Wyoming places with solid standing in 2013 KIDS COUNT® report
Need to invest early in children’s well-being is emphasized in report

Cheyenne — The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 2013 National KIDS COUNT® Data Book ranks Wyoming 15th overall in the nation using for the second year a data index that provides an even more robust and comprehensive portrait of how U.S. children are faring. The index assesses states based on how they do on 16 indicators of child well-being and combines those indicators into four key domains: Economic Well-being, Education, Health and Family and Community.

Although the report shows positive upward movement in Wyoming’s ranking it must be noted that those rankings are not only based on what is happening in our state they are dependent on what is happening in states that rank both above and below Wyoming. In addition, a very small change in an indicator especially in a sparsely populated state such as Wyoming can result in a relatively large jump in either direction in rank. Those reviewing the data are encouraged to focus the trend data that provides a clearer picture of the well-being of children over time.

States ranked across four domains: Shows Wyoming’s strengths and weaknesses

In addition to providing an overall ranking of states, the 16 indicators are organized into four composite domains each with four indicators: Economic Well-Being, Education, Health, and Family and Community. The report also provides state ranking for each of these areas.

Wyoming clearly outperformed the majority of states in the 2013 KIDS COUNT® Data Book in the areas of Economic Well-being and Family and Community, ranking 2th and 12th respectively. The state was middling in the area of Education with a rank of 26th. The Cowboy State lags behind the majority in the Health category with a rank of 39th among all U.S. States.

Economic Well Being
Wyoming is ranked 2nd in the Economic Well-being category. Despite the high standing relative to the majority of states, the state saw an increase in the number of children living in poverty from 11% in 2005 to 16 percent in 2011.

The percentage of children living in households with a high housing cost burden also increased in Wyoming from 20 percent in 2005 to 27 percent in 2011. Meanwhile, the National average increased during the same period from 37 percent to 40 percent.
The percentage of teens not in school and not working decreased in Wyoming from 7% in 2005 to 4% in 2001 while in the Nation rate remained in the same time period at 8 percent. The percentage of children whose parents lack secure employment rose to 24 percent in 2011 from a rate of 23% in 2008.

Education
Wyoming is ranked 26th in the Education category. The numbers show a need for improvement in education despite relative parity with National averages and trends.

The percentage of children not attending preschool from 2009-2011 in Wyoming was 60% while the national percentage was 54%

Wyoming 8th grade students showed an 11 percent positive improvement in math with 63 percent NOT proficient in math in 2011 compared to 71 percent in 2005. Nationally, the rate fell from 72 to 66 percent during the same period.

The percentage of Wyoming fourth graders NOT proficient in reading remained at 66 percent from 2005 to 2011 while the National average decreased from 70 to 68 percent.

Health
Despite a rank of 39th in the Health category, Wyoming showed improvement in two domain indicators: Child and teen deaths and Teens who abuse alcohol and drugs. The biggest strike against Wyoming in the Health category is the number of children without health insurance which is unchanged since 2008 at 9%.

Family and Community
Wyoming ranks 12th in the Nation for this category. Wyoming had fewer children are living in areas of high-poverty (<0.5% percent in 2007-11) even though the number of children living in poverty has increased in recent years in Wyoming. The absence of high-poverty areas can be explained in part due to the fact that Wyoming is the least populated state with the 9th largest geographical area. Comparatively, 12 percent of all U.S. children were living in high-poverty areas in 2007-11, an increase from 9 percent in 2000. The number of Wyoming children living in single-parent families, increased 30 percent in 2011 compared to 27 percent in 2005.

Wyoming stands out as a state where more children live in families that include a parent who has achieved a basic educational milestone. The percentage of Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma decreased in Wyoming from 10 percent in 2005 to 9 percent in 2011. Nationally, the rate fell from 16 to 15 during the same period.

“The progress we’re seeing in child health and education is encouraging, but the economic data clearly speak to the considerable challenges we still face,” said Laura Speer, The Casey Foundation’s associate director for policy reform and data. “We need to do better and be
smarter about investing in effective programs and services to help ensure all kids get the best possible start in life.”

The KIDS Count Data Book features the latest data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. This information is available in the newly redesigned KIDS COUNT Data Center, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of measures of child well-being. Data Center users can create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and view real-time information on mobile devices. http://datacenter.kidscount.org/