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Chapter Section

Impact of Economic Trends and Disparities on South Carolina Children's Health and Well-being: An Analysis of the 2016 KIDS COUNT Profile

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Introduction

There are many approaches to conceptualizing and measuring the well-being of children. These indices vary considerably depending on the goal of the scale. However, all of these indices share similar characteristics in that they are multi-dimensional and take into account the complexity of children's lives. One of the best known of these measures is the Annie E. Casey Foundation's national KIDS COUNT Data Book (<http://www.aecf.org/resources/the-2016-kids-count-data-book/>). Each year since 1990 the Casey Foundation has released the KIDS COUNT Data Book. This data provides key information about dimensions of child well-being in the following areas: health, education, economic well-being and family and community. During the past 10 years the KIDS COUNT project has provided a website that has data of more than 100 state level measures of child well-being, and also provides county level data for each state.

Child well-being is intertwined with their parents' or caregivers' well-being. Low socioeconomic status among parents contributes to poor childhood health outcomes in the next generation. Subsequently, poor childhood health contributes to lower socioeconomic status in adulthood (Cowell, Luo, & Masuda, 2009). According to Perreira and Ornelas (2011) this cycle can be particularly malicious for vulnerable and low-income minority populations as health status is a vital aspect of human capital. States play a key role in assisting parents and caregivers in providing adequate or acceptable living conditions to their children. This assistance is typically transferred into the community through publicly-funded safety net programs (Wheaton, et al., 2011).

The Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Index's four domains (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016) are: (1) Economic well-being; (2) Education; (3) Health; and (4) Family and Community. The KIDS COUNT index arranges 16 indicators, four per each domain. The index measures the status of child well-being at the state and national levels. KIDS COUNT's domains premise is that to create effective programs practitioners must work collaboratively across sectors to address the unique needs of communities. The purpose of this article is to examine South Carolina (SC)'s data on dimensions of child well-being in health, education, economic well-being and family and community areas using the KIDS COUNT framework (2016).

Overview of South Carolina 2016 KIDS COUNT data

In 2014, 23% of South Carolina's population were children under 18 years of age (South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control, 2016). The 2016 KIDS COUNT Data Book showed that SC ranked 41st in the nation in child well-being. SC improved from 45th in 2014 and 2013. The largest gain was made in access to health care. Only six percent (national average) of SC children lacked health insurance in 2014. This is down from 13 percent in 2008. A year earlier, the state legislature passed a law increasing children's eligibility for Medicaid. This law allowed parent's income to reach 200 percent of the federal poverty level. However, the state did little to publicize the benefit until 2011, when the SC Medicaid agency reformed the application process to make it easier for parents to sign their children up and keep them enrolled (Aiken Standard, 2015). A single parent

can earn up to \$23,500 annually, and a family of four can earn up to \$48,500 and still obtain Medicaid coverage for their children (South Carolina eHealth Medicaid Statistics, 2015).

The percentage of low-birth weight infants dropped in SC from 9.7% to 9.4%, and there was also a drop (6% to 5%) in adolescents who abuse drugs and alcohol, from 2013 to 2014. There was also a drop in child and adolescent deaths from 35 per 100,000 in 2008 to 31 per 100,000 in 2015. The teen birth rate fell from 51 per 1,000 in 2008 to 28 per 1,000 in 2014. However, SC continued to lag behind the country in other indicators. Since 2008 more children are living in poverty (27%), and living in single-parent families (43%) (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). Economic pressures such as low wage jobs and a lack of secure employment are problems.

In education, where the state ranks 43rd, it is clear that SC is lagging behind much of the nation. Seventy-two percent of 4th graders are not proficient in reading, 69% of 8th graders are not proficient in math, 59% of children are not attending preschool, and 28% of high school students are not graduating on time. The statistics are even worse for children of color. Only 13% of African American 4th and 8th graders are proficient in reading and math, and one-third of black students are not graduating from high school in four years. A more in-depth analysis of SC KIDS COUNT indicators (2016) by specific domains (Economic Well-being, Education, Health, and Family and Community) is available online at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/search/#q?south%20carolina>.

Economic Well-Being Indicators and Child Well-Being

According to the KIDS COUNT report (2016), despite some positive developments for families and children, children's economic well-being worsened across the nation as it increased from 18% of nation's children living in poverty in 2008, to 22% in 2014. This last figure represents more than 16 million children living in poverty in the U.S. SC ranked 37 in terms of child economic well-being in the nation. Although showing a slight improvement compared to the 42 ranking in 2013, this figure is expressed within communities as social conditions of poverty (Lopez, 2015). Social conditions of poverty, inadequate housing, poor access to health care, and a high rate of single-parent households are experiences shared today by most minority U.S. families. The KIDS COUNT Index (2016) identifies four indicators into the economic well-being domain. These indicators will be explained including children in poverty; children whose parents lack secure employment; children living in households with a high housing cost burden; and, teens not in school and not working.

Children in poverty

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) range from physical, emotional or sexual abuse to parental divorce. Economic hardship was found to be the most common ACE reported in the U.S. (Sacks, Murphy & Moore, 2014). Poverty is related to every KIDS COUNT indicator. A report by the Children's Trust of South Carolina for KIDS COUNT (2014) showed the state's children, especially those of color, are falling behind in important milestones. Therefore, poverty does not express itself equally across race-ethnicities in SC. Between 2010 and 2012, while 64% of White non-Hispanic children lived in families with an income at or above 200% of poverty in South Carolina, only 27% of African-American and Latino children did so. Similarly, 77% of White non-Hispanic children lived in low-poverty areas (poverty <20%), only 47% of African American children and 56% of Latino children lived in low-poverty areas in this state (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2014).

Children in poverty is the percentage of children under age 18 who live in families with incomes below 100% of the U.S. poverty threshold, as issued each year by the U.S. Census Bureau. In calendar year 2014, a family of two adults and two children fell in the poverty category if their annual income fell below \$24,008. Values for 16 KIDS COUNT indicators by counties in South Carolina can be found at <https://www.scchildren.org/advocacy-and-media/kids-count-south-carolina-data-by-county/> (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015). In South Carolina, the county of York ranked 1st for having the best percentage for all indicators considered in the KIDS COUNT index. Allendale was the county with the reported highest proportion (56.1%) of children 0 to 17 years of age living in households with income below poverty level. This county is closely followed by Marion (53.5%) and Williamsburg (49.3%).

Children whose parents lack secure employment

Secure parental employment is the share of all children under the age of 18 living in families where no parent has regular, full-time, year-round employment. Secure parental employment increases family income and reduces poverty. Among poor families, children with working parents are more engaged academically, and less likely to repeat a grade or be suspended or expelled from school than children with non-working parents (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2015). The percentage of children whose parents lack secure employment across the nation rose from 27% in 2008, to 30% in 2014. Representing more than 22 million children living with parents with unsecured employment in the U.S. In SC 33% of children were living in this condition in 2014 (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016).

A similar indicator by counties is the percentage of South Carolina's children living in families where no parent is in labor force (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015). Dillon (24.8%), Bamberg (22.4%), and, Chester (19.2%) accounted for the greater percentages in the 2010-2012 period.

Children living in households with a high housing cost burden

Children living in households with a high housing cost burden is the percentage of children under age 18 who live in households where more than 30% of monthly household pretax income is spent on housing-related expenses, including rent, mortgage payments, taxes, and insurance. This indicator decreased nationwide from 39% in 2008, to 35% in 2014. Although this percentage reduction reflects an improvement, still almost 26 million children were living in households where a significant percentage of the income went towards housing expenses. In SC, 33% of children were living in this situation in 2014 (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). A similar indicator disaggregated by county is the owner-occupied housing where the head-of-household spends at least 30% of income on housing (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015). Beaufort (34.6%), Jasper (33.7%), and, Georgetown (33%) reported the higher percentages of children living in household where owners spent at least 30% of their income on housing.

Teens not in school and not working

Teens not in school and not working is the percentage of teens ages 16 to 19 who are not enrolled in school (full or part time), and not employed (full or part time) (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). Seven percent of teens nationwide were not in school and not working in 2014 (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). This figure represents a small reduction from 8% in 2008.

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Similarly, in SC 8% of teens were not in school and not working in 2014. This indicator disaggregated by race/ethnicity in SC showed that while 85% of White non-Hispanic youths ages 19 – 26 were in school or working in the period 2010-2012, only 70% of African Americans, and 78% of Latinos were in school or working during this period (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2014). In South Carolina, Allendale, McCormick and Kershaw were the counties with the larger percentage of teens age 16-19 not enrolled in school and not working (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015).

Education Indicators and Child Well-being

South Carolina's average spending per student in public schools was \$9,907 in the 2014-2015 school year. The amount of spending per student declined from the 2009-10 school year to 2011-12, but it increased five percent from the school year 2012-13 to 2014-15 (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). SC ranks 33rd, with one being the best rank, in public education spending in the U.S. South Carolina has been lower than the national average in student spending since 2008 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). In SC, nearly two-thirds of all fourth graders are reading below grade level, ranking SC 39th nationally in reading proficiency. Among minority fourth graders only 15% of black children and 22% of Hispanic children are reading proficiently compared with 45% of white children (The Post and Courier, 2016).

One reason for some cautious optimism is the national gap in school readiness between children from low-income and high-income families are slightly smaller today than they were two decades ago (Duncan, Magnuson & Murnane, 2016). SC ranks 43rd in the Education Domain. The KIDS COUNT Index identifies four indicators in the Education domain. These indicators will be explained including children not attending pre-school; fourth graders not proficient in reading; eighth graders not proficient in math; and, high school students not graduating on time.

Children not attending preschool

Young children not in school is the percentage of children ages 3 and 4 who were not enrolled in school (e.g., nursery school, preschool, or kindergarten). In the period 2012-14, 53% of U.S. children were not attending school. In SC, 56% of young children were not enrolled in school for the same period (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). From 2010 to 2012, 61% of White non-Hispanics and African Americans children three to five were enrolled in nursery school, preschool or kindergarten in SC. However, this gap increased for Latino children of this age group as only 44% of them were enrolled (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2014).

Fourth graders not proficient in reading

Fourth-graders not proficient in reading is the percentage of fourth-grade public school students who did not reach the proficient level in reading as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The percentage of fourth graders not proficient in reading decreased nationwide from 68% in 2007, to 65% in 2015. In SC, this percentage was higher (67%) than the national average (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). In this state, African Americans (13%) and Latinos (21%) reported lower percentages of fourth graders scoring at or above proficient in

reading as compared to White non-Hispanics (39%) (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2014). Another indicator that reflects SC's children's reading skills is the percentage of third graders testing below state standards in reading. The counties with the higher percentages for this indicator were: Allendale (58.9%); Jasper (49.0%); and, Lee (48.3%) (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015).

Eighth graders not proficient in math

Not proficient in math is the percentage of eighth-grade public school students who did not reach the proficient level in math as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Students must rely on math to perform everyday activities, advance their education, and navigate today's technological world. Strong math skills predict higher college attendance and success rates and increase students' employability (Child Trends, 2013). Although it continues to be a significant figure, the U.S. percentage of eighth graders not proficient in math slightly decreased from 69% in 2007, to 68% in 2015. In SC 74% of eighth graders were classified as not proficient in math for this year (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). Disparities in math achievement related to race and family income persist in the U.S. (Child Trends, 2013). Only about 13% of South Carolina African American eighth graders, and 23% of Latinos scored at or above proficiency in math. Compared with 43% non-Hispanic Whites on eighth grade in this state (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2014).

High school students not graduating on time

High school students not graduating on time is the estimated percentage of an entering freshman class not graduating in four years. High school graduation is the minimum requirement for college and most employment. Adults without high school diplomas are more likely to be unemployed and have lower median incomes than adults with high school degrees. In SC, the percentage of high school students not graduating on time in 2012-13 was 26%, 10% higher than the national average of 18% (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). The lower percentage of high school students graduating on time in SC was 60% for African Americans, and the highest registered was for White non-Hispanics with 73% (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2014). SC's dropouts as a percentage of the total enrollment for grades 9-12 differed by counties in 2012-2013. Jasper (6.8%), Cherokee (4.9%), and, Marlboro (4.2) accounted for the higher percentages of dropouts (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015).

Health Indicators and Child Well-Being

South Carolina ranks 37th in the Health domain (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). This is the domain where SC has the best ranking as compared to the other three domains, with a slight drop as compared with a 36 ranking in 2015. The KIDS COUNT Index identifies four indicators in the Health domain including low-birth weight babies; children without health insurance; child and teen deaths per 100,000; and, teens who abuse alcohol and drugs.

Low-birth weight babies

Low birth weight babies is the percentage of live births weighing less than 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds). In 2014, in SC 9.4% of babies were low-birth weight infants; higher than the national percentage (8%) (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). By race-ethnic groups, the greater percentage of babies born with low birth-weight in SC were African Americans (15%). Latinos registered the lowest percentage of low-birth weight babies with 6%, even lower than White non-Hispanics (8%) (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2014). Hampton (16%), Chester (15.8%), and, Fairfield (13.4%) counties reported the higher percentages of children born with low birth weight in SC in 2013 (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015).

Children without health insurance

Children without health insurance is the percentage of children under age 18 not covered by any health

insurance. This percentage decreased in the U.S. from 10% in 2008, to 6% in 2014 (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). Children who have health insurance coverage are healthier and have fewer preventable hospitalizations. They are more likely to receive preventive medical and dental care, be screened for the achievement of developmental milestones, obtain needed timely treatment, have access to prescription medications, and miss fewer days of school (Majerk, Newkirk, & Garfield, 2015).

Child and teen deaths per 100,000

Child and teen deaths are the number of deaths, from all causes, to children between ages 1 and 19 per 100,000 children in this age range. SC registered a rate of 31 child and teen deaths per 100,000 in 2014. Higher than the national rate of 24 per 100,000 (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). The three counties that registered the higher infant death rate per 1,000 in SC were: McCormick (25 infant deaths per 1,000 live births); Barnwell (15.9 infant deaths per 1,000 live births); and, Chesterfield (15.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births) (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015).

Teens who abuse alcohol or drugs

Teens who abuse alcohol or drugs is the percentage of teens ages 12 to 17 reporting dependence on or abuse of either illicit drugs or alcohol in the past year. Illicit drugs include marijuana, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants or prescription drugs used non-medically. The percentage of teens who abuse alcohol or drugs in the U.S. dropped from 8% in 2007-08 to 5% in 2013-14. In SC, 5% reported abusing drugs or alcohol in 2013-14 (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016).

Family and Community Indicators and Child Well-Being

South Carolina ranking in the Family and Community domain worsen from 39 in 2013 to 42 in 2015 (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). KIDS COUNT Index identifies four indicators into the Family and Community domain. These indicators will be explained including children in single-parent families; children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma; children living in high-poverty areas; and, teen births per 1,000.

Children in single-parent families

Children in single-parent families is the percentage of children under age 18 who live with their own unmarried parent, either in a family or subfamily. In this definition, single-parent families include cohabitating couples. In SC, 39% of children were living in a single-parent household in the 2010-12 period. This figure increased in 2014 to 43% of children living in this situation (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). This figure varied by race-ethnicity in SC. African Americans had the greater percentage (65%) of children living in this situation. Whereas White non-Hispanics had only 25% of children living in a single-parent household; thus significantly lower than the national average (35%). Hispanics were close to the national figure with 33% (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2014). The counties with the higher percentages of children living with single parent families for the period 2009-13, were: Marlboro (65.9%); Marion (63.9%); and, Allendale (62.3%) (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015).

Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma

The percentage of children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma is the percentage of children under age 18 living in households where the household head does not have a high school diploma or equivalent. This indicator decreased in the U.S. from 16% in 2008 to 14% in 2014 (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). In SC for the period 2009-2014, the counties with the higher percentage of children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma were: Calhoun (25.2%); Lee (25.2%); and, Marlboro (24.2%) (7.7%) (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015).



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Children living in high-poverty areas

Children living in high-poverty areas is the percentage of children under 18 years who live in census tracts where the poverty rates of the total population are 30% or more. In the U.S. this indicator increased from 11% in 2006-10 to 14% in 2010-14. In SC, 15% children were living in high-poverty areas in 2010-14 (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). SC's African American communities had the highest percentage of children living in high-poverty areas (53%), followed by Latinos (44%). White non-Hispanic children registered the lower percentage (23%) (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2014). The counties with the higher percentage of children living high-poverty areas were: Allendale (100%); Williamsburg (58%); and, Marion (51%) (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015).

Teen births per 1,000

Teen births is the number of births to teens between ages 15 to 19 per 1,000 females in this age group. In 2014, the rate of teen births was 28 births per 1,000. Thus, greater than the national average of 24 per 1,000 (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). In SC, 88% and 87% of African Americans and Latinos respectively reported plans to delay childbearing until adulthood, as compared to 94% of White non-Hispanics in 2010 (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2014). The indicator of birth to teens 15 to 19 years per 1,000 by counties in SC showed that Allendale (78.3/1,000), Jasper (63.4/1,000), and, Dillon (62.7/1,000) were the counties with higher rates of birth to teens 15 to 16 years (KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Children's Trust of South Carolina, 2015).

Conclusions

Based on these results, we are recommending a shift in thinking about child well-being policy to a "whole child perspective." We are also recommending a shift in thinking from disease and treatment-centered health care to one of promoting health and well-being. For too long, health and well-being have been put in a silo apart from school and education. This analysis demonstrated that health and education are intertwined when examining child well-being outcomes from a whole child perspective. SCNA members should actively work within their communities and with branches of State government to adopt programs and legislation that will enhance the well-being of all South Carolina children.

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