

**UNDER EMBARGO Until Monday, December 14, 2020 at 12:01 a.m. ET**

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**Maryland Data Show Families with Children Struggling During Health Crisis**  
*Data Show Struggles Across Key Areas, Annie E. Casey Foundation Report Finds*

**BALTIMORE**—Maryland performed well on access to health care during the pandemic but continues to struggle in the areas of food security, housing stability, and mental health according to ***Kids, Families and COVID-19: Pandemic Pain Points and the Urgent Need to Respond***, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how families are faring during the COVID-19 crisis.

This KIDS COUNT® report examined data from weekly surveys conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau focuses on 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.

In Maryland, key findings show:

- While 15% of respondents with children said they had lacked **food security** prior to the pandemic, 17% reported that in the most recent week there was sometimes or always not enough to eat in their household.
- 20% said they had only slight confidence or no confidence at all that they would be able to **make their next rent or mortgage payment** on time.
- 7% **lack health insurance**, however, this indicator improved slightly from 8 percent over the prior measurement period.
- 24% reported that they had felt down, depressed, or hopeless an increase of 3 percent over the previous measurement period highlighting the need for **mental health** supports.

“Maryland’s children and families are in crisis,” said Mariama Boney, interim executive director at Advocates for Children and Youth. “The pandemic has exacerbated the disparities that have existed, and we must work together to address this crisis in an equitable manner to ensure that an entire generation of children—especially Black, Latinx and the Indigenous—will not face long-term effects.”

Advocates for Children and Youth joins the Annie E. Casey Foundation in urging policymakers and child advocates to unite and put COVID-19 response at the top of 2021 agendas to ensure that children have what they need to survive and thrive. We call 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 12:00 p.m. EDT at [www.acy.org](http://www.acy.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](http://datacenter.kidscount.org). Join us on **Monday, December 21, 2020 at 1PM EDT** for a webinar reviewing the COVID-19 household data. To register, click here: <https://bit.ly/3ghQaGv>.

#### **About Advocates for Children and Youth**

Advocates for Children and Youth is a statewide, nonpartisan advocacy nonprofit in Maryland and the state affiliate in the Kids Count network. Our mission is to build a strong Maryland by advancing policies and programs to ensure children and families of every race, ethnicity, and place of birth achieve their full potential. For more information, visit [www.acy.org](http://www.acy.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](http://www.aecf.org). *KIDS COUNT*® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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