

More Kids Growing up in Poor Neighborhoods in FL

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – A new **KIDS COUNT Data Snapshot** from the Annie E. Casey Foundation released today shows that the number of children living in high-poverty communities has increased by 28 percent in Florida. In high-poverty neighborhoods, 30 percent or more of the residents are below the poverty line.

Laura Speer is the associate director of policy reform at the Casey Foundation. She says children in these neighborhoods face challenges in almost every aspect of their lives that make it less likely they will reach their full potential as adults.

"They have harmful levels of stress; they're more likely to have behavioral and emotional problems; they have more trouble in school and have lower test scores."

According to the data, just over 340,000 children in Florida are living in poverty-stricken neighborhoods. Speer notes that about 75 percent of children living in an area of concentrated poverty have at least one parent working. Even if a family is not officially "in poverty" according to federal standards, she says it still harms children when a lot of other people in the neighborhood are under that line.

"Living in an area of concentrated poverty limits the opportunities families have available to get a better job to make sure the health and the welfare of their children is taken care of."

The report calls for transforming disadvantaged communities. It offers several recommendations that can be tailored to each area, Speer says, with the idea of making those neighborhoods better places to raise children.

"We know it's important to support the families in the communities in terms of giving them access to financial coaching, as well as helping them gain employment skills."

In many projects showcased as success stories, institutions near high-poverty zones are involved in revitalization and education initiatives.

The data also identifies which children are most likely to live in high-poverty communities, Speer says.

"Children of color in the United States are much more likely to have poverty within their households be compounded by also living in a high-poverty neighborhood and everything that means."

African-American, American Indian and Latino children are six to nine times more likely to live in high-poverty communities than their white counterparts. And no matter what their race or ethnicity, children in the South and Southwest are more likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty.

The full report is available at [AECF.org](http://www.aecf.org).