



Children in the States

ALASKA

September 2015

Child Population

186,543 children lived in Alaska in 2014; 50 percent were children of color.

- 50 percent were White
- 9 percent were Hispanic
- 3 percent were Black
- 6 percent were Asian
- 12 percent were two or more races
- 18 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native
- 2 percent were Pacific Islander

Child Poverty

Nearly 1 in 6 (15.8 percent) of Alaska's children were poor in 2014, a total of 28,851 children.¹

- Alaska ranked 13th in child poverty among states.²
- Nearly 1 in 17 children lived in extreme poverty at less than half the poverty level.
- The youngest children were the poorest age group. More than 1 in 6 children under age 6 were poor; more than one third of the poor children were extremely poor.

Children of color in Alaska are disproportionately poor.

- More than 1 in 2 Black children, more than 1 in 7 Hispanic children and more than 3 in 10 American Indian/Native Alaskan children were poor in 2014, compared to nearly 1 in 13 White children.

Child Hunger and Homelessness

Child poverty in Alaska leads to unacceptable child homelessness and hunger.

- More than 4,000 Alaska public school students were homeless in the 2012-2013 school year.
- In 2014, nearly 3 full-time minimum-wage jobs were necessary to be able to afford a fair market rent two-bedroom apartment in Alaska and still have enough left over for food, utilities and other necessities.
- 20 percent of children lived in households that lacked access to adequate food in 2013. Nearly 30 percent of children ages 10-17 were overweight or obese in 2011-2012. Alaska ranked 14th of 50 states in child food security and 24th in percent of children overweight and obese.
- More than 20 percent of Alaska children relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to meet their nutritional needs on an average month in FY2013.
- More than 86 percent of Alaska children receiving a free and reduced-price lunch during the school year did not participate in Summer Nutrition Programs in 2014 – ranking Alaska 29th of 50 states in ensuring that children have adequate summer nutrition.

Child Health

Although the majority of Alaska's children have access to health coverage, that does not guarantee enrollment in coverage or access to care, which can jeopardize their education and their future.

- In FY2013, 82.0 percent of eligible children participated in Alaska Medical Assistance Program or Denali KidCare, Alaska's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). In FY2013, a total of 86,926 Alaska children ages 0-18 were enrolled in Alaska Medical Assistance Program, and an additional 16,566 in Denali KidCare.

¹ A family of four was poor if it was living on less than \$23,834 a year, \$1,986 a month, \$458 a week and \$65 a day, and extremely poor if living on less than \$11,917 a year, \$993 a month, \$229 a week and \$33 a day.

² The state ranked 1st is the best for children for that outcome and the state ranked 50th is the worst for children.

- Nearly 22,000 Alaska children ages 0-17 (11.6 percent) were uninsured in 2013. The state had the 4th highest rate of uninsured children among states.
- In 2012, 11,000 children ages 0-18 were eligible for Alaska Medical Assistance Program or Denali KidCare but not enrolled.

Early Childhood and Education

Lack of early childhood investments deprives children of critical supports in the early years and reduces school readiness.

- In 2013, the average annual cost of center-based child care for an infant was \$10,280 – 74.7 percent more than the average annual in-state tuition and fees at a public four-year college in Alaska.
- Alaska did not have a waiting list for child care assistance in early 2014.
- On average, 37 percent of Alaska’s 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in public or private preschool from 2011-2013. Only 32 percent of children from families with incomes under 200 percent of poverty were enrolled.
- Alaska’s state-funded preschool program met 10 of the 10 quality benchmarks set by the National Institute for Early Education Research in 2012-2013.

Alaska’s schools fail to educate all children, closing off a crucial pathway out of poverty.

- In 2013, 73 percent of Alaska’s fourth grade public school students were unable to read at grade level and 63 percent were unable to compute at grade level.
 - 82 percent of Black fourth graders could not read at grade level and 78 percent could not compute.
 - 74 percent of Hispanic fourth graders could not read at grade level and 67 percent could not compute.
- 79 percent of Alaska public high school students graduated on time in 2012, placing Alaska 30th among states. 75 percent of Black students and 84 percent of Hispanic students graduated on time compared to 83 percent of White students.
- Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out of school. During the 2011-2012 school year, 7 percent of Alaska public secondary school students received at least one out-of-school suspension, placing Alaska 8th among 48 ranked states. For Black and Hispanic students, the percentages were 14 percent and 8 percent, respectively.

Children Facing Special Risks

Many vulnerable children need treatment, services and permanent families.

- In Alaska, 2,448 children were abused or neglected in 2013 – 13 out of 1,000 children.
- On the last day of FY2013, there were 2,030 Alaska children in foster care.

Too many Alaska children are involved in the juvenile justice system.

- 222 children and youth were in residential placement in 2011. 12 percent of the children in residential placement were Black, 1 percent were Hispanic, and 34 percent were White.
- No Alaska children were in adult jails in 2013.
- Alaska spent 2.2 times as much per prisoner as per public school student in FY2012.

Alaska ranked 41st out of 41 states in child and teen gun deaths.

- A total of 18 children and teens were killed by guns in Alaska in 2013 – a rate of 8.7* out of 100,000 children and teens.

For sources please visit www.childrensdefense.org/cits

*Rate is unreliable because it is based on fewer than 20 deaths.