New KIDS COUNT Report Shows Florida Children Benefit Greatly from Anti-Poverty Programs

The Supplemental Poverty Measure Demonstrates the Impact of Safety Net Programs and Tax Policies

A new report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation is a call to action to decision makers in the public, nonprofit and private sectors to invest in the development – and implementation – of the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM). With the official poverty measure increasingly outdated, in 2011 the U.S. Census Bureau created the SPM which is based on a modern family budget and is adjusted according to geographic variations in the cost of living.

The KIDS COUNT® Data Snapshot, Measuring Access to Opportunity in the United States, points to the SPM as a better index for measuring poverty. The SPM data indicates that the programs and policies being applied in Florida are lifting over a half million children out of poverty. The research shows the rate of child poverty is 21 percent when families are utilizing safety net resources, but climbs to 35 percent without them.

“The official poverty measure does not provide the accurate information policymakers need to measure the success of anti-poverty programs – nationally and at the state level,” said Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Relying on this tool alone prevents policymakers from gauging the effectiveness of government programs aimed at reducing child poverty. Given that child poverty costs our society an estimated $500 billion a year in lost productivity and earnings as well as health- and crime-related costs, the SPM is an important tool that should be used to assess state-level progress in fighting poverty.”

As we better understand the results of current anti-poverty programs, we should continue to invest in the policies that work and expand on promising programs that can help Florida’s children achieve their full potential. “The findings in this report clearly demonstrate the value of improved poverty measurement; funding and dedication to this activity is critical to assess program success and the economic reality for our children,” said Susan Weitzel, Florida KIDS COUNT Director.

Measuring Access to Opportunity in the United States will be available Feb. 25 at 12:01 a.m. EST at www.aecf.org. To learn more about Florida’s children and families, visit http://www.floridakidscount.org/.

Florida KIDS COUNT (FKC) is part of a Nationwide KIDS COUNT Network and project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. FKC disseminates national, statewide and county-level data on key indicators for Florida’s children.

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