

California failing to ensure health and well being of children

By Theresa Harrington, Contra Costa Times

California has the largest child population, but the state ranks near the bottom – 41st in the nation – when it comes to children’s well-being, according to a report released Wednesday.

In fact, California is failing in three of four measures that gauge health and well-being, says a report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 2012 Kids Count Data Book, released in partnership with Children Now, an Oakland-based nonprofit advocacy group. Each state was graded according to 16 indicators of economic well-being, education, health and family and community

California ranked 23rd in health but failed to rise above the bottom 10 in the other categories. It came in last in the percentage of household income available for living necessities other than housing, and last for heads of households with high school diplomas.

“These numbers are particularly disturbing, given over one in 10 of the nation’s children lives in California,” said Ted Lempert, president of Children Now. “The last couple of years have seen California children bearing the brunt of the state’s budget cuts. We must hold the state’s policymakers more accountable for failing to invest in children, because their poor decisions will certainly have a lasting effect on the economic and civic fabric of our state.”

The Golden State earned its lowest ranking – 45th – in economic well being.

According to the research, more than half of California's children live in households that spend at least 30 percent of their income on housing, leaving many families struggling to pay for food, clothing and health care. Due in part to the economic recession, more than a third of parents lack secure employment, and 22 percent of children live in poverty.

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