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Race for Results: Michigan's largest racial/ethnic groups fall below national average in child well-being

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan's future prosperity is linked to how well we prepare the state's current generation of children for the jobs of the 21st century. A new KIDS COUNT[®] report shows that Michigan has a long way to go to eliminate barriers for children, particularly African American kids, to accomplish that goal.

Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children, released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation today, for the first time uses an index based on 12 key milestones and conditions for children across racial and ethnic groups for the nation and the states.

"These results show starkly different conditions in our state for children of different races and places," said Jane Zehnder-Merrell, director of the Kids Count in Michigan project at the Michigan League for Public Policy. "Our state and local policymakers must focus on strategies to increase opportunities for families with children in all racial/ethnic groups to have better outcomes and conditions."

Michigan had the third lowest state score (244) in the nation for the overall well-being of African-American children —only one point better than Mississippi (243). (Wisconsin had the worst score: 238.) The stakes are high as one of every six children in Michigan is African American.

Overall, the index shows that at the national level, no one racial group has all children meeting all milestones. Using a scale of one (lowest) to 1,000 (highest), nationally Asian and Pacific Islander children have the highest index score at 776 followed by white children at 704. Scores for Latino (404), American-Indian (387) and African American (345) children are distressingly lower.

Similar to the national results, Michigan's Asian children scored the highest (787), followed by whites (668), American Indians (501), Hispanic/Latinos (411) and African Americans (244). The indices for Asian, American Indian and Hispanic/Latinos in Michigan were better than those of their national counterparts.

The overall well-being of Asian and white children in Michigan was roughly triple that of African American children, but that of white children fell slightly below their national counterparts by six points. More distressing was the 100-point shortfall for conditions facing the state's African American children compared with their national counterparts.

Some of the suggested strategies to improve economic outcomes/conditions for Michigan families with children include:

- Reinstating the state Earned Income Tax Credit at 20% of the federal EITC
- Increasing the child care subsidy amount and eligibility level to assure access to high-quality care
- Raising the state minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour (from \$7.40)

The index measures success at each stage of childhood, as well as the economic and social context for children's lives from birth to adulthood. The indicators were grounded in the goal that all children should grow up in economically successful families, live in supportive communities and meet developmental, health and educational milestones. To compare results across the areas in the index, the indicators are grouped into four areas: early childhood; education and early work; family supports; and neighborhood context.

The report demonstrates how much state averages mask the dramatically different outcomes and conditions experienced by children of diverse races/ethnicity. For example, the state average hardly varied from the national average on almost all indicators.

In contrast, eight of the 12 outcomes and conditions for the state's African American children were substantially worse than those of their national counterparts. Of most concern, the percentage of the state's African American children living in low-poverty neighborhoods (poverty rates less than 20%) were the worst in the nation: 30 percentage points below the national average—worse than Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana.

Opportunities for Michigan's white children were ranked 34th among the 50 states (with No. 1 the best) with scores falling behind their national counterparts in many key areas:

- Percent fourth graders proficient in reading
- Percent eighth graders proficient in math
- Young adults ages 25-29 with an associate's degree or more
- Children living above 200% of the federal poverty level (roughly \$37,000 for a family of three and \$47,000 for a family of four)

The three indicators where at least three racial/ethnic groups in the state compared poorly with the national average were all in the area of education:

- Percent fourth graders proficient in reading
- Percent eighth graders proficient in math
- High school students graduating on time

On the other hand, children in three of Michigan's racial/ethnic groups were more likely to live with a householder who had at least a high school diploma than their national counterparts.

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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.

For more information: [KIDS COUNT Data Center](http://www.kidscount.org), which is home to comprehensive national, state and local statistics on child well-being. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Michigan League for Public Policy, www.mlpp.org, is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization dedicated to economic opportunity for all.