



# 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.<sup>1</sup>**

- Alaska ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in child poverty among states.<sup>2</sup>
- 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 14<sup>th</sup> of 50 states in child food security and 24<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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.

<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.

- Nearly 22,000 Alaska children ages 0-17 (11.6 percent) were uninsured in 2013. The state had the 4<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 41<sup>st</sup> 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](http://www.childrensdefense.org/cits)

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