



# Children in the States

## MONTANA

September 2015

### Child Population

**225,024 children lived in Montana in 2014; 21 percent were children of color.**

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

### Child Poverty

**Nearly 1 in 5 (18.5 percent) of Montana's children were poor in 2014, a total of 40,619 children.<sup>1</sup>**

- Montana ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> in child poverty among states.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 1 in 12 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; nearly half of the poor children were extremely poor.

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

- Nearly 1 in 3 Hispanic children and more than 2 in 5 American Indian/Alaska Native children were poor in 2014, compared to more than 1 in 7 White children.

### Child Hunger and Homelessness

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

- Nearly 2,600 Montana 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 Montana and still have enough left over for food, utilities and other necessities.
- More than 22 percent of children lived in households that lacked access to adequate food in 2013. More than 29 percent of children ages 10-17 were overweight or obese in 2011-2012. Montana ranked 28<sup>th</sup> of 50 states in child food security and 20<sup>th</sup> in percent of children overweight and obese.
- More than 23 percent of Montana children relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to meet their nutritional needs on an average month in FY2013.
- More than 81 percent of Montana children receiving a free and reduced-price lunch during the school year did not participate in Summer Nutrition Programs in 2014 – ranking Montana 16<sup>th</sup> of 50 states in ensuring that children have adequate summer nutrition.

### Child Health

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

- In 2013, 85.8 percent of eligible children participated in Montana Medicaid or Healthy Montana Kids, Montana's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). In FY2013, a total of 83,447 Montana children ages 0-18 were enrolled in Montana Medicaid, and 44,661 in Healthy Montana Kids.
- More than 22,000 Montana children ages 0-17 (10.1 percent) were uninsured in 2013. The state had the 6<sup>th</sup> highest 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, 20,000 uninsured children ages 0-18 were eligible for Montana Medicaid or Healthy Montana Kids 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 \$8,858 – 42.6 percent more than the average annual in-state tuition and fees at a public four-year college in Montana.
- Montana did not have a waiting list for child care assistance in early 2014.
- On average, 38 percent of Montana's 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in public or private preschool from 2011-2013. Only 35 percent of children from families with incomes under 200 percent of poverty were enrolled.

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

- In 2013, 65 percent of Montana's fourth grade public school students were unable to read at grade level and 55 percent were unable to compute at grade level.
  - 77 percent of Hispanic fourth graders could not read at grade level and 66 percent could not compute.
- 86 percent of Montana public high school students graduated on time in 2012, placing Montana 12<sup>th</sup> among states. 65 percent of Black students and 96 percent of Hispanic students graduated on time compared to 87 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 Montana public secondary school students received at least one out-of-school suspension, placing Montana 8<sup>th</sup> among 48 ranked states. For Black and Hispanic students, the percentages were 7 percent and 7 percent, respectively.

## **Children Facing Special Risks**

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

- In Montana, 1,414 children were abused or neglected in 2013 – 6.3 out of 1,000 children.
- On the last day of FY2013, there were 2,239 Montana children in foster care.

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

- 6,903 children were arrested in Montana in 2012 – a rate of 6,967 out of 100,000 children ages 10-17.
- 168 children and youth were in residential placement in 2011. 4 percent of the children in residential placement were Black, 7 percent were Hispanic, and 61 percent were White.
- 1 Montana child was in an adult jail in 2013.
- Montana spent 4.2 times as much per prisoner as per public school student in FY2012.

### **Montana ranked 39<sup>th</sup> out of 41 ranked states in preventing child and teen gun deaths.**

- A total of 14 children and teens were killed by guns in Montana in 2013 – a rate of 5.6 out of 100,000 children and teens.

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