A Message from KIDS COUNT

Dear Friends,

As father of two and as your Governor, I fully understand the importance of advocating for our kids and ensuring they have every resource available to ensure all their dreams can be fulfilled. We must nurture our youth so that regardless of where they come from, they have the means necessary to succeed.

It is imperative for our young children to grow and learn in an environment that is advantageous to their growth. The creation of these environments is encouraged through a focus on the child and family wellbeing – across the domains of health, education, economics and community. This collaborative effort brings Delawareans together to ensure a brighter future.

Being deliberate and focused on our children’s progress benefits our state in a myriad of ways. For example, it helps keep children, our most vulnerable asset, safe from harm. Delawareans as they grow into tomorrow’s citizens. It’s in everyone’s best interest to keep children, our most vulnerable asset, safe from harm.

Abuse, neglect, and trauma can have a devastating effect on children and can lead to a range of negative outcomes later in life. The ACEs research demonstrates that the negative impact of child trauma doesn’t end with childhood. ACEs often erode the foundations required for a person to have the best life he or she could have and impacts society in often undesirable, costly ways. Further, as the number of ACEs increases, so does the number of negative health outcomes. For example, the original Kaiser/CDC study of ACEs estimated that individuals with six or more adverse childhood experiences die 20 years earlier than individuals without these experiences. In addition to measuring the scope of a problem, data point to solutions as well.

The research is clear that protective factors such as safe, stable and nurturing relationships, can help to mitigate the long-term impact of ACEs by developing resiliency. As we build the next generation, we must target investments to have the largest impact. Strengthening families, building stronger communities and ensuring access to opportunity through ACE prevention, mitigation, and recovery will enhance the success of young Delawareans as they grow into tomorrow’s citizens. It’s in everyone’s best interest to keep children, our most vulnerable asset, safe from harm.

What we know: what data tell us is that there are groups of children who are more likely to have poor outcomes across their life span. This year’s Fact Book highlights adverse childhood experiences, commonly referred to as ACEs.

While parents, families, and communities play key roles in nurturing the children in their care, state and federal policymakers enact the laws and allocate the resources that shape the environment in which children and their families live. They present the possibility of remarkable change to our national policy landscape, pressures in our own state will impact priorities, programs and policy decisions being made locally. With challenges such as these, it is easy to become off-track.

In response, we are seeing Delawareans from many different walks of life who are becoming engaged and mobilized, providing a renewed opportunity to work together in order to make progress on some of our most entrenched problems.

Sincerely,

Kim Gomes, President, Board
Mary Joan McDuffie, Chair, Data Committee
Janice Barlow, Director

KIDS COUNT® in Delaware

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Welcome to the Executive Summary of the 2017 KIDS COUNT in Delaware Fact Book. This project is a collaborative effort of over forty organizations and is housed within the Center for Community Research & Service at the University of Delaware. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local and state discussion concerning ways to secure better lives for all children. Our mission is to provide up-to-date, accurate, objective, comprehensive data on the well-being of children, youth and their families in order to raise awareness and inform both policy and programmatic decisions throughout the state. This year the fact book has a special focus on adverse childhood experiences.

Adverse Childhood Experiences, or “ACEs,” are stressful or traumatic experiences that disrupt the safe, nurturing environments that children need to thrive. Exposure to ACEs can lead individuals toward the adoption of unhealthy habits and the onset of negative long-term health and economic issues. Adverse childhood experiences include events such as abuse, neglect, and family violence that occur in the first 18 years of life. ACEs often reflect the struggles that children’s families are going through because of their own compromised well-being. In other words, ACEs remind us that creating conditions for child well-being requires creating conditions for family well-being.

Not every person who suffers an adverse experience will face chronic health issues or a poor quality of life, but the higher the total number of these events a child experiences, the higher the risk of obesity, chronic illness, substance abuse, smoking, and mental health problems. Early results from the original study estimated that individuals with six or more adverse childhood experiences die 20 years earlier than individuals without these experiences. A child who experiences one adverse event is very likely to experience additional events during childhood.

Look for special icons throughout our 252 page digital fact book that highlight ACE indicators, as well as hardships, possible risk outcomes, and policy actions that are related to adverse childhood experiences. The full edition of our fact book can be found at www.dekidscount.org.

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the number of negative health outcomes.

# Kids Count Overview

## Health and Health Behaviors

### Low Birth Weight Births

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-2014</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Improved**

### Infant Mortality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Rate per 1,000 Live Births</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-2014</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Improved**

### Children Without Health Insurance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-2016</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2011</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Improved**

## Educational Involvement and Achievement

### Graduation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>79.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Improved**

### 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Delaware’s “Smarter Balance” test was initiated in the 2014/15 school year. Because the performance measure has changed, historical data comparison data is not available.*

### 8th Grade Math Proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Delaware’s “Smarter Balance” test was initiated in the 2014/15 school year. Because the performance measure has changed, historical data comparison data is not available.*
### Kids Count Overview

#### Economic Security

**Children in Poverty**
- **Percentage of Children (0-17) in Poverty**
  - 2014-2016: 18.5%
  - 2009-2011: 16.9%
  - **Worsened**

**Median Family Income**
- **Median Income in Thousands of US Dollars of Households with Children under 18 by Family Type**
  - 2014-2016:
    - 1-parent: $29,589
    - 2-parent: $92,887
  - **Improved**
  - 2009-2011:
    - 1-parent: $27,212
    - 2-parent: $85,950

**Economic Inclusion of Young People**
- **Percentage of Teens (16-19) Not Attending School and Not Working**
  - 2014-2016: 8.8%
  - 2009-2011: 8.4%
  - **Worsened**

#### Family and Community

**Teen Births**
- **Live Births to 15-19 Year-old Females per 1,000 15-19 Year-old Females**
  - 2010-2014: 27.6
  - **Improved**
  - 2005-2009: 41.1

**Children in One-Parent Families**
- **Percentage of Children (0-17) in One-Parent Families**
  - 2014-2016: 35.2%
  - **Improved**
  - 2009-2011: 36.6%

**Child Abuse/Neglect**
- **Children with Substantiated Reports of Abuse and Neglect per 1,000 Children Ages Birth to 17**
  - 2016: 7.1
  - **Improved**
  - 2011: 11.1
Health and Health Behaviors

The future prosperity of any society depends on its ability to foster the health and well-being of the next generation. Part of fostering that future success is acknowledging and rectifying the structural and institutional discrimination that has a dramatic impact on the health outcomes for children of color. People of color often receive a lower quality and intensity of health care, are more likely to be uninsured and live in medically underserved communities, experience cultural and linguistic barriers to care, and are more likely to be the victims of subtle bias and stereotyping.

Safeguarding a child’s health, and in particular addressing the barriers facing children of color, is the first step to ensuring a child is able to grow, learn, and thrive. The conditions and environments in which children live affect their health and differ by race and ethnicity. Our state can ensure health and wellness by reducing racial and ethnic disparities in food security, access to health insurance for children and parents and exposure to environmental risks.

A healthy start begins with the prenatal health and well-being of a child’s mother. It also includes a child’s early months and years, when a child’s brain is rapidly developing the knowledge and skills essential for future success in their relationships, school, and reaching their full potential in life. The economic security and stability of young families is critical during this time, as it reduces the risk of poverty and stress to parents and children—which can have lifelong impacts on the whole family’s well-being. A high quality early learning system can support young families by providing children with learning environments that support healthy development, and giving parents affordable options for child care so they can work if they need or wish to.

Having a safe and stable house to sleep in each night, as well as having enough food, are fundamental to a child’s social, emotional, and physical well-being. Compared to children with adequate nutrition and stable housing, children who experience homelessness and hunger are more likely to experience trauma, chaos, trouble in school, and poorer health. The unpredictability of homelessness and hunger puts a child’s safety at risk as well, as the stress on families can reach toxic levels that may undermine relationships between parents and children.

Low Birth Weight Births

Delaware Compared to U.S.

Delaware: 8.5
U.S.: 8.0

Delaware by Race/Ethnicity

Black: 12.6
White: 6.8
Hispanic: 6.7

Source: Delaware Health Statistics Center
Health and Health Behaviors

**Infant Mortality**

*Delaware Compared to U.S.*

Note: Infant Mortality Rate – number of deaths occurring in the first year of life per 1,000 live births
Source: Delaware Health Statistics Center

**Children Without Health Insurance**

*Delaware Compared to U.S.*

Source: Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research, University of Delaware
A high quality education system—one that empowers children to excel in school from preschool through higher education—supports students in reaching their full potential, and is essential for the future competitiveness and economic vitality of our state. The first five years of a child’s life are an important time for growth and development, and lay out the foundations for language, academic ability, habits and socio-emotional development. Research shows that access to high quality early care and education programs help young children grow up ready to succeed in school and life. However, there are large gaps in the quality of early care and childhood programs, and not all children receive the maximum benefits from their program. A child entering kindergarten should exhibit age-appropriate cognitive, social and emotional skills. Quality early learning in culturally and linguistically responsive environments, characterized by nurturing relationships and rich opportunities for play and exploration, lays the foundation for learning in elementary school. Compared to their peers, children who enter kindergarten without a solid foundation in early learning may have a harder time meeting important educational, social, or even physical milestones throughout school. When we invent and replicate high quality programs for children and youth, we can solve these gaps in early childhood development and show significant long-term improvements for children.

Since most children attend schools they live near, patterns of residential segregation and poverty concentration are reflected in the racial, ethnic and economic makeup of schools and districts. Decades of policy choices and individual behaviors have led to the concentration of children of color and low-income families in certain schools and districts. Research shows that, in general, students in high-poverty schools have less access to effective teachers than students in low-poverty schools, affecting their opportunities to learn. High-poverty schools also serve more students who are more likely to face out-of-school challenges which research shows is connected to academic readiness, test performance and educational achievement. These challenges can include housing instability, food insecurity and lack of access to health care.

Investing in a system of high quality early care and education programs will benefit both young children and society. Early investments reap dividends as child development translates into economic development later on. By expanding educational opportunities for every child, Delaware can make equity a priority in students’ ability to access educational resources and services.
In the 2014-15 school year, Delaware’s assessment program was renamed the Delaware System of Student Assessments (DeSSA). DeSSA assessments include Smarter English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) and Mathematics assessments. The Smarter assessments are designed to measure the progress of Delaware students in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics standards in grades 3-8, and 11.
Economic Security

As a state we need to ensure that families with children live in “high-opportunity” neighborhoods. Many strategies can help advance the goal of every child living in a neighborhood with abundant opportunities, including creating partnerships to invest in neighborhoods, removing barriers for families who want to move to different neighborhoods and pursuing policies to prevent racial and economic isolation. Effective strategies include creating partnerships between schools, colleges, workforce development programs and businesses to offer job-based training for youth and parents; investing state funds to support and expand early college high school programs; and coordinating workforce and early childhood programs.

Delaware should be a state where every child is financially secure. However, historical and current policies, laws and practices have created and maintained deep divides in children’s opportunities. Although no racial or ethnic group is unaffected by poverty, the likelihood of living in poverty is far higher if you are a Black or Latino child. Fighting child poverty and closing racial and ethnic gaps will require an “all-of-the above” approach: programs that boost incomes and provide safety nets for families who fall on hard times; greater opportunities for parents to increase their skills, education and access to family-supporting jobs; and policies that help every child have meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential, across race, ethnicity and place.

Historical barriers have created unequal situations for families, and current policies have not done enough to undo them. Access to jobs that pay family-sustaining wages shapes a parent’s ability to provide financial security to their children, which has an impact on that child’s likelihood to reach their full potential. Poverty produces a wide variety of circumstances that can hurt children’s well-being including a lack of access to health care, an increased

Percentage of Children in Poverty
Percentage of Children (ages 0–18) in Poverty by Census Tract • Delaware, Five-Year Average 2011–2015

Census tracts ranked by percentage of population below 100% of poverty. A person is “in poverty” if they reside in a family with income below the U.S. poverty threshold, as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. Poverty thresholds differ by family size and are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. However, they do not take into account geographic differences in the cost of living.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
Economic Security

Kent and Sussex County data are not available separately. Source: Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research, University of Delaware

**Median Family Income**

Source: Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research, University of Delaware

Reducing poverty, and the racial and ethnic disparities in our state’s poverty rates, must begin with a shared understanding of how opportunities and well-being are shaped by policy. For example, we have significantly reduced poverty for seniors with income support through Social Security. Conversely, discriminatory private practices and public policies have created persistently higher poverty rates for Black and Latino families. Our policy choices matter.
Family and Community

The well-being of our children is a barometer for the future. In one short generation, they will be the parents, workers, volunteers, leaders, and change-makers determining the social and economic vitality of Delaware. If we want a better future for all of us, we need better results for kids now. Getting results means giving all kids what they need to reach their full potential. And it especially means investing in kids of color and those from families with low incomes, so they can overcome the barriers created by racism and poverty and have equal opportunity to succeed. We must remove the exclusionary practices that undergird much of our country’s public institutions—and replace them with measures designed to let kids of all backgrounds succeed. Second, we must focus our public investments on the success of the whole family, with the understanding that the well-being of children is inextricably tied to the well-being of their parents.

The opportunity gap starts young, with children of color as much as 2.6 times more likely as their white peers to experience poverty. By fourth grade, Black and Latino children are more likely to be reading below grade level, a crucial milestone that predicts future success in school. As they progress through adolescence into young adulthood, children of color are more likely than their white peers to be diagnosed with asthma, be suspended from school, drop out of high school, and become involved with the criminal justice system. Young adults of color are less likely to graduate from college than their white peers, which has long-term implications for their job prospects, economic stability, and the future well-being of the children they will one day raise.

But we cannot raise the bar for all kids if we don’t look specifically at how Delaware’s children of color are faring. We can often trace racial and ethnic gaps in children’s health, education, and financial security to historical policies that created barriers for families and current policies that perpetuate them. We must “close the gaps” by intentionally breaking down any obstacles which prevent certain groups of children from reaching their full potential.

We believe that raising the bar and closing the gaps in child well-being is the way forward for sustainable economic growth and prosperity. By creating abundant opportunities for Delaware kids, the state will build on its strengths: its diversity, capacity for growth and enterprising spirit.
**Children in One-Parent Families**

**Children in One-Parent Families—Delaware Compared to U.S.**

- **Delaware:** 33.9%
- **U.S.:** 35.2%

**Births to Single Mothers—Delaware by Race/Hispanic Origin**

- **Black:** 71.4%
- **Hispanic:** 63.1%
- **White:** 40.0%

**Types of Abuse and Neglect—Delaware Fiscal Year 2016**

- **Neglect:** 48.2%
- **Abuse (except sexual):** 28.2%
- **Dependency:** 13.3%
- **Sexual Abuse:** 10.3%

**Number of Substantiated Cases**

- **Total Substantiated Cases:** 1,239

**Note:** Children in One-Parent Households — percentage of all families with “own children” under age 18 living in the household, who are headed by a person — male or female — without a spouse present in the home. “Own children” are never-married children under 18 who are related to the household by birth, marriage, or adoption.

**Source:** Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research, University of Delaware

**Source:** Delaware Health Statistics Center

**Number of Substantiated Cases**

- **Fiscal Years:** 1993-2016

**Number of Substantiated Cases in Delaware**

- **1993-1995:** 931
- **1996-1998:** 1,039
- **1999-2001:** 1,071
- **2002-2004:** 1,188
- **2005-2007:** 1,212
- **2008-2010:** 1,189
- **2011-2013:** 1,220
- **2014-2016:** 1,239

**Source:** Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

**Source:** Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
KIDS COUNT in Delaware wants to see our state provide meaningful and abundant opportunities for every child. For that vision to be realized, children’s risks and opportunities in life should not be dictated by their gender, ZIP code, family income, race or ethnicity. These factors are each uniquely related to kids’ well-being and can interact in powerful ways. Raising the bar and closing the gaps in child well-being is both a winning and necessary strategy. Research has shown that racial and ethnic gaps in children’s health, education and financial security can often be traced to historical policies that created barriers for families and current policies that can perpetuate them. For example, historical segregation of neighborhoods and schools and a lack of investment led to school systems that generally do not serve Black and Latino children as well as White children. We must “close the gaps” so that even if some children face bigger obstacles on the path to reaching their full potential, we intentionally work to break down those obstacles and create equitable opportunities for good health, an excellent education and economic security for every child.

Our children are growing up in an exciting and profound time. Conversations about income inequality, racial justice, gender equity, climate change, living-wage jobs, and family economic security—all essential issues for child well-being—are dominating our public debates. Growing knowledge and awareness of these issues is accompanied by reignited social movements that are gaining momentum thanks to new faces, old wisdom, savvy use of new technologies and communications, and a profound sense of urgency to change the course of our future. Structural racism—the way that policies, practices, and programs combine and interact to sustain poorer outcomes among communities of color undermines progress for children. To build a great future for kids and families, we need public policies that set ALL children up for success. No child should face a future limited by inequity. Together, state lawmakers and advocates can design laws, practices and policies that extend opportunity to all.
Acknowledgments

Thanks for the data:
- Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research
- Center for Drug and Health Studies
- Center for Community Research and Service
- Children and Families First
- Delaware Department of Education
- Delaware Dept. of Health and Social Services
- Delaware Department of Labor
- Delaware Department of Public Safety
- Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
- Delaware Division of Libraries
- Delaware Health Statistics Center
- Delaware Population Consortium
- Delaware State Housing Authority
- Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
- Nemours Health and Prevention Services
- Statistical Analysis Center

A special thank you to the Delaware children and families whose photos are featured throughout this book.
The Kids Count Data Center allows the ability to create and download different visualizations or spreadsheets of all of our data. Whether you share this report with others, go online for the full digital version, or utilize the Data Center to discover even more ways to customize the data, please join us in using this data to make informed program and policy decisions by investing in Delaware’s biggest asset, our kids.

Several national reports are available by going to: [http://datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org)