Mich. last among Great Lakes states for child well-being
No. 31 ranking calls for action to help kids and families


Support for families must be addressed by state and federal policies. Those include poverty-fighting tax credits, health care for low-income adults, more education and job training for low-skilled workers and an increase in the minimum wage, the Michigan League for Public Policy said in helping release the report.

Michigan ranks 31st in overall child well-being, up one slot from last year’s report, but behind Minnesota (4th), Wisconsin (12th), Illinois (23rd), Ohio (24th) and Indiana (30th). New Hampshire is in the No. 1, or best, slot while New Mexico is last.

“If we want our kids to succeed, we must address the rising poverty that plagues our state and strips away hope that all children have an opportunity to grow and prosper in Michigan,” said Gilda Z. Jacobs, president & CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. “Even after the Great Recession has receded, our families continue to struggle to find adequate work to support their children.”

The report ranks states in four domains, each with four indicators. Michigan ranks 36th in Economic Well-Being, 32nd in Education, 23rd in Health and 27th in Family and Community. All four indicators in Economic Security domain worsened while the other domains showed mixed trends.

Among good news in the report is that Michigan ranked No. 4 in providing health insurance for children through private insurance and the state Medicaid and MIChild programs. Only 4 percent of Michigan children are uninsured.

“This shows that where we have the political will, we can find a way to help our families stay healthy and productive. Michigan has done a great job of covering kids with health insurance as recognized by this report,” Jacobs said.

One of the best rankings for the state is No. 15 for having only 10 percent of kids living in families where the head of household lacks a high school diploma, compared with the national average of 15 percent.

Yet, Michigan ranks in the bottom 10 states (43rd) for children living in high-poverty neighborhoods.

Roughly 350,000 Michigan kids (15 percent) are living in neighborhoods where more than 30 percent of residents subsist on income below poverty level -- $22,811 for a family of four.
Statewide, 560,000 kids (25 percent) lived in poverty in 2011, a 32 percent jump since 2005. Only nine states had larger increases.

In addition, Michigan ranks 37th for the 35 percent of children living in homes where no parent has full-time, year-round employment.

Among recommendations to address issues in the report:

- Restore the Michigan Earned Income Tax Credit to 20 percent of the federal credit. The Michigan Legislature and Gov. Rick Snyder cut the state EITC to 6 percent in 2011.
- Expand eligibility for Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act to provide health care to low-income parents and individuals.
- Make training for low-skilled adults a priority in the state budget.
- Increase the minimum wage and index it to inflation.
- Add reasonable exemptions to time limits for cash assistance and lift the asset test for food assistance.

The release of the 2013 data book also coincides with a revamped KIDS COUNT Data Center http://datacenter.kidscount.org.

More information on that site, not included in the 2013 report, shows that Michigan has the 12th highest rate of extreme poverty (children in families living at less than half the poverty line) and that one in every two African American children in the state lives in poverty.

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. Follow the Annie E. Casey Foundation on Twitter @aeckidscount and on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/KIDSCOUNT.

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