



Issues for Michigan's Children

*An in-depth look at some of the
public policy issues affecting
children and youth in Michigan*

Michigan's
Children

July 22, 2014

Make Michigan Children Count This Election Season

The Annie E. Casey Foundation released the 2014 KIDS COUNT Data Book, an annual look at how the states compare on a key set of well-being indicators. Michigan ranked 32nd, in the bottom third of all states. Ten years ago, Michigan ranked 24th in the nation. This situation is unacceptable.

Economic Security: Michigan ranked 34th on our level of economic security for children, youth and their families. Despite family struggles, Michigan continues to strip away access to poverty prevention programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit. Policy decisions made in areas like health and education often fail to take into consideration the thoroughly researched and long-term impact of the lack of economic security on child outcomes.

Education: Michigan's worst rank was in the category of education, ranking 38th in the country, down from a rank of 32nd just last year. Our stagnation on assessment indicators and the more significant improvement on graduation rates in other states resulted in our worsening rank. This report did not reflect recent investment in the state's preschool program, which we know will help us move the dime on this indicator. Critical to improving our ranking will be our success in linking high quality early childhood programs to a high quality K-12 system with strategies that promote learning and high school completion for those who struggle most.

Health: Michigan ranked 29th on indicators of child, adolescent and family health, also down from a rank of 23rd the year before. Similarly, some improvements on insurance rates and child and teen deaths were not enough to maintain us in the top half of the states. Despite recent improvements in health insurance access, mental health and home visiting programs, Michigan continues to disinvest in public health, which continues to increase pressure on local communities to fill in the gaps.

Family and Community: Michigan saw no improvement in our rank of 29th on these indicators that represent specific family and community challenges: single-parent families; parents who lack a high school credential; teen parents; and communities with concentrated poverty. These issues are complex and inter-related, posing policy challenges that must better support two-generation strategies that help children thrive while their parents move ahead.

Newly elected candidates this fall will make public policy and budget decisions that will make a huge impact on child well-being in Michigan. During this election year, it is critical that candidates who support evidenced investments in children, youth and families are elected into office and that those elected officials are held accountable for commitments to help children, youth and families succeed. The most recent KIDS COUNT Data Book shows us that as a state, we are not doing well by our children, our families or our communities. Each election provides a unique opportunity to get involved in changing that course.