

Kids Count In Arkansas – What it takes to be #1

In these difficult economic times, Arkansas faces major challenges in meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families. Decreasing tax revenues and growing demand for services and support require tough decisions, thoughtful approaches and the political courage to balance a range of demands on state government. This year's release of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's annual KIDS COUNT Data Book is the perfect opportunity to stop and reflect on how these challenges affect the daily lives of Arkansas children and their families. It also allows us to see how Arkansas children and youth compare to other states.

It is also an opportunity to take a positive and hopeful approach by outlining what it would take for Arkansas to lead the country in our children's well-being. Are our children prepared to meet the challenges faced by the state and country in the decades ahead? What can be done to bolster their chances of success and the future of Arkansas? This policy brief will use the 2010 KIDS COUNT Data Book release to help Arkansas policy makers and the public focus on the solutions to the problems facing children.

The bottom line is that children do well in strong supportive families, and families thrive in supportive communities. There is no "silver bullet" that will resolve the poor indicators of child well-being in Arkansas, because most of those indicators are interrelated. Areas such as family financial resources, access to health care, quality child care and positive opportunities for youth to engage with the larger community must all be addressed to ensure good outcomes for our children. And it takes more than one organization to address these areas. It takes cooperation between parents, neighbors, family members, child advocates, community leaders, and elected officials to chart a course for change. It will also come down to tough choices, primarily from policy makers who will have to be practical about making cuts in spending and increasing revenues in order to invest in the quality of life and economy we want for the future.

Low Birth Weight Babies*: The % of total births that were low-birth weight babies in 2007.

Arkansas Rate: 9.1% Rank: 38 • #1 State: Alaska - 5.7% • National Average: 8.2%

Where are we now?	What will it take to be the best?	What will it take to achieve the national average?	How can we do it?
Arkansas ranks 38th in the nation with 9.1% of Arkansas's births being low-birth weight babies.	Arkansas must attain a 5.7% low-birth weight baby rate to match Alaska's lowest rate in the nation.	The national rate is 8.2% of births being low-birth weight or a 1% reduction.	Increase access to prenatal care and programs that reduce alcohol and substance abuse during pregnancy. Expand home visiting programs to high risk populations.

Infant Mortality*: The infant mortality rate is the # of infant deaths under 1 yr of age per 1,000 live births in 2007.

Arkansas Rate: 7.7 per 100,000 Rank: 37 • #1 State: Washington - 4.8 per 100,000 • National Average: 6.7 per 100,000

Where are we now?	What will it take to be the best?	What will it take to achieve the national average?	How can we do it?
Arkansas ranks 37 th in the nation with 7.7 per 100,000 Arkansas infants dying before reaching one year of age.	Arkansas needs to attain an infant mortality rate of 4.8 per 100,000 to match the state of Washington's efforts.	The current national rate of infant deaths is 6.7 or one less per 100,000 than Arkansas's.	Increase access to prenatal care and programs that reduce alcohol and substance abuse during pregnancy. Increase use of home visiting models to help identify problems earlier and provide parent education.

*The official number of low birth weight infants and those dying before the first year of life were not released prior to this publishing.

Child Deaths: The number and rate of deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 14 in 2007.

Arkansas Rate: 28 child deaths per 100,000 Rank: 46 • #1 State: Rhode Island - 9 child deaths per 100,000 • National Average: 19

Where are we now?	What will it take to be the best?	What will it take to achieve the national average?	How can we do it?
Arkansas ranks 46 th in the nation. 153 children age 1-14 died in 2007, giving Arkansas a rate of 28 child deaths per 100,000.	To attain the top rate of 9 child deaths per 100,000 held by Rhode Island, annual child deaths in Arkansas must decrease by 105, to only 48.	The number of child deaths in Arkansas will have to decrease to 103, fifty-one fewer deaths a year, to reach the national child death rate of 19.	Proper use of child restraint seats, enforcing primary seat belt laws, carefully securing harmful substances and weapons to avoid unintentional injury, and more restrictions on the use of ATVs.

Teen Death: The teen death rate is the number of deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19 in 2007
Arkansas Rate: 93 deaths per 100,000 Rank: 45 • #1 State: Vermont - 35 deaths per 100,000 • National Average: 62

Where are we now?	What will it take to be the best?	What will it take to achieve the national average?	How can we do it?
Arkansas ranks 45th in the nation; 184 teens age 15-19 died in 2007 giving Arkansas a teen death rate of 93 deaths per 100,000.	To attain the top ranking rate of 35 teen deaths per 100,000 held by Vermont, teen deaths in Arkansas would have to decrease by 115, to only 69 per year.	The number of teen deaths in Arkansas will have to decrease to 122, or 62 fewer deaths a year, to reach the national rate.	Policies that encourage teen seat belt use, increased access to teen substance abuse treatment, aggressive enforcement of graduated drivers licensing, expanded ATV restrictions, and expanded access to after school and summer programs.

Teen Births: The teen birth rate is the number of births to girls ages 15 to 19 per 1,000 in 2007.
Arkansas Rate: 62 per 1,000 teens Rank: 47 • #1 State: New Hampshire - 20 per 1,000 teens • National Average: 43 per 1,000 teens

Where are we now?	What will it take to be the best?	What will it take to achieve the national average?	How can we do it?
Arkansas ranks 47 th in the nation with 5,927 births to Arkansas teens in 2007 giving Arkansas a teen birth rate of 62 per 1,000 teens.	To attain the top ranking of 20 births per 1,000 teens currently held by New Hampshire, the number of teen births in Arkansas would have to decrease by 4,007 for a 67% drop.	The number of teen births in Arkansas will have to decrease by 1,841 birth to achieve the national average of 43 per 1,000 teens.	Develop and provide access to coordinated school health and school wellness centers across the state and expand access to quality afterschool and summer programs that help reduce risk taking behaviors.

Idle Teens: The % of teens ages 16-19 not attending school and not working in 2008

Arkansas Rate: 12% Rank: 50 • #1 State: Iowa - 4% • National Average: 8%

Where are we now?	What will it take to be the best?	What will it take to achieve the national average?	How can we do it?
Arkansas ranks 50, with 12% of teens age 16-19 not attending school or working. This represents a total of 20,350 idle Arkansas youth.	Arkansas would need to reduce the number of idle teens by 12,867 (a 63% decrease) to reach Iowa's top rate of 4%.	The number of idle teens in Arkansas will have to decrease by 6,844 to achieve a national average of 8%.	Afterschool and summer programs that connect older teens with enhanced learning opportunities, workforce skills, technical education, apprenticeships, credit recovery education programs and workforce education.

Kids without Secure Parental Employment: The % of children living in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment in 2008

Arkansas Rate: 32% Rank: 45 • #1 State: Nebraska 19% • National Average: 27%

Where are we now?	What will it take to be the best?	What will it take to achieve the national average?	How can we do it?
Arkansas ranks 45 th in the nation. 32% of Arkansas's children live in households where no parent has full-time, year-round employment. (222,905 children)	Arkansas would need to reduce the number of children in these households by 90,200 to attain the rate of 19% currently held by Nebraska.	Arkansas would need to reduce the number of children in these households by 31,055 to meet the nation average of 27%.	Education for life policies: Integrate workforce and career development into afterschool programs, vocational, local high school, and two- and four-year college educational goals. Increase the % of adults with a BA degree and increase literacy rates. Expansion of subsidized child care

Children in Poverty: The % of children living in poverty is the proportion of all children under age 18 living in families with incomes below the federal poverty level. The federal poverty level for 2009 was \$22,050 for a family of two adults and two children.

Arkansas Rate: 25% Rank: 48 • #1 State: New Hampshire 9% • National Average: 18%

Where are we now?	What will it take to be the best?	What will it take to achieve the national average?	How can we do it?
This indicator is the leading predictor of child well-being in Arkansas. Arkansas ranks 48 th in the nation with 25% of Arkansas children (171,849) living in abject poverty.	To lead the country in this critical indicator, 109,860 of Arkansas's poorest children would have to rise out of poverty. New Hampshire leads the country with 9%.	To reach the 18% national average for children in poverty, 46,154 Arkansas children would have to increase their yearly earnings.	Early childhood education and achievement gap reduction, progressive taxation, state level EITC, Individual Development Accounts, access to reasonable credit, low-cost housing and supports for those families to ensure their economic viability.

Single Parent Families: The % of children in single-parent families in 2008

Arkansas Rate: 36% Rank: 43 • #1 State: Utah 18% • National Average: 32%

Where are we now?	What will it take to be the best?	What will it take to achieve the national average?	How can we do it?
Arkansas ranks 43 rd in the nation. 36% of Arkansas's children live in single parent families (237,451 children).	Arkansas would need to reduce the number of children living in single parent families by 120,555 children to attain the 18% rate in Utah.	To reach the national average of children living in single parent families (32%) Arkansas would have to decrease the number of children in these families by 25,775 children.	Communities should explore research based approaches that encourage strong marriages and reduce the number of divorces. Expand programs and policies outlined above that support working parents.