



Children's Advocacy

A L L I A N C E

an independent voice
for Nevada's children

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Nevada data show families with children struggling during COVID crisis; food security and mental health care greatest concerns

Data Across 50 States Show Struggles with Hunger, Housing, Health Insurance and Mental Health, Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds

LAS VEGAS — Over a quarter of Nevada's families are reporting feelings of hopelessness, as almost a quarter of those surveyed are reporting no confidence of meeting housing demands or food needs according to the "***Kids, Families and COVID-19: Pandemic Pain Points and the Urgent Need to Respond***" report. The 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzes how households with children are faring during the COVID-19 crisis.

The growing concerns noted in the report represent a challenge and an opportunity for Nevada. This KIDS COUNT® report examined data from weekly surveys conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau that demonstrate how families across the country are challenged to meet basic needs during this global public health crisis while managing school, work and mental health. The Foundation finds that the concurrent health and economic crises are exacerbating trends that show vulnerable families are unable to fulfill basic needs. Nevada households are represented among the ranks of households struggling with this delicate balance.

"For Nevada, this pandemic has highlighted fragile points in our unique culture, shining a light on the needs of our most vulnerable populations. Nevada's performance on these indicators highlights where we are struggling to navigate this global pandemic. It is imperative that we take targeted action in both policy and practice to promote health and wellness for our children. Children's Advocacy Alliance is committed to elevating best practices to close the gap and secure a brighter future for Nevada's children," said Dr. Tara C. Raines, KIDS Count Initiatives director of the Children's Advocacy Alliance, Nevada's member of the KIDS COUNT network.

The report shows how urgent local, state and federal intervention is to the health and well-being of families with children. A significant percentage of Nevada households with children noted housing instability, food insecurity, lack of healthcare access and hopelessness as a concern,

underscoring the ways in which the pandemic has impacted households nationally. With a number of CARES Act provisions due to sunset this month, this plight will likely worsen. “Now more than ever, we must affirm our commitment to Nevada’s children and families by ensuring a safety net during this critical time. This safety net must include resources for addressing the housing stability, food insecurity and despair that has ensued,” said Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner, executive director of the Children’s Advocacy Alliance.

By measuring food security, the ability to make rent or mortgage payments, health insurance status and mental health concerns, the Casey Foundation identified four pain points for children and families that require immediate action. All points were concerning for Nevadans.

Percentages of families with children who have experienced challenges as measured by these four indicators are listed below:

- **FOOD SECURITY:** Nationally, 14% of respondents said they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat. While in Nevada, 17% of households with children indicated they sometimes or often did not have enough food to eat.
- **HOUSING STABILITY:** 18% of households with children, nationally, had slight or no confidence they would make the next rent or mortgage payment on time. Alarming, Nevada had the highest rate in this indicator, with 24% of households with children having a slight or no confidence in ability to pay their next mortgage or rent payment.
- **AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE:** 12% of families did not have health insurance. Similarly, 13% of Nevada households with children did not have health insurance.
- **MENTAL HEALTH:** 21% of surveyed households noted feeling down, depressed or hopeless. During the same period, 26% of Nevada households with children indicated feeling down, depressed or hopeless.

“As one of the richest nations, our children should not have to worry about having their basic needs met. Families should not be struggling to survive this pandemic without having access to financial, health, child care, supports and resources,” added Anna Villatoro, media advocacy manager at the Children’s Advocacy Alliance. “We at the Children’s Advocacy Alliance call on our national and local officials to support policies and relief packages to help families and children carry through these dark and unknown times. We need our families to have a place to turn to with their physical and mental health. We need to ensure that every child has a chance to thrive, especially during these critical times.”

The Annie E. Casey Foundation urges policymakers and child advocates to unite across differences and put COVID-19 response at the top of 2021 agendas to ensure that children have what they need to survive and thrive. The Foundation calls on elected officials and other decision makers to:

- ***Put racial and ethnic equity first in policymaking*** by using disaggregated data and engaging community stakeholders. This should ensure that the policymaking process is informed by the diverse perspectives of those hardest hit by the crisis and created in

partnership with communities. This approach should underpin any concrete policy actions.

- ***Prioritize the physical and mental health of all children*** by guaranteeing that any vaccine will be available without cost as a factor and by retaining and strengthening the Affordable Care Act. To promote mental health, particularly in times of crisis, policymakers should work to reduce the student-to-school-counselor ratio in all school settings to levels recommended by mental health professionals.
- ***Help families with children achieve financial stability and bolster their well-being*** by expanding access to unemployment insurance for part-time and gig economy workers, low-wage workers and students and by expanding child care access. Additionally, policymakers should eliminate barriers to accessing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC). And beyond any temporary housing assistance programs aimed at heading off a foreclosure or eviction crisis, federal policymakers should expand the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, and increase the overall availability of public housing.
- ***Ensure schools are better funded, more equitably funded and ready to meet the needs of students disparately affected by the pandemic*** by boosting school funding to protect against the economic impact of the pandemic, build maintenance-of-equity requirements into relief packages and address disparities in technology access at home and in the classroom.

Release Information

The *2020 KIDS COUNT report* will be available December 14 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Kids Count* report can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

About the Children's Advocacy Alliance

The Children's Advocacy Alliance (CAA) is a community-based nonprofit organization that advocates for policy changes that benefit Nevada's children and families by researching and utilizing current data and promoting evidence-based policies to ensure that every child has a chance to thrive. CAA engages the community by bringing people together to address challenges and opportunities around children's issues to leverage collective strength toward improving the systems that support the well-being of Nevada's children. For more information, visit www.caanv.org.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. *KIDS COUNT*® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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