Pennsylvania Drops to 17th in National Rankings for Children’s Overall Well-Being

KIDS COUNT® Data Book Underscores Impact of Deferred Investments in Kids

(HARRISBURG, PA) – Pennsylvania’s children are not making any measurable gains in areas like health care, early learning or economic security, a lack of progress that has caused the commonwealth to slip three spots in the latest national rankings of child well-being.

The 2013 KIDS COUNT® Data Book ranks Pennsylvania 17th in the nation for its overall child well-being, down from 14th a year ago. Pennsylvania was among only five states to fall three or more spots in the rankings. The report underscores the continued toll the sluggish economy and deferred state investments in children have taken on the commonwealth’s nearly 2.8 million kids.

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children President and CEO Joan Benso called Pennsylvania’s drop in the national rankings “a warning sign that we cannot keep deferring investments in programs that benefit our youngest citizens.”

“Failing to invest in children during difficult fiscal times has very definite long-term consequences – and that’s what these rankings show us,” Benso said. “We are treading water when it comes to improving the well-being of our children and, unfortunately, this approach can drown opportunities for our kids.”

The data book released today uses 16 indicators to rank each state within four domains that represent what children need most to thrive. In this year’s data book, Pennsylvania ranked:

- **22nd in health, down from 8th last year.** The health domain looks at the percentage of children who lack health insurance, child and teen death rates, low-birth weight babies, and alcohol or drug abuse among teens.
- **25th in the family and community domain, down from 23rd last year.** This domain examines the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas, single-parent households and education levels among heads of households, as well as teen birth rates.
- **8th in education, the same ranking as last year.** The education domain looks at preschool opportunities, reading and math proficiency, and whether high school students graduate on time.
- **17th in economic well-being, the same ranking as last year.** The economic well-being domain examines data related to child poverty, family employment, housing costs and whether older teens not in school are working.

In many cases, Pennsylvania’s statistics did not significantly worsen, but other states improved, leading those states to climb ahead of the commonwealth in the national rankings.

For instance, the percentage of uninsured children in Pennsylvania remained relatively stable at about 5 percent in this year’s data book, but 21 other states managed to decrease the percentage of uninsured children and move up in the national rankings. As a result, Pennsylvania plummeted 14 spots in the health domain rankings.

Still, Benso cautioned: “If Pennsylvania doesn’t start showing a stronger commitment to investing in programs that help our kids, we might end up further down in these rankings in the years to come.”

The 2013 KIDS COUNT® Data Book can be found online at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

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