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## ***2012 KIDS COUNT Data Book Released*** **Alabama moves ahead in national rankings**

**Montgomery, Alabama** - The 2012 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation offers hope for Alabama's children with the state's best ranking in overall child well-being since the *Data Book* began publication in 1990. Alabama ranks 45<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states for child well-being in new domains of Economic Well-Being, Education, Health, Family and Community are compiled.

“While ranking 45<sup>th</sup> in child well-being is not cause for celebration when viewed alone, the fact that the state is making progress is encouraging,” said Linda Tilly, executive director of VOICES for Alabama's Children. “This report, coming on the heels of the Southern Regional Education Board report, ranks Alabama as the leader in the nation for improvements in reading scores. This indicates that the work of child advocates, community programs, and policymakers who make children a priority, is paying off.”

The *Data Book*, which in previous years has had only 10 indicators of child well-being, has been updated to include 16 indicators. The new format reflects tremendous advances in child development research since the Casey Foundation's first *KIDS COUNT Data Book* more than two decades ago.

In addition to the overall state rankings, the 16 indicators are organized into four domains: Economic Well-Being, Education, Health, and Family and Community. Alabama ranked 44<sup>th</sup> in Education with all four indicators showing improvement. The state ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation under the Health domain with three of the measures improving and one remaining the same. The picture in the Family and Community domain was not as bright. The state ranked 44<sup>th</sup>, but three of four indicators showed deterioration. In the Economic Well-Being domain the state ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> and all measures showed children and families losing ground. Overall, of the 16 measures that make up the four domains, the state improved on eight, remained unchanged on one, and lost ground on seven.

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“The report shows both progress and challenges for Alabama,” stated Tilly. “We have made positive strides in several areas. Because of the new *Data Book* format, we can’t compare overall rankings to past years when only 10 measures were used. Using more complete data, however, shows that, relative to other states, Alabama compares more favorably than many expected.”

The annual *Data Book* is complemented by the expanded KIDS COUNT Data Center, which contains hundreds of measures of child well-being and allows users to create maps and graphs of data at the national, state, county, and city level. To access information for Alabama go to <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/al>. VOICES for Alabama’s Children will publish the state *Data Book* showing measures of child well-being for each of the state’s 67 counties in the fall.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state-by-state rankings and supplemental data launches at 12:01 a.m. EDT, July 25, 2012 at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>.

Follow the Annie E. Casey Foundation on this issue on Twitter @aecfkidscount and on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/KIDSCOUNT>.

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*VOICES for Alabama’s Children is a statewide non-partisan, non-profit organization that works to ensure the well-being of Alabama’s children through research, public awareness and advocacy and assists the Annie E. Casey Foundation in releasing the Data Book in Alabama.*