



# Children in the States

## NEBRASKA

September 2015

### Child Population

**466,609 children lived in Nebraska in 2014; 29 percent were children of color.**

- 71 percent were White
- 17 percent were Hispanic
- 6 percent were Black
- 2 percent were Asian
- 4 percent were two or more races
- 1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native
- <1 percent were Pacific Islander

### Child Poverty

**Nearly 1 in 6 (16.2 percent) of Nebraska's children were poor in 2014, a total of 74,414 children.<sup>1</sup>**

- Nebraska ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in child poverty among states.<sup>2</sup>
- 1 in 15 children lived in extreme poverty at less than half the poverty level.
- The youngest children were the poorest age group. Nearly 1 in 5 children under age 6 were poor; more than 2 in 5 of the poor children were extremely poor.

**Children of color in Nebraska are disproportionately poor.**

- Nearly 1 in 2 Black children, nearly 3 in 10 Hispanic children, and nearly 3 in 5 American Indian/Alaska Native children were poor in 2014, compared to more than 1 in 10 White children.

### Child Hunger and Homelessness

**Child poverty in Nebraska leads to unacceptable child homelessness and hunger.**

- More than 3,000 Nebraska public school students were homeless in the 2012-2013 school year.
- In 2014, nearly 2 full-time minimum-wage jobs were necessary to be able to afford a fair market rent two-bedroom apartment in Nebraska and still have enough left over for food, utilities and other necessities.
- More than 21 percent of children lived in households that lacked access to adequate food in 2013. Nearly 29 percent of children ages 10-17 were overweight or obese in 2011-2012. Nebraska ranked 21<sup>st</sup> of 50 states in child food security and 19<sup>th</sup> in percent of children overweight and obese.
- More than 18 percent of Nebraska children relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to meet their nutritional needs on an average month in FY2013.
- Nearly 91 percent of Nebraska children receiving a free and reduced-price lunch during the school year did not participate in Summer Nutrition Programs in 2014 – ranking Nebraska 42<sup>nd</sup> of 50 states in ensuring that children have adequate summer nutrition.

### Child Health

**Although the majority of Nebraska's children have access to health coverage, that does not guarantee enrollment in coverage, jeopardizing their education and their future.**

- In 2013, 88.1 percent of eligible children participated in Nebraska Medicaid or Kids Connection, Nebraska's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). In FY2013, a total of 165,038 Nebraska children ages 0-18 were enrolled in Nebraska Medicaid, and 55,783 in Kids Connection.
- More than 25,000 Nebraska children ages 0-17 (5.5 percent) were uninsured in 2013. The state had the 19<sup>th</sup> lowest rate of uninsured children among states.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

- In 2012, 17,000 uninsured children ages 0-18 were eligible for Nebraska Medicaid or Kids Connection 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 \$9,100 – 24.4 percent more than the average annual in-state tuition and fees at a public four-year college.
- Nebraska did not have a waiting list for child care assistance in early 2014.
- On average, 45 percent of Nebraska’s 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in public or private preschool from 2011-2013. Only 37 percent of children from families with incomes under 200 percent of poverty were enrolled.
- Nebraska’s state-funded preschool program only met 6 of the 10 quality benchmarks set by the National Institute for Early Education Research in 2013-2014.

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

- In 2013, 63 percent of Nebraska’s fourth grade public school students were unable to read at grade level and 55 percent were unable to compute at grade level.
  - 84 percent of Black fourth graders could not read at grade level and 88 percent could not compute.
  - 78 percent of Hispanic fourth graders could not read at grade level and 80 percent could not compute.
- 93 Nebraska public high school students graduated on time in 2012, placing Nebraska 1<sup>st</sup> among states. 65 percent of Black students and 93 percent of Hispanic students graduated on time compared to 93 percent of White students.
- Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out of school. During the 2011-2012 school year, 8 percent of Nebraska public secondary school students received at least one out-of-school suspension, placing Nebraska 14<sup>th</sup> among 48 ranked states. For Black and Hispanic students, the percentages were 31 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

## **Children Facing Special Risks**

### **Many vulnerable children need treatment, services and permanent families.**

- In Nebraska, 3,993 children were abused or neglected in 2013 – 8.6 out of 1,000 children.
- On the last day of FY2013, there were 4,614 Nebraska children in foster care.

### **Too many Nebraska children are involved in the juvenile justice system.**

- 12,198 children were arrested in Nebraska in 2012 – a rate of 6,103 out of 100,000 children ages 10-17.
- 669 children and youth were in residential placement in 2011. 30 percent of the children in residential placement were Black, 14 percent were Hispanic, and 44 percent were White.
- 15 Nebraska children were in adult jails in 2013.
- Nebraska spent 1.9 times as much per prisoner as per public school student in FY2012.

### **Nebraska ranked 10<sup>th</sup> out of 41 ranked states in preventing child and teen gun deaths.**

- A total of 13 children and teens were killed by guns in Nebraska in 2013 – a rate of 2.5 out of 100,000 children and teens.

For sources please visit [www.childrensdefense.org/cits](http://www.childrensdefense.org/cits)