

Health



Ensuring that children have a healthy start in life is essential to their health as adults. According to the KIDS COUNT data, the well-being of Kansas children is significantly hampered by rankings in the four health indicators. Though we have made recent progress on two of the indicators, our progress has slipped on the other two.

Low-Birthweight Babies and Infant Mortality

The first step toward improving our state's health indicators is to ensure that more pregnant women are receiving early and adequate prenatal care. In 2008, the Kansas Legislature made three data-driven policy changes designed to create better health outcomes for Kansas children. Medicaid eligibility for pregnant women was increased, allowing access to prenatal care for more women. The other two changes – recommendations made by the Kansas Health Policy Authority – will provide pregnant women on Medicaid with dental benefits and a smoking cessation program. In order for these policies to have full impact, sufficient funding will be necessary.

Child and Teen Death Rates

In recent years, Kansas has implemented policy changes aimed at decreasing our rates of child and teen deaths. Two years ago the Legislature approved a booster seat policy that requires children under age eight to be properly restrained when riding in a vehicle. This policy, which will continue to improve our state's child death rate, was followed by teen safety belt legislation in 2007. Because motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death among Kansas teens, requiring the use of safety belts is one step toward saving teen lives.

The next step toward reducing teen death rates, which has not yet been implemented in Kansas, is a comprehensive graduated drivers licensing (GDL) system. Right now, Kansas is failing to prepare teens for the lifelong responsibility of driving. A GDL system, which has been successfully implemented in more than 40 other states, will update our licensing system and reduce the number of injuries and deaths that involve teen drivers. A comprehensive GDL system is one that addresses the three greatest risks to teen drivers: inexperience, multiple passengers and late-night driving.

Indicator	Definition	Kansas Current Rate	National Ranking	Top-Ranked State(s)	How Can Kansas Become No. 1?
Low-Birthweight	Percent of babies born weighing less than 5.5 pounds	7.2% 2,860 babies (2005 rate)	17th (tied with 1 other state)	Alaska, Oregon and Washington tie for No. 1 with a rate of 6.1%	Reduce the number of low-birthweight births in Kansas by at least 427
Infant Mortality	Number of deaths per 1,000 live births	7.4 294 infants (2005 rate)	33rd (tied with 1 other state)	Utah has the lowest rate of infant mortality at 4.5	Reduce the number of infant deaths by at least 114
Child Death Rate	Number of deaths per 100,000 children (ages 1-14)	23 120 children (2005 rate)	31st (tied with 2 other states)	New Hampshire is No. 1 on this indicator with a rate of 8	Reduce the number of child deaths in Kansas by at least 79
Teen Death Rate	Number of deaths per 100,000 teens (ages 15-19)	66 133 teens (2005 rate)	24th (tied with 3 other states)	Hawaii is the best state in the nation with a rate of 37	Reduce the number of teen deaths in Kansas by at least 58

Key components to strengthening Kansas' licensing policy

Twelve-Month Learner's Permit

Based upon licensing updates made in other states, we know that a one-year, adult-supervised learning period stands to reduce the number of teen crashes on Kansas roads by up to 50%. By incorporating a 12-month learner's permit phase into our licensing policy, Kansas teens will be better equipped for the lifelong responsibility of driving.

Six-Month Driving Limitation

The risk of death among teen drivers more than doubles when there are two passengers in the vehicle and more than triples when there are three passengers. By limiting young drivers to one teen passenger during the first six months of unrestricted driving, Kansas teens will be better equipped to manage distractions on the road.

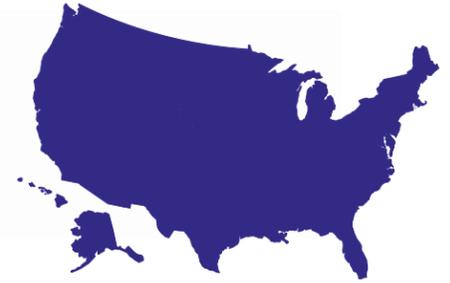
Six-Month Late-Night Driving Limitation

The research tells us that late-night driving poses a serious risk for young drivers. In fact, teens are twice as likely to die in a car crash during late-night hours. National statistics show that almost half of teen crash fatalities occur after 9 p.m. By limiting teen driving after 9 p.m. to work and school, we stand to significantly reduce the number of fatalities among Kansas teens.

Existing Farm Permit

Based upon the current needs of Kansas farm families, the existing Farm Permit would remain unchanged under this proposal.

What will it take?



A guide to making Kansas the best state in the nation to raise a child

Someday, Kansas children will grow up to be our next workforce, our next taxpayers and our next community leaders. But, right now, they rely on us to set the course for their future and the future of our state.

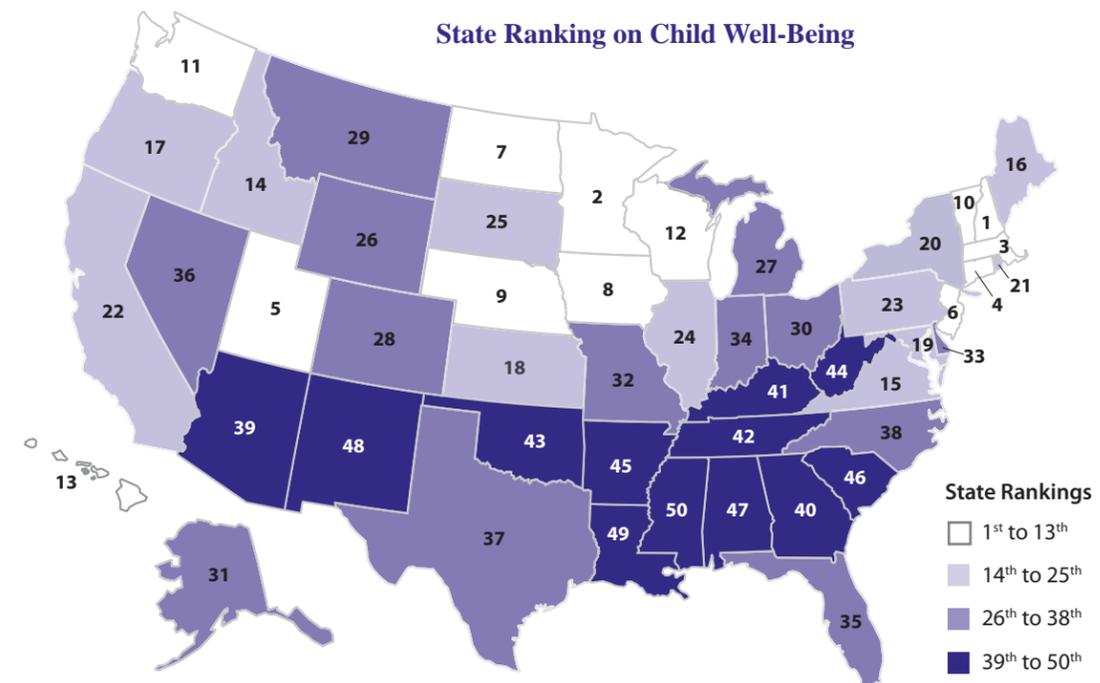
- Will we make adequate investments in educating our next workforce for a global and changing economy?
- Will we foster an environment in which more Kansas children and their families can achieve economic stability?
- Will we update our health care system in a way that ensures every Kansas child has the opportunity to grow up healthy?

Each year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation releases KIDS COUNT, a state-by-state ranking of child well-being. In 2008, New Hampshire was deemed the best state in the nation to raise a child, while Kansas dropped to the 18th spot. Though our state continues to rank near the top third, Kansas has noticeably slipped from the 12th spot to the 18th spot in just two years.

This report will explore what Kansas can do to regain lost ground in terms of child well-being and become the No. 1 state in the nation to raise a child. Our state has taken concrete steps over the past decade to improve the health, education and economic security of our next generation. By building on those recent policy changes and making a

commitment to sustaining those changes, Kansas can become a model state when it comes to encouraging future prosperity.

Research tells us that children need access to three fundamental resources in order to reach their fullest potential: health, education, and economic security. The latest KIDS COUNT data indicates how Kansas compares to the rest of the nation in these three areas, and identifies resources upon which we can focus that will improve outcomes for our next generation.



Education



Economic Success

Indicator	Definition	Kansas Current Rate	National Ranking	Top-Ranked State	How Can Kansas Become No. 1?
High School Drop Outs	The percent of teens (ages 16-19) who are not enrolled in school and are not high school graduates	4% 7,207 teens (2006 rate)	2nd (tied with 7 other states)	North Dakota, with a rate of 3%	Reduce the number of high school dropouts by at least 2,246
Idle Teens	The percent of teens (ages 16-19) who are not attending school and not working	6% 9,106 teens (2006 rate)	9th (tied with 8 other states)	New Hampshire, with a rate of 4%	Reduce the number of idle teens in Kansas by at least 2,491

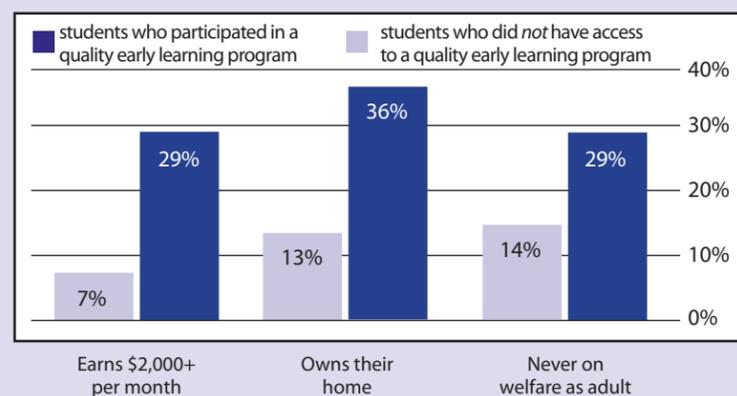
Recognizing that our state's greatest resource is its future workforce and next generation of leaders, Kansas has a history of prioritizing education. This commitment is reflected in our high school graduation and idle teen rankings. Although we rank in the Top 10 in both of these categories, there are still more than 7,000 Kansas teens who drop out of school each year.

Research demonstrates that children are less likely to drop out of high school if they have access to early learning environments, such as quality preschool programs. Studies also tell us that early learning opportunities generate greater lifetime earnings and a lower crime rate.

By remaining committed to quality early learning environments in Kansas, we can continue to achieve both short-term and long-term results, including:

- Increased literacy and high school graduation rates
- More graduates likely to pursue a higher education
- A next generation that is adequately prepared for the workforce
- An enhanced economy and quality of life for Kansas families

With a significant investment in early learning opportunities by the 2008 Legislature, Kansas took an important step toward making Kansas the best state in the nation. The Legislature's creation of an Early Childhood Block Grant – championed by the Kansas Coalition for School Readiness and Kansas Action for Children – will provide more Kansas children with access to quality early learning opportunities. And, the Kansas block grant has been held up nationally as a model program because 30% of the funding is set aside for infant and toddler programs. Kansas can continue to lead the nation in the early education arena with continued support from policymakers on initiatives to improve the quality and accessibility of early learning programs and child care.



Improved Economic Outcomes

Research shows access to quality early learning programs results in better economic outcomes for participants and communities.

Source: High/Scope Perry Preschool Program

We know that old-fashioned Kansas values, like hard work and perseverance, are no longer enough to achieve the American dream. Under our current system, more and more Kansas families are being left behind – sometimes earning enough to get by, but never earning enough to get ahead. We can improve the financial stability of Kansas families and communities by creating more opportunities for asset development, ensuring consumer protection against unfair lending, and implementing a balanced tax structure.

In the past few years Kansas has seen an increase in the number of children living in poverty. Just two years ago, 12 percent of our next generation was living in poverty. Today, that number has increased to 16 percent or about 107,000 children. Another 151,000 Kansas children are living in low-income families, meaning more than one-third of our future workforce is likely growing up without the essential resources they need to reach their fullest potential.

Asset Development

Helping families save for the future is a proven strategy for increasing the long-term economic stability of our communities and our state. When families have an opportunity to develop assets, they are more likely to be financially independent, they are more likely to weather difficult economic times, and their children are more likely to reach their fullest potential. One of the surest ways to help Kansas children overcome poverty is access to higher education. A higher education means both higher earning potential for the next generation of Kansans and a more skilled workforce that will help attract new industries to our state. We can encourage our next generation to pursue a higher education and gain marketable job skills – whether that be through

KIDS College Savings Program

Data shows that higher education is fundamental to strengthening our state's future workforce and fostering greater financial independence for our next generation. The KIDS college savings program in Kansas is helping low-income families save for their children's college or vocational training. Just last year, hard working Kansas families invested an average of \$505 in more than 500 accounts. All together, because of the KIDS program, Kansas families saved \$273,915 of their hard earned dollars for their children's post-secondary education. By continuing the KIDS college savings program we will encourage more Kansas children to pursue college or vocational training.

- Number of Kansans participating: **543**
- Average investment: **\$505**
- Total investments by Kansans: **\$273,915**

a college degree or vocational training – by continuing the KIDS program, a college savings plan that is designed to help low-income families save for their children's education. And, we can further encourage those families that are already participating in the KIDS plan by permitting one account per child.

Predatory Lending

In tough economic times, families living paycheck to paycheck are more vulnerable to predatory lending practices that often trap them in a cycle of debt. Although Kansas enforces a number of laws designed to protect consumers from scams, exploitation and fraud, we do little to protect consumers from predatory lending practices. In fact, under current law, interest rates on payday loans can reach as high as 390% annualized and car title loans in Kansas are structured to avoid interest rate caps altogether. Just as banks and credit unions adhere to lending practices that protect all of us, we should expect the same of short-term lenders. Capping the interest rates and increasing the duration for repayment on short-term loans are two options to reduce predatory lending practices.

Balanced Tax System

As fewer Kansas families experience adequate growth in their household income, our state and our communities experience the consequences through budget shortfalls and decreased public services. But, we know that budget shortfalls are not caused solely by the struggling economy. When our founders built the public infrastructure in Kansas, it was built upon a tax system that relied heavily on revenues from our state's agricultural industry. Though the face of agriculture has changed significantly over the years, our tax system has not. As a result, Kansas fails to capture the revenues – namely because of sales tax exemptions and tax favors – that other states rely upon to remain viable and competitive. While those exempted groups avoid paying their fair share to support our public infrastructure, Kansas families bear the tax burden. We need to develop a reasonable and responsible approach to modernizing our tax system that will equalize the tax burden so as to foster growth and prosperity not only for our state, but also for Kansas communities and Kansas families.

Indicator	Definition	Kansas Current Rate	National Ranking	Top-Ranked State(s)	How Can Kansas Become No. 1?
Teen Birth Rate	Number of births per 1,000 females (ages 15-19)	41 4,055 births (2005 rate)	29th	New Hampshire, with a rate of 18	Reduce the number of teen births by 2,293
Children in Families Without Secure Employment	Percent of children living in families where no parent has full-time year-round employment	28% 192,470 children (2006 rate)	7th (tied with 5 other states)	North Dakota, with a rate of 24%	Reduce the number of children living in families without secure employment by 25,904
Poverty	Percent of children living in poverty (income below \$20,444 for a family of four)	16% 106,645 children (2006 rate)	21st (tied with 2 other states)	Maryland and New Hampshire tied at No. 1 with a rate of 10%	Reduce the number of children living in poverty by 38,135
Children in Single-Parent Families	Percent of children in single-parent families	28% 183,831 children (2006 rate)	12th (tied with 5 other states)	Utah, with a rate of 18%	Reduce the number of children living in single-parent families by 65,777