed parents, and a heavy housing cost burden on families.

The KIDS COUNT Data Book, an annual publication produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is an exhaustive compilation of the most critical indicators of children’s health, education, and well-being for each state. This year’s edition shows that while there have been modest gains nationally in education and children’s health, the lingering effects of the recession are widening income disparities among children. This is especially true in Oregon, where nearly 1 in 4 children lives in poverty, 37% live in homes where their parents lack secure employment, and 45% of families lose almost one-third of their income to housing costs.

The experience of poverty and related risk factors—inadequate nutrition, frequent moves and changes in caregivers, insufficient cognitive stimulation, and exposure to unsafe environments—can suppress brain development and have life-long consequences for young children. But the authors of the report acknowledge that the published rates are based on a very conservative measure of hardship; the actual percentage of Oregon children living in economically fragile homes is nearly twice as high as the child poverty rate. According to the report, there are measurable differences in how lower-income children develop and learn as compared to their peers. Thus, the lingering effects of the recession stand to have a ripple effect well into the future success of the state.

“We are encouraged to see signs of an economic recovery overall,” says Children First Executive Director, Robin Christian. “But the increase in childhood poverty tells us that jobs are not adequately supporting families. As we emerge from the worst recession in a generation, we need to ensure that those of us hit hardest by the economic downturn have
access to supports that protect children, stabilize struggling families, and create a pathway to financial security.”

Supports, she says, like the Employment Related Day Care program (ERDC)—which subsidizes child care for low-income families while they work—and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)—which provides cash assistance to low-income parents who are striving to become self-sufficient. “ERDC removes a barrier to employment—the high cost of child care—for parents who have lost their jobs and are having to reenter a competitive job market for lower pay than what they earned before the recession,” she says. Not only do these programs allow parents to enter and stay in the workforce, says Christian, they also reduce the need for foster care and provide children with access to the early learning opportunities that help prepare them for school.

This report comes at a time when the state legislature is deciding the fate of many vital programs. Christian says, “these numbers tell us clearly that Oregon’s children are at serious risk. If we want Oregon to be a place where families can thrive and where children are succeeding, we need to be investing in programs that will see families through periods of economic uncertainty.”

Key Statistics

- Oregon’s overall rank: 32
- Overall rank last year: 33
- Economic Well-Being Rank: 41 (no change from last year)
- Percent of Oregon children living in poverty: 24 (33% increase from 2005)
- Percent of children living in households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing: 45
- Percent of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment: 37 (up from 36% in last year’s report)

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state-by-state rankings and supplemental data launches at 12:01 a.m. EDT, June 24, 2013 at [http://datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

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