



**MISSISSIPPI KIDS COUNT**  
Social Science Research Center  
Family and Children Research Unit  
P.O. Box 5287  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
Home Page: <http://www.ssrc.msstate.edu/mskidscount>

**UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, June 13, 2017, 12:01 a.m. EDT**

CONTACT: Laure Bell | [laure.bell@ssrc.msstate.edu](mailto:laure.bell@ssrc.msstate.edu) | 662-325-8079

## **Mississippi Sees Gains in Health Insurance Coverage, but Ranks Last in Overall Child Well-Being**

*2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book shows improvements in education and health, but Mississippi faces continued challenges in tackling high poverty levels*

**Starkville, Miss., June 13, 2017** — The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, reveals that the number of children without health insurance in Mississippi is at an all-time low, with just 4 percent not covered in 2015 – a 50 percent drop from 2010. This follows a national trend, as 5 percent of U.S. children now are without health care coverage, due to the combination of key provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and expansions to Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). This remarkable progress is a bright spot in the *2017 Data Book* for the Magnolia State, although the state’s overall ranking was 50.

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — that represent what children need most to thrive. It compares domains over a five-year period and year to year. While Mississippi experienced gains in the areas of health and education, the percentage of children living below the federal poverty line rose between 2014 and 2015, from 29 percent to 31 percent.

“We have seen the percentage of Mississippi’s children covered by health insurance increase substantially over the past several years, as well as a decrease in the teenage birth rate. However, many more areas need to improve in order to change Mississippi’s overall ranking,” said Linda Southward, director of Mississippi’s *KIDS COUNT*. “States that consistently invest in children’s health and education, while providing economic opportunities on behalf of their families and communities, end up promoting a common good that makes a positive difference in children’s well-being.”

According to the *Data Book*, Mississippi ranks:

- **48<sup>th</sup> in health.** The health domain looks at the percentage of children who lack health insurance, child and teen death rates, low birthweight babies, and alcohol or drug abuse among teens. The percentage of Mississippi teens abusing drugs or alcohol dropped 17 percent since 2010. The percentage of low birthweight babies also declined over the five-year period, falling 6 percent.
- **48<sup>th</sup> in education.** This domain examines the percentage of children ages 3 and 4 not attending school; fourth graders not proficient in reading; eighth graders not proficient in math; and high school students not graduating on time. In Mississippi, 74 percent of fourth graders scored below proficient in reading in 2015 compared to 78 percent in 2009. Similarly, 78 percent of eighth graders scored below proficient in math in 2015, compared to 85 percent in 2009.
- **50<sup>th</sup> in economic well-being.** The economic well-being domain examines data related to child poverty, family employment, housing costs and whether older teens not in school are working. Thirty-seven (37)

percent of Mississippi's children lived in families where no parent has full-time year-round employment in 2015, compared to 39 percent in 2010.

- **50<sup>th</sup> in the family and community domain.** 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. The teenage birth rate for ages 15-19 was 35 per 1000 in 2015, compared to 55 per 1,000 in 2010. In addition, 13 percent of Mississippi children lived in families where the head of household lacked a high school diploma in 2015 compared to 17 percent in 2010.

Data-driven investments and policies are the keys for a promising future. "One of the ways that other states have decreased the percentage of children in poverty is through advancing state funded Earned Income Tax Credits," said Southward.

Annie E. Casey Foundation President and CEO Patrick McCarthy called on policymakers to not back away from policies that are working for children. "We must use reliable data to inform policy decisions that ease poverty and create the next generation of healthier and better-educated citizens," said McCarthy. "We call on policymakers to use this evidence to continue and expand what's working, and to find additional solutions that make a measurable difference for children."

### **Release Information**

The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available June 13 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://www.aecf.org/databook), which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

###

### **About Mississippi KIDS COUNT**

Established in 2007, Mississippi KIDS COUNT is housed within the Family and Children Research Unit at the Social Science Research Center on the campus of Mississippi State University. Funded through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, MS KIDS COUNT provides data, statistics, and original research about the health, education, safety and well-being of children to policy makers, educators, program administrators and others. Visit [kidscount.ssrc.msstate.edu](http://kidscount.ssrc.msstate.edu) for more information.

### **About the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.