



**Arkansas Advocates
for Children and Families**
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Advocacy Matters



Summer 2023

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Arkansas's Kids Count!

In June, we helped release the *2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how children and families are faring.

Every child and family deserves access to high-quality early childhood care and education. But sadly, this year's findings included bad news for our state: Arkansas parents are struggling more than most to access quality child care.

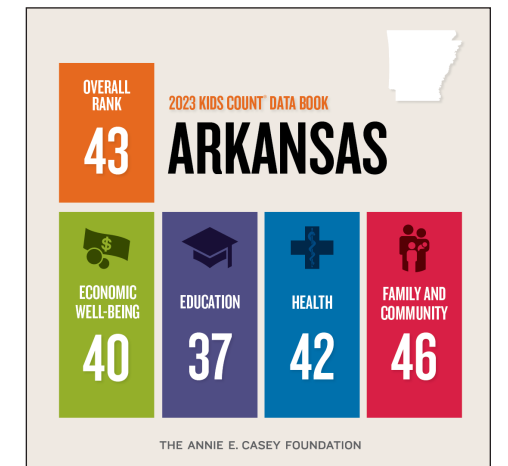
High-quality child care is a key component of an economy that largely requires both parents to work outside the home while raising children. But in 2020-21, 15% of children birth to age 5 in Arkansas lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care.

Arkansas has consistently ranked in the bottom 10 states overall and on specific child well-being indicators, including this year ranking 44th for teens not in school

and not working, 43rd for eighth-graders not proficient in math, 42nd in low birth-weight babies, and 50th for teen births.

This year's KIDS COUNT data makes it clear our state must place a greater focus on improving child well-being outcomes. Arkansas's continually poor rankings are evidence we have not invested enough in proven areas — like child care and early childhood education — to better the lives of our children.

Visit aradvocates.org/2023-kids-count-data-book/ for more information.



SAVE THE DATE

Post-Legislative Summits

Children's Policy Summits are where you can share your thoughts on what came out of the state Capitol this year and how you think the new laws will affect your community. Learn about opportunities for advocacy now that the legislature has adjourned, and celebrate the work of advocates for children during the legislative session.

We have already held summits in Helena-West Helena, Little Rock and Rogers this year. Attend virtually on July 18 or in a city nearest you!

Register at aradvocates.org/events

- July 18 | Virtual - Statewide!
- August 10 | Berryville
- August 22 | Jonesboro
- September 19 | Fort Smith

Friends of Children Annual Luncheon

Honoring Jay Barth, Ph.D., and Christie Erwin.
Special posthumous tribute to Senator Bill Lewellen.
November 14 in Little Rock

Sponsorships and table sales are open now. Individual ticket sales will be available closer to the event.

Visit aradvocates.org/events for more information!

Be Social

- facebook.com/aradvocates
- twitter.com/aacf
- [@aradvocates](https://www.instagram.com/aradvocates)

15 years of advocacy in Northwest Arkansas

AACF's Springdale office opened in September 2008, to provide a voice for children in Northwest Arkansas. Despite the presence of some of the state's most prosperous cities, Arkansas's 3rd Congressional District has a child poverty rate of 27% (higher than the state rate of 22%).

Our regional office serves the community by researching the needs of children in the area and advocating for solutions to help better the lives of our children and families.



NWA Development Director Missy Darwin Kincaid,
NWA Director Laura Kellams and
NWA Office Coordinator Christine Hartman

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

AACF Issue Areas

AACF focuses on key issue areas to help improve child well-being in Arkansas.

Child welfare

Economic security

Early childhood and K-12 education

Health care

Hunger

Immigrant children and families

Juvenile justice

Racial equity

Tax and budget

AACF 2023 Board of Directors

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Rebecca Zimmermann

Community Engagement Director

Rebecca Zimmermann joined the AACF team in 2017. Before coming to AACF, she served as Program and Advocacy Director at the Arkansas Nonprofit Alliance, where she helped expand the advocacy efforts of nonprofits to increase their impact in Arkansas communities. Rebecca earned her bachelor's degree in international relations and Latin American Studies from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville and her Master of Public Service at the Clinton School of Public Service.



Want to learn how to be a stronger advocate? Rebecca offers advocacy training for groups across Arkansas.

Public policy has the power to improve the lives of some 700,000 kids who call Arkansas home. Advocacy is the best tool for creating significant and lasting change to make Arkansas a great place for children and families. And kids are counting on us to use our voices to speak up for them when important decisions are being made at the local, state, and federal levels.

Ways to Advocate

- Download the AACF Advocacy Guide: www.aradvocates.org/advocacy-guide
- Make sure your voter registration is up to date!
- Follow up with your elected officials. They want to hear from you!
- Want to host a speaker from AACF? Please contact us at contact@aradvocates.org



Helena-West Helena Children's Policy Summit

2023 General Assembly

Post-Legislative Review

The 2023 Arkansas General Assembly kicked off with the historic inauguration of our state's first female governor, Sarah Huckabee Sanders. From the start, lawmakers were mostly focused on accomplishing her three major policy priorities: education reform, prison expansion, and tax cuts.

The work of child advocates around the state in the 94th General Assembly kept the well-being of children at the forefront of many important debates and helped pass and reshape legislation that will improve the lives of the kids of our state. But there is still work to do, and we look forward to advocating with you.

1,439 bills filed	\$6,593 billion general revenue budget 2023-2024
889 bills passed	For more, visit aradvocates.org/2023Session
6 bills from AACF agenda introduced	AACF promoted 8 advocacy alerts, resulting in 234 advocates contacting their legislators 340 times by email and 882 petition signatures
122 attendees at our Kids Count Day at the Capitol	6 AACF staff testified 23 times before legislative committees

Kids at the Capitol



Arkansas's 2023 General Assembly passed 889 bills. Many of these new laws will impact Arkansas' kids. From depression-screening coverage for pregnant women and new moms to free school meals for more kids, our Kids at the Capitol 2023 Legislative Summary has it

all. Read about the good laws that passed, the missed opportunities, and the harmful legislation that passed or was narrowly avoided.



Conway Public School student Izzy Kopsky spoke about the importance of advocacy at Kids Count Day at the Capitol.

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Text ADVOCATE to 243725

Donate through a Donor Advised Fund

Help us plan for the future by including a bequest to AACF in your estate plans

Fran Carter 501-454-5014 Missy Darwin Kincaid 479-466-0771

DID YOU KNOW?

Although most gifts to AACF come in the form of cash and check, there are other ways to give. You can make a donation of stock or transfer from your IRA with beneficial tax implications. For more information, contact Fran or Missy or your financial advisor.

All new and increased gifts received in 2023 will be matched!

