HOW CANDIDATES AND VOTERS CAN PUT KIDS FIRST IN 2018 AND BEYOND
The future of Colorado begins today. We don’t have to wait for the November election, or for candidates to be sworn into office, to begin building a brighter future for Colorado kids. Every candidate and voter can be a voice for children early and often this election season.

We know from past elections that the earlier candidates, advocates and voters learn about issues facing kids, the more likely Colorado will see research-based policy change that benefits kids and makes an investment in our state. 2018 is a pivotal year for kids as we’ll welcome a new governor and dozens of new state and federal legislators. This cohort of new and returning policymakers will make decisions shaping lives for years to come.

The Colorado Children’s Campaign has prepared this concise guide of trends in child well-being and policy solutions for candidates and voters. In this overview you’ll find data on demographics and family economic security to provide an introduction to Colorado kids and families.

Inside this overview, you’ll find several pull-out issue guides to learn more about everything from child care to school finance. On the back of each issue guide is a set of questions for candidates to consider, or for voters to ask of candidates in person or online. These questions get to the heart of what policy makers will face when they begin making big decisions about kids in 2018 and beyond.

As always, there is much more information available in our annual KIDS COUNT in Colorado! report on child well-being. You can find that publication, and much more, on our website: www.coloradokids.org. Whether you are running for office or voting, we hope these resources help you speak up for kids now and in the future. It starts today.

Kelly Causey, Ph.D.
President and CEO
As Colorado’s child population grows, it is vital that we equip every child with the skills and resources he or she will need to thrive. Our child population has increased steadily for decades. Colorado’s child population grew faster than all but five other states between 1991 and 2016, and three times faster than the U.S. child population.

That growth hasn’t been even across the state, however. Some of our rural areas have seen slow growth, and even declines, in the number of kids in their communities.

**States With Largest Percentage Increase in Child Population, 1991 to 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percentage Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>108%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.

**Change in Child Population by County, 1991 to 2016**

[Diagram showing county-wise percentage change in child population]
Kids of color are leading the way to a new Colorado

Colorado kids are leading the way to a more diverse and prosperous Colorado. Children of color make up about 43 percent of all Colorado kids. Our child population is projected to be majority children of color in 2031. That’s when today’s kindergarteners graduate from high school.

We need to ensure all our children have the opportunities they need to thrive. Unfortunately, children of color and their families continue to face more barriers to prosperity than their white peers. This is due to past and current practices in our health, housing, education and financial systems that created barriers based on race and ethnicity.


- Non-Hispanic White, 57%
- Hispanic Latino, 31%
- Black, 4%
- Two or More Races, 4%
- Asian, 3%
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.1%
- American Indian/Alaska Native, 1%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.

Since 1991, Hispanic/Latino kids in Colorado saw the largest *numerical* increase in population. The number of Hispanic/Latino children grew by more than 230,000 kids between 1991 and 2016.

Asian and Pacific Islander children saw the largest *percentage* increase between 1991 and 2016, growing by 162 percent.
Economic security for today’s children will ensure economic prosperity for Colorado tomorrow

All Colorado families want to provide a better life for their children. This is hard to accomplish, however, depending on your race and ethnicity, and where you live in Colorado. Overall, our child poverty rate has been gradually falling since the Great Recession and sits at about 13 percent—compared to a national rate of 19 percent.

When we look deeper in the numbers, however, we see that child poverty rates are far higher for children in families of color. This is due to barriers to economic security such as redlining in the housing market, employment discrimination and inequitable criminal justice practices.

*Child Poverty Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2016*

- White: 8%
- Asian: 11%
- Multiracial: 13%
- Hispanic: 23%
- Black: 25%

Throughout our country’s history, policies and practices have helped move some families along the path to economic security while putting up roadblocks for others. Practices such as redlining in the housing market, employment discrimination and inequitable criminal justice policies have created circumstances in which children of color are more likely to experience poverty than their white peers. The 1993 KIDS COUNT report noted a racial and ethnic inequity in child poverty rates, and it persists 25 years later.

*Single-year poverty rates for American Indian children and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander children are unavailable due to a small sample size. Reliability of estimates can be increased by examining five-year aggregations of data. During the five-year period from 2012 to 2016, 31 percent of Colorado’s American Indian/Alaska Native children and 39 percent of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander children experienced poverty. Note that these five-year estimates should not be compared to the single-year estimates in the above graph.*
Child poverty rates also vary greatly by geography due to uneven access to employment, low wages in some sectors of our economy, and lack of access to child care and other support families need to work.

**Child Poverty Rates by County, 2016**

What does it mean to live in poverty?

Our federal definition of poverty-level income applies the same whether you live in Alamosa or Aspen. A family of four earning less than about $24,300 a year is considered living in poverty. We all know the cost of living varies drastically across Colorado and families struggle to pay for health care, child care, housing, food, transportation, and other necessities even while earning much more than the federal level.
THIS IS WHERE YOU COME IN.

Kids do better when the adults put them first at the Colorado State Capitol and in Washington, D.C. With this information, and much more available in KIDS COUNT in Colorado!, you can speak up for kids whether you hold office or want those who represent you to reflect your priorities. We urge you to ask hard questions of yourself and those who represent you.

What is our responsibility to Colorado children? If some of our kids aren’t doing well, what does that say about us as a state? Should we be proud of a Colorado in which only some children can truly aim high?

Your job will be to ensure Colorado has a prosperous future. If you place children, especially very young children, and their families at the heart of your policy and public investment strategy, then we can make that happen together. We must acknowledge, though, that children of different backgrounds face greater distances to opportunity and so we must do all we can to ensure our focus begins with these children and families.

If we want our own kids to be well, happy and smart, we need to make that true for all Colorado kids. The 2018 election is a huge opportunity to make a big step in the right direction. Working together, we can ensure all our elected officials start their first day knowing the issues and opportunities facing Colorado kids.

Conclusion

Child Poverty Rates by County, 2016
The Colorado Children’s Campaign is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization committed since 1985 to realizing every chance for every child in Colorado. We advocate for the development and implementation of data-driven public policies that improve child well-being in health, education and early childhood. We do this by providing Coloradans with trusted data and research on child well-being and organizing an extensive state-wide network of dedicated child advocates. For more information, please visit www.coloradokids.org.