VERMONT RANKS 2nd IN THE NATION FOR OVERALL CHILD WELL-BEING, YET CHILD POVERTY CONTINUES TO POSE RISKS TO VERMONT KIDS

MONTPELIER – The 2013 KIDS COUNT Data Book, an annual publication of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, tracks the well-being of America’s children, ranks Vermont as 2nd in the nation for overall child well-being. While Vermont compares favorably with many other areas of the country, there are still many thousands of children in Vermont who do not have what they need to thrive.

The Data Book assesses states based on 16 indicators of child well-being organized into four categories: Economic Well-Being, Education, Health, and Family & Community. The 2013 Data Book provides a look at these indicators in 2011 as compared to 2005, before the recession.

“This report provides a valuable tool for looking at our state’s progress over time and in comparison with the rest of the nation,” says Sarah Teel, research associate at Voices for Vermont’s Children. “But it is important to recognize where the bar needs to be set, which is that every child has the opportunity to thrive – to grow up healthy, safe and economically secure. We are clearly still far from that goal. There is no acceptable level of child poverty.”

This year’s Data Book indicates children and families across the nation continue to struggle financially. In Vermont, this trend is no different. In 2011, 29% of children in Vermont had parents who lacked secure employment. 15% of children were living in poverty. These numbers contribute to Vermont’s 9th place rank in measures of children’s economic well-being.

“It’s important to contextualize these numbers,” says Voices for Vermont’s Children’s executive director, Carlen Finn. “We can be proud that Vermont fares as well as it does in many areas. But the United States ranks 26th out of 29 economically advanced countries.” What good rankings mean relative to where we want to be should also be seen in that light.”
The 2013 Data Book also ranks Vermont 3rd in the nation in education, yet in 2011 59% of 3rd graders in the state were not proficient in reading and 54% of eighth graders were not proficient in math. While both measures represent improvements since 2005, they also indicate areas of clear and persistent need.

Other highlights from Vermont include:

- **Economic Well-Being:** In 2011, 36% of children lived in households with a high housing cost burden, a measure that has worsened from 33% in 2005. This trend is in line with the national percentage of 40%, which has also worsened by 3 percentage points since 2005.

- **Education:** In 2010, 9% of Vermont high school students did not graduate on time, compared to 22% nationally. In 2011, 53% of Vermont children—and 54% of kids nationally—did not attend preschool.

- **Health:** In 2011, only 2% of Vermont children were uninsured compared to 7% nationally. In 2010, Vermont’s low-birthweight rate was 6.1% compared to 8.1% nationally.

- **Family and Community:** In 2010, the rate of teen births was 18 per 1,000 births, compared to 34 per 1000 nationwide. In 2011, 32% of children in Vermont lived in single-parent households.

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The information in the Data Book will also be available on June 24th at 12:01 am at the KIDS COUNT Data Center, which provides easy, online access to the latest child well-being data on hundreds of indicators by state, county, city, and school district. It serves as a comprehensive source of information for policymakers, advocates, members of the media, and others concerned with addressing the needs of children, families, and communities. Data Center users can also download the complete 2013 Data Book and create custom maps and graphs.

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