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Isabella County ranked 24th statewide in child well-being by Kids Count book

LANSING—Isabella County ranked 24th for child well-being by county, according to the *2017 Kids Count in Michigan Data Book* released today by the Michigan League for Public Policy. No. 1 is the best in the state.

The Michigan League for Public Policy has been compiling and releasing the annual Kids Count in Michigan Data Book for 25 years to analyze and evaluate the well-being of children in the state and its counties. The 2017 book primarily compares data from 2008 to 2015 and analyzes 15 key indicators across four domains.

The report also ranks 82 of the 83 counties for overall child well-being (Keweenaw County lacks sufficient data). The top three counties for child well-being are Ottawa (1st), Clinton (2nd) and Oakland (3rd) counties, with each of these counties moving up one rank from last year. The bottom three counties in 2017 are Oceana (80th), Iosco (81st) and Lake (82nd).

Here is how Isabella County ranked out of 82 counties in each Kids Count in Michigan child well-being indicator:

Indicators	**2015 Rate**	**Percent Change from 2008 (Negative Number Means Rate Decrease)**	**County Rank****
ECONOMIC SECURITY			
Children in poverty, ages 0-17	20%	-5.2%	28
Young children, ages 0-5, in the Food Assistance Program	24.4%	-20.1%	28
Students receiving free/reduced-price school lunches	41.8%	106.2%	17
HEALTH			
Less than adequate prenatal care	35.5%	-8.9%	56
Low-birthweight babies	6.5%	-16.5%	27
Infant mortality (per 1,000)	4	-35.7%	3
Child/Teen deaths, ages 1-19 (per 100,000)	13.1	-44.6%	1
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY			
Births to teens, ages 15-19 (per 1,000)	10.9	-17.6%	4
Child abuse/neglect: Children in investigated families (per 1,000)	155.4	95.1%	53
Child abuse/neglect: Confirmed victims (per 1,000)	16.1	-6.6%	21

Child abuse/neglect: Children in out-of-home care (per 1,000)	6	35.2%	43
EDUCATION			
Three- and four-year-olds in preschool	37.1%	-16.5%	71
Students not graduating on time	20.9%	-8%	53
Not proficient (M-STEP): Third-graders (English Language Arts)	52.3%	12.7%	40
Not proficient (M-STEP): Eighth-graders (Math)	63.3%	-3.5%	18

* Sometimes a rate could not be calculated because of low incidence of events or unavailable data.
** Number of counties ranked varies by indicator (47 for infant mortality, 51 for child/teen deaths).

"No Michigan child should be experiencing poverty, hunger, abuse or neglect, regardless of where they are born and grow up, their race or ethnicity, or their family's economic standing," said Alicia Guevara Warren, Kids Count in Michigan project director at the Michigan League for Public Policy. "Just as past policies and practices have created these disparities, using a racial equity lens and a two-generation approach to develop policy solutions can help resolve them. In order to have a vibrant state for us all, lawmakers need to make sure all kids in Michigan thrive."

Comparing counties from 2008-2015, 72 counties saw their child poverty rate increase, 79 counties saw an increase in the percent of kids receiving free and reduced-price lunch, and 58 counties saw the rate of confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect go up. For teen births, 71 counties saw their rate go down.

According to the report, historical and current public policies are adversely affecting Michigan kids' ability to thrive and widening disparities in child well-being based on where a child lives, their race and ethnicity, and their family's income. Statewide, more than 1 in 5 (22 percent) Michigan children lived in poverty in 2015, a 15 percent rate increase since 2008, the last full year of the Great Recession.

But the rates are significantly worse for kids of color, with 47 percent of African-American kids and 30 percent of Latino kids living in poverty compared to 15 percent for White kids in 2015. Nearly 28 percent of children in rural counties live in poverty, 24 percent in midsize counties and 22 percent in urban counties, although poverty increased at the highest rate for urban areas.

The *2017 Kids Count in Michigan Data Book's* key recommendations for policymakers to support parents and improve child well-being are:

- Promote comprehensive strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect, including the expansion of home visitation programs.
- Ensure access to affordable, quality child care by raising eligibility levels for state child care subsidies and reforming the current system.
- Increase funding for maternal smoking prevention and cessation programs and services.
- Provide sufficient funding for early interventions to improve third-grade reading using a birth-to-eight framework.
- "Raise the Age" of juvenile jurisdiction from 17 to 18 years old.

“The Michigan League for Public Policy has been fighting to protect Michigan kids since 1912, but child poverty is just as pressing now as it was then,” said Gilda Z. Jacobs, president and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. “Too many Michigan families are working but barely making ends meet and are one financial emergency away from disaster. Simply having a job is not enough anymore, and we need stronger policies to support workers with low wages and their families.”

For additional information on the *2017 Kids Count in Michigan Data Book*, including the full report, state, county and regional rankings, charts and images, resources for advocates, frequently asked questions and county-specific press releases for 82 counties, go to http://www.mlpp.org/kids-count/michigan-2/2017-kids-count-in-michigan-data-book.

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The Kids Count in Michigan project is part of a broad national effort to improve conditions for children and their families. Funding for the project is provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, The Skillman Foundation, Steelcase Foundation, Frey Foundation, Michigan Education Association, American Federation of Teachers Michigan, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, United Way for Southeastern Michigan, DTE Energy Foundation, Ford Motor Company Fund, Battle Creek Community Foundation, and the Fetzer Institute. More state and local data are available at the Kids Count Data Center, www.datacenter.kidscount.org.