



The Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy creates awareness, takes action and changes policy on behalf of children.

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**THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION KIDS COUNT PROGRAM
RELEASES 2012 DATA BOOK**

Statistics surrounding children's issues in Oklahoma lend themselves to policy opportunities to address Oklahoma's future workforce needs and economic success.

OKLAHOMA CITY -- Reform and investments in education and greater access to health care appear to be key factors in Oklahoma's national ranking of 40th in overall child well-being. The KIDS COUNT data was released today by the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) - a national funder of the [Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy \(OICA\)](#).

This year's revamped Data Book uses 16 different indicators to determine each state's rank overall and in four key domains: **Economic Well-Being, Education, Family and Community and Health**. Oklahoma's children improved in only five of the 16 indicators, remained unchanged in two, and actually *worsened* in nine.

See [Oklahoma's Profile](#).

"As child advocates, we're always excited when we see numbers get better in any area for Oklahoma's children, especially when it comes to access to health care and educational opportunities," Linda Terrell, executive director of OICA, said. "But we also remain concerned about the number of children living in poverty and whose parents lack secure employment."

Terrell explained that while every education indicator appears to be improving, with the exception of students graduating on time, comparing the numbers nationally paints a much different picture.

"Nationally, those numbers are improving at a much greater pace, and that spells trouble for the future workforce needs for Oklahoma's business community," Terrell said. "When other state's educational opportunities outpace those in Oklahoma, it means our students aren't as prepared to enter the workforce which ultimately hurts our economy. This places Oklahoma at a disadvantage when competing for high paying jobs."

According to OICA's Policy Director Amber England, the data released today highlights opportunities for child advocates to partner with business groups on policy solutions to help improve Oklahoma's rankings in the future.

"Businesses have just as much at stake here as child advocates when it comes to ensuring these numbers continue to improve," England said. "Forging partnerships with economic development groups and the business community to make policy reforms that increase access to affordable health care and improve our education system gives children and families a ladder out of poverty and into the middle class. It will help give them the skills they need to be successful in the workforce."

Matt Robison, Vice President of Government Affairs at [the State Chamber of Oklahoma](#), agrees.

"We cannot underscore enough the importance of the overall well-being of Oklahoma's kids to the future economic success of our state," Robison said. "We look forward to continue partnering with groups who want to see improvements in these numbers because we understand what that means to Oklahoma's pro-growth business climate. This will ensure Oklahoma remains an attractive place to live, work and raise a family."

See the original press release and learn more on our website:
[2012 KIDS COUNT Data Book Released](#)

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AECF analysts will be available for interviews in person or by phone today. Contact Brett Kincaid at (501)371-9678 ext. 110 to make arrangements.