The Alaska Children’s Trust would like to thank the following people and organizations that helped produce the 2018 Kids Count Alaska report series. Each of these people dedicates themselves to the success of Alaska children every day. We sincerely thank you for your generous contribution of funding, time, data, and advice.

Thank you to our generous funders.

**Annie E. Casey Foundation**
**Rasmuson Foundation**

Thank you to the Kids Count Alaska Advisory Committee.

**Abbe Hensley**  
Best Beginnings  
Executive Director

**Carla Britton**  
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium  
Senior Epidemiologist

**Dr. Jared Parrish**  
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services - Division of Public Health  
Senior Epidemiologist

**Lori Grassgreen**  
Association of Alaska School Boards  
Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement  
Director

**Dr. Melissa Kemberling**  
Mat-Su Health Foundation  
Director of Programs

**Stephanie Berglund**  
thread  
CEO

Thank you to the Kids Count Alaska Project Team.

**Donna Logan**  
McDowell Group  
Vice President, Anchorage Operations

**Jean D’Amico**  
Population Reference Bureau

**Lauren Rocco**  
McDowell Group  
Senior Analyst and Project Manager

**Kaerin Stephens**  
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section Women’s, Children’s & Family Health,  
Research Analyst II
Alaska Children’s Trust Board

First Lady Donna Walker
Honorary Chair (2014-2018)

Ivy Spohnholz
Board Chair
State Legislator

Gregory Deal
Wells Fargo

Michael Hanley
Chugach School District

Carley Lawrence
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

Jose Luis Martinez
Edward Jones

Sherry Modrow
Public Member

Dr. Joy Neyhart
Rainforest Pediatric Care

Ramona Reeves
Public Member

Marcus Wilson
Anchorage School District

Lisa Wimmer
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

Alaska Children’s Trust Staff

Trevor Storrs
President / CEO

Vicki Lewis
Executive Assistant

Thomas Azzarella
Alaska Afterschool Network
Director

Andrew Cutting
Voices for Alaska’s Children
Program Fellow

Laura Norton-Cruz
Alaska Resilience Initiative
Director

Julia Martinez
Vice President of Philanthropy
and External Relations
In a state full of resources, we sometimes forget that our most precious and valuable resource is in homes across Alaska—our children. Alaska’s growth and prosperity are deeply connected to the health and productivity of our children, families, and the communities in which they live. Alaska is home to 187,300 children, and while many of them are thriving, there are just as many who are not.

All families—no matter their education level, economic status, family structure, or where they live—can raise children who thrive. Unfortunately, many of our hard-working Alaskan families are struggling, faced with challenges that prevent them from becoming, and remaining, physically, mentally, and economically self-sufficient.

As a state, we all have a responsibility to ensure our children and families live in safe, stable, and nurturing environments. One of the ways we can ensure we achieve this goal is by allowing data to help tell the story of how we can eliminate the challenges that prevent our families from raising thriving children.

Alaska Children’s Trust (ACT) embraces the belief that all Alaskans have a responsibility to support our children and families, and has adopted a framework that provides the architectural structure Alaska needs to support these families. This framework has six core components:

1. **Foster Data** – data is neutral information that is an essential tool in building the road map to true success.
2. **Advocacy** – ensures implementation of legislation that addresses the root cause of trauma and supports resilience.
3. **Community Investment** – utilizes resources that support efforts to address the social determinants identified by the data.
4. **Strengthen Economic Supports for Families** – lack of resources (i.e. wages, health insurance, transportation) leads to many of the social determinants that create the environment that cultivates unhealthy children. This strategy aims to improve the socioeconomic conditions of families, which tend to have the largest impacts on health.
5. **Education & Life Skills** – increases children’s access to more effective, equitable education, social-emotional learning, and life skills training.
6. **Norms & Values** – aims to strengthen norms and values that support safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children and families.

Kids Count Alaska is an ACT project that supports the first core component of this framework – Foster Data. Kids Count Alaska is part of the national KIDS COUNT program at the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF). The mission of KIDS COUNT is to ensure child advocates, policymakers, and the public have access to high-quality, unbiased data about child well-being. AECF gathers and publishes child well-being data from national and state sources online on the KIDS COUNT Data Center. Currently, the data center houses over 4 million data points at national and local levels. To provide an accessible snapshot of child well-being, KIDS COUNT compiles annual Data Books that describe national and state progress towards selected indicators of children’s economic well-being, education, health, and family/community context. KIDS COUNT engages in advocacy at the federal level.
for investments in data collection and provides funding to a network of organizations to gather data and support advocacy at the state level.

Figure 1. Voices for Alaska's Children Model

ACT has operated as Alaska’s KIDS COUNT partner since 2016. Kids Count Alaska is part of the Voices for Alaska’s Children program (Voices) at ACT. Voices is a grassroots community movement focused on continually raising awareness of the needs and challenges of children, youth, and families throughout Alaska. Voices is an independent voice for children; it aims to provide a sustainable and impactful system that allows every voice to be heard during advocacy for policies and decisions that support children. The goal of Voices is to help create a normative shift that ensures children and families live in safe, stable, and nurturing environments.

*Trevor Storrs*
President / CEO
Alaska Children’s Trust
Executive Summary

KIDS COUNT is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) that ensures child advocates, policymakers, and the public have access to high-quality, unbiased data about child well-being. Kids Count Alaska is part of the Voices for Alaska Children program (Voices) at the Alaska Children's Trust (ACT). The following summary, completed by McDowell Group, presents analysis of national and state-level KIDS COUNT data focused on the health of Alaska children.

All data included here can be found at datacenter.kidscount.org/data#AK. Analysis of this data and more is published in the report 2018 Kids Count: Family and Community available at www.alaskachildrenstrust.org.

Alaska Children

- Alaska’s child population will continue to increase modestly through 2045.
- Population changes vary regionally. Over the last 15 years, the child population has increased steadily in the Matanuska-Susitna region, remained about the same in the Interior, Northern, and Southwest regions, and decreased in all other regions.
- Most children live in two-parent households, but approximately 60,000 children live with only one parent. Nearly 40,000 single-parent households are headed by women.
- Alaska’s child population is more racially diverse than the adult population.

Community Environment

- 10,000 children live in areas with poverty rates of over 30 percent.
- Most parents say their children live in safe neighborhoods (59 percent).
- Alaska’s overall crime rate has increased 25 percent over the last five years.

Community Connection

- 53,490 children (age 6-17 years) volunteered in their community in 2016.
- Half of high school students feel they matter to people in their community (52 percent).
- Ninety-three percent of children and young adults have someone besides a parent to rely on for guidance.
- One in five children (age 6-17 years) were bullied in 2016 (25,350 children).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Source: National Survey of Children's Health

Source: National Survey of Children's Health
Family Characteristics

- Eighty-three percent of children live in families that demonstrate resilience during difficulty all or most of the time (150,000 children).
- Two-thirds of children live in two-parent families; one-third live in single parent families (68 percent and 32 percent).
- Most single parent households are headed by women (68 percent).

Foster Care

- Alaska’s rate of children in foster care is more than double the United States rate. In 2016, 15 per 1,000 children under age 18 were in foster care in Alaska, compared to 6 per 1,000 children in the United States as a whole.
- 2,810 Alaska children were in the foster care system in 2016.
- Most children in foster care live in a non-relative foster family home (31 percent), pre-adoptive home (28 percent), or relative foster family home (26 percent).

Juvenile Justice

- A total of 1,715 juveniles were referred to Alaska’s juvenile justice system in 2018.
- From 2014 to 2018, most referrals to the Alaska juvenile justice system were for crimes against property (39 percent).
- Statewide, 70 percent of juveniles referred to the juvenile justice system in 2017 were male.
- Alaska’s rate of youth detained, incarcerated, or placed in a residential facility is higher than the national rate (262 youth per 100,000 in Alaska and 152 youth per 100,000 in the United States).
Finding Solutions

The Alaska Children’s Trust recommends the following solutions to support thriving Alaska families and communities. Family and children are at the core of every community. Thriving community exists when children are safe and their families are well-connected to the communities where they live.

Community Engagement - The most significant deterrent to crime and violence is not saturation with law enforcement officers — it is a neighborhood alive with community supports and strong relationships among children and families. Three ways to improve community engagement are:

1. **Public Health & Law Enforcement Partnership** - Law enforcement and public health agencies have increasingly recognized a shared interest in poverty, violence and other societal issues. Both fields recommend responding to existing problems while also taking a preventive approach to minimize issues before they start. Public health and public safety agencies have begun to adopt similar strategies and tools—many of which emphasize data analysis, collaboration, community engagement, and problem-solving—to combat problems facing communities.

2. **Information Sharing** - Tight budgets make it necessary to maximize existing resources and share information across sectors. By sharing data and analyzing it in new ways, community groups and law enforcement can seek interventions more precisely and support programs that are effective. Together, we have the knowledge and resources to identify and address sources of crime, drug use, and juvenile delinquency in our communities.

3. **Inclusive Partnerships** - Developing and sustaining partnerships requires strong local leadership from mayors, city managers, city planners, and other elected local officials. A framework for using community and government partnerships to reduce crime now exists based on the experiences of public officials. This framework includes recognizing crime and safety as a quality-of-life issue, working across jurisdictional boundaries, recognizing the crucial role of political leadership, and developing tools and measures of success that involve the community and victims of crime.

Strengthen Juvenile Justice System Data Collection - There is a need for further research and inquiry with children and the justice system. More needs to be reported on juveniles transferred into the adult system, the impact of sentencing on adolescent brain development, and the sentencing of youth in the adult court.

Reduce Teen Birth Rate – The national birth rate for teens has decreased over the years, and this is true in Alaska as well. We should continue implementing evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs, those proven through rigorous evaluation to reduce teen pregnancy and the behavioral risk factors underlying teen pregnancy, or other associated risk behaviors. Building the capacity of youth-serving programs and organizations to implement, evaluate, and sustain evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs will ensure the rates continue to drop. We should rigorously evaluate any new approaches to preventing teen pregnancy. Any program changes to fill gaps in current evidence-based programs should include interventions for Latino, Alaska Native, American Indian, and LGBTQ youth, for males, and for youth in the foster care and juvenile justice systems.
**Prevent Out-of-Home Placement** - Many families who are in the Foster Care and OCS system struggle with high housing cost and low wages, and some grapple with substance abuse and domestic violence. Due to the chronic nature of these conditions, sustaining viable in-home safety plans is challenging, and there are systemic pressures (such as the agency’s goal to prevent removals and the ICWA requirement to demonstrate active efforts before removal) on caseworkers to open in home cases reliant on challenging-to-maintain safety plans. Family support services often are not consistently available, and/or they are not intensive enough in many areas of Alaska to support in-home safety plans. The state should look for ways to partner with Tribes and nonprofit and support services that prove to make a difference in the lives of children. Most offices do not have the resources to dedicate staff to in-home casework; we should make this a priority. Diligent follow-through to support utilization of services is important, and any deficiency of the current system should be continually monitored and addressed whenever possible.
The following resources provide additional information regarding Alaska children’s families and community.

These resources and more are available at: http://www.voicesakchildren.org/publications/.
Each year AECF publishes rankings of national and state performance on a selection of indicators of economic well-being, education, health, and family and community domains. Alaska and United States rankings for the family and community domain are presented below. In 2018, Alaska ranked 46th overall and 20th in family and community. The complete profile of state rankings can be found at: https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2018kidscountdatabook-2018.pdf.

Table 1. 2018 KIDS COUNT Family and Community Profile, Alaska and United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family and Community Indicator</th>
<th>Alaska</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>Percent of Total Child Population</td>
<td>Rate per 1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Single Parent Families</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Families where the Household Head Lacks a High School Diploma</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Living in High-Poverty Areas</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Births per 1,000 Females</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
