

Kids Count Data Book and Education in Tennessee

The Annie E. Casey Foundation released its annual *Kids Count Data Book* on June 12, offering a data-focused summary of the status of children in Tennessee and other states (<http://www.aecf.org/>). Tennessee's overall ranking improved just one notch, moving the state from 43rd to 42nd. The state showed improvement in some benchmark categories, while other areas showed deterioration. For example, while the teen death rate in the state fell from 2004 to 2005, the number of low-birth weight babies, the infant mortality rate and the number of children in poverty rose slightly.

Despite some improvement for the year, the 42nd place ranking means the state stacks up poorly against its counterparts across the country in broad areas like education, health status, poverty, and youth risk factors. Children in Tennessee will bear the direct consequences of these poor rankings, while society at large will bear indirect costs through the public health, welfare and prison systems.

Many of the problems and risks that children in Tennessee confront are related to the low levels of educational attainment of their parents. A recent report by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Tennessee, [*Education Crossroads*](#), showed the many ways that education may affect the wellbeing of the family, the economy, society and the state government budget.

As shown in [*Education Crossroads*](#), children with well-educated parents not only tend to have better overall health, but they also tend to have:

- lower infant mortality rates
- lower rates of low birth-weight babies
- lower teen pregnancy rates

The report illustrates how infant mortality rates decline as the mother's education increases. Mothers with 9-11 years of education have an average infant mortality rate of 9.4 percent, but this rate drops to 7.7 percent and 6.2 percent for mothers with 12 years of education and mothers with 13-15 years of education, respectively.

The report also documents the strong connection between educational attainment and access to private insurance. In general, uninsured rates increase for those with less education. According to survey data from Tennessee, 16.3 percent of adults with a high school degree or less are uninsured while only 5.3 percent of adults with a bachelor's degree are uninsured. Parental education and access to private insurance can have direct affects on the wellbeing of children in the home.

For more information, see www.educationcrossroads.com.