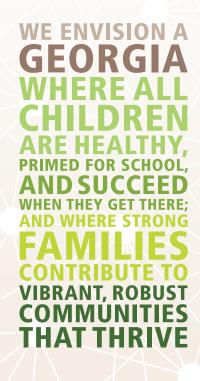




12180 KIDS COUNT ON US Make Data COUNT for KIDS

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Using Reliable Data to Make Informed Decisions

KIDS COUNT, a project of The Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a national and state-by-state effort to track the well-being of children in the United States. KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich and inform local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure a brighter future for all children and their families. By providing high-quality data and analyses through its KIDS COUNT Data Center, the Foundation raises the visibility of children's issues through a nonpartisan, evidence-based lens.

Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) is the state grantee designated to manage the Georgia KIDS COUNT project. Georgia KIDS COUNT compiles current, reliable data on child well-being in each of our state's 159 counties, and reports year-to-year data highlights, trends, and disparities on the well-being of children, families, and communities throughout Georgia.

The KIDS COUNT National Data Center uses the best available data to measure the educational, social, economic, and physical well-being of children, families, and communities. The Data Center tracks and reports data at the school district, city, county, congressional district, and national levels.

gafcp.org/kids-count provides:

- county, city, school system, and regional profiles;
- Birth to 21 snapshots;
- Comparable Counties map;
- interactive Indicator Explorer;
- online calculator;
- interactive map tool of county, census tracts, and Georgia legislative districts; and
- race, equity, and inclusion tool.

Publications, web-based tools, and mobile phone applications allow users to customize data for their particular needs.



Numbers Add Value to Our Daily Lives

How much will it cost to fill my gas tank?

How much can I pay toward my utility bill this month and still have enough to buy baby food?

Can the kicker complete a 45-yard field goal into this wind?

We use numbers, percentages, valuations, ratios, and other metrics to communicate facts, describe and depict the world around us, and help us interpret differences in our daily lives, both at work and at play.

Without numbers we have no way to quantify and evaluate, and no way to compare and measure. By tracking numbers over time, we can see whether things are getting better, worse, or staying the same.

This guide to using data is a resource to help you understand and use Georgia KIDS COUNT indicators of child, family, and community well-being. Staying informed about trends, relationships, differences, and patterns will help you better identify and talk about challenges—but more importantly—provide you with the data you need to design and support community strategies that will improve outcomes for Georgia's children, families, and communities.

Monitoring Change to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families

We track indicators of child and family well-being in Georgia across five result areas that serve as our framework for working toward measurably better outcomes for everyone. Keeping an eye on these indicators helps us to better understand the impact of policy decisions and economic and demographic changes on our most vulnerable Georgians and the communities where they live. Monitoring change in an indicator at the local level can help determine the effectiveness of strategies or programs aimed at improving child, family, and community well-being.

FIVE RESULT AREAS

- Healthy children
- Children primed for school
- Children succeeding in school
- stable, self-sufficient, and productive families
- Thriving communities

HOW WE SELECT INDICATORS

The Georgia General Assembly charged key state and community partners in 1995 to select critical measures designed to achieve positive results for children in Georgia. The original list of Georgia KIDS COUNT indicators has since gone through several stringent reviews and revisions. Each indicator committee, composed of a diverse group of stakeholders, guides the review and adoption process, and examines the viability of current and emerging indicators against five criteria for inclusion before finalizing a list of indicators.

FIVE CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION

- 1. Reliable state data source
- 2. Consistent data collection (at least annually)
- 3. Available at a county level
- 4. Construct validity (accurately measures what it is supposed to measure)
- 5. Face validity (makes common sense)

The indicators we track best represent key concerns within our five result areas. All indicator data are originally collected by state partners or the U.S. Census and are obtained from partners or downloaded by Georgia KIDS COUNT. State agency websites and the U.S. Census have more detailed data sets beyond the Georgia KIDS COUNT indicators.

FINDING AND ACCESSING DATA

Georgia KIDS COUNT works with state partners who analyze and manage data collected from across the state. After our partners release the data, we gather the information into one central location at **gafcp.org/data**. We update the site regularly throughout the year.

State Data Partners:

- » Georgia Bureau of Investigation
- » Georgia Department of Community Health
- » Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
- » Georgia Department of Education
- » Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services
- » Georgia Department of Labor
- » Georgia Department of Public Health, Vital Records, Office of Health Information and Policy
- » Georgia Secretary of State
- » Governor's Office of Student Achievement
- » Technical College System of Georgia

We also download data from the U.S. Census Bureau.



Why Healthy Children Matter

Healthy births begin with healthy mothers. Women who receive appropriate and adequate care, nutrition, and support services before and during pregnancy are more likely to deliver a healthy, normal-weight infant.

Infants born to teen mothers are at increased risk of lower birthweight, infant mortality, health and behavioral problems, child abuse and neglect, and poorer education and economic outcomes.

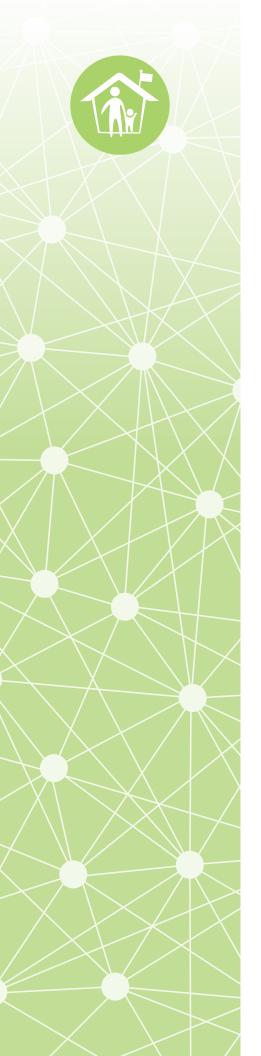
As children grow and mature, access to medical care, dental care, and other support services promote healthy development.

Risky behaviors often lead to serious diseases, accidents, and untimely deaths. Unprotected sexual intercourse and multiple sex partners place young people at risk for HIV infection, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and pregnancy. And even with strict driving regulations and laws, motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of teen deaths.

Healthy Children Indicators

- Low-birthweight babies*
- Infant Mortality (per 1,000)
- Children enrolled in Medicaid or PeachCare
- Children without health insurance*
- Children, birth through 4, enrolled in the WIC program
- Child deaths, ages 1 14 (per 100,000)*
- Teen pregnancies, ages 15 17 (per 1,000)
- Teen births, ages 15 19 (per 1,000)*
- Teen mothers giving birth to another child before age 20, ages 15 19
- 9th grade students reporting alcohol use in the past 30 days
- 9th grade students reporting perception of negative risk with alcohol consumption
- STD incidence for youth, ages 15 19 (per 1,000)
- Teen deaths, ages 15 19 (per 100,000)*
 By homicide, suicide, and accident, ages 15 19 (per 100,000)*

^{*}National KIDS COUNT indicators



Why Children Primed for School Matter

Parents and caregivers play a vital role in preparing children for school. From birth through age 5, young children begin to develop the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive skills they will need for the rest of their lives.

Early experiences and interactions with caregivers determine whether a young child's developing brain architecture provides a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health.

Young children who receive proper care and nutrition, and engage in enriching experiences every day, are better prepared to develop language and problem-solving skills, form positive relationships, and cultivate other fundamental abilities.

Children Primed for School Indicators

- Children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program
- Children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program from low-income families
- Children, ages 3 4, not attending preschool*
- Centers and family care homes rated in Quality Rated
- Babies born to mothers with less than 12 years of education

^{*}National KIDS COUNT indicators



Why Children Succeeding in School Matter

Students who do well in school early in life build a stronger educational foundation for future success.

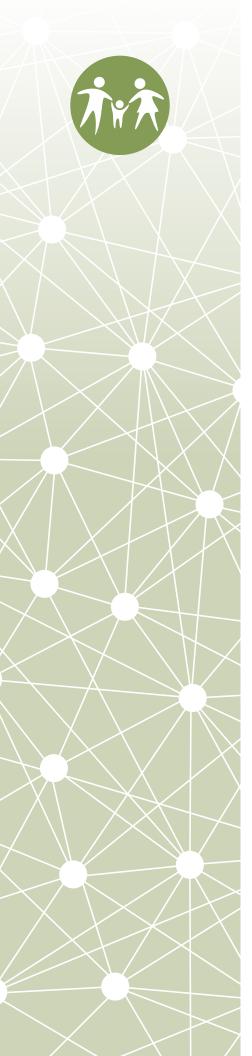
A student must be present in school to learn. Health, financial, and transportation issues can pose barriers to attendance. Chronic absenteeism is often linked to low academic performance, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and juvenile delinguency.

Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is linked to later success in school and is the leading predictor of high school graduation.

A high school graduate has higher earning potential than a worker without a diploma. An educated workforce has a positive impact on productivity and on the local and state economy over time. Education indicators have far-reaching implications for a student's success in the workforce and access to higher education.

Children Succeeding in School Indicators

- Children absent more than 15 days from school
- 3rd grade students achieving Developing Learner or above on Milestones ELA assessment
- 3rd grade students achieving Proficient Learner or above on Milestones ELA assessment
- 5th grade students achieving Developing Learner or above on Milestones assessment in ELA and Math
- 5th grade students achieving Proficient Learner or above on Milestones assessment in in ELA and Math
- 8th grade students achieving Developing Learner or above on Milestones assessment in in ELA and Math
- 8th grade students achieving Proficient Learner or above on Milestones assessment in in ELA and Math
- Students who graduate from high school on time*
- Teens who are high school dropouts, ages 16 19
- Teens not in school and not working, ages 16 19*



Why Stable, Self-Sufficient, and Productive Families Matter

A stable family structure is critical to the future success of children and the strength of any community.

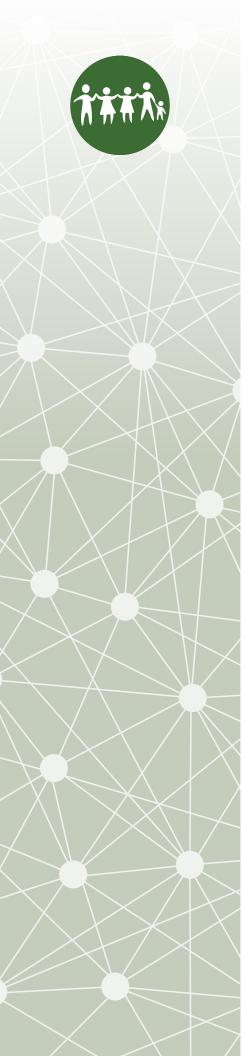
Low-income and single-parent families face extraordinary challenges in providing the basic necessities of life for their children. Children whose families struggle financially are at higher risk of living in poverty and experiencing child abuse and neglect, and often lack often lack access to health care and benefits. Undereducation, under-employment, and unemployment threaten family independence.

A community's development, along with its sustainable, long-term economic strength, depends on stable families with opportunities to become self-sufficient and productive.

Stable, Self-Sufficient, and Productive Families Indicators

- First birth to mother age 20 or older with 12 years of education
- Children living in single-parent families*
- Children with a substantiated incident of child abuse and/or neglect (per 1,000)
- Children leaving foster care who are reunified with their families or placed with a relative within 12 months of entering foster care
- Households, with children, receiving food stamps
- Children whose parents lack secure employment*

^{*}National KIDS COUNT indicators



Why Thriving Communities Matter

A thriving economy, diverse job opportunities and industries, affordable housing, safe neighborhoods, and quality health care and schools are signs of a vibrant, growing community.

When families struggle financially, the economy suffers and the community declines and faces extraordinary challenges—unemployment, crime, teen pregnancy, inadequate education, and limited access to human services programs.

A strong community, however, establishes an environment that cultivates healthy children, school readiness and success, and stable, self-sufficient families. Economic development, job creation, and sound policies that promote self-sufficiency play a role in creating neighborhoods where our children and families can thrive and learn.

Thriving Communities Indicators

- Adult educational attainment
 - > High school graduate or higher
 - > Bachelor's degree or higher
- GED graduates
- Unemployment
- Poverty status
 - > Children living in poverty*
 - > Families, with children, with annual incomes less than 150% of the federal poverty threshold
- Homeownership
- Crime rate, age 17 or older (per 1,000)
- Voter participation

^{*}National KIDS COUNT indicators

Providing Context—Using and Interpreting Complex Data

Think of data as a jigsaw puzzle. After you interlock all the pieces, the picture emerges to tell the story. Bits of data that you connect in an appropriate way shape the evidence that helps you describe a situation, understand disparities between groups of people or places, uncover a trend over time, illuminate geographic patterns, and make the case for community action.

START WITH A QUESTION

What do you want to know? Your question will help guide you to the type of data you need. Understanding how to make comparisons, interpret changes in data over time, calculate rates, or select the right data set are crucial for putting together the pieces that fit.

Guiding Questions	Where to look	Examples		
How do I see changes in data over time?	Trend data (multiple years of the same data set)	The Georgia teen pregnancy rate has declined from its highest rate in 1996.		
Do different groups of people or places have different outcomes?	Disaggregated data (breakdowns by age, race/ethnicity, geography, income status)	The percent of babies born to mothers with less than a high school education improved at a faster rate from 2000 to 2019 for black and white mothers than for Hispanic mothers. The percent of babies born to Hispanic mothers with low education levels has improved from 60% to 30% but remains higher than for other populations.		
How do I describe a specific group of people?	Data sets that tell the story about different characteristics of a set population	 For Georgia teenagers, look at: vital statistics (death rates, accident rates, and teen births); education data (high school graduation, school absenteeism); or census data (teens not working and not in school). 		



CALCULATIONS TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE DATA

As you assemble the data to tell a story, you need a way to gauge the impact of the data to understand the magnitude of differences or changes. Simple calculations help you understand the data.

Rate

A rate is the relationship between two amounts or numbers. An example is miles per gallon. You drove your car 150 miles and used 10 gallons of gas:

150 miles ÷ 10 gallons = 15 miles per gallon

Calculating a rate helps you better understand patterns in data. It is useful to calculate a rate by time periods (month, day, year); by race/ethnicity; by subgroup (disabilities, income level); or other groupings. Rates are often calculated on group sizes of 100, 1,000, or 100,000. Health data, in particular, is often presented as per 1,000 or per 100,000.

To calculate a rate, divide the number of events (numerator) by the population size (denominator), then multiply by the group or "per" number.

EXAMPLE

What is the teen birth rate in Georgia?

In 2019, there were 7,073 births to teens ages 15 to 19. There were 360,287 girls ages 15 to 19 in 2019.

7,073 teen births \div 360,287 girls = 0.01963 x 1,000 = 19.6 per 1,000

How many babies per day are born to Georgia teens?

In 2019, there were 7,073 births to teens ages 15 to 19.

7,073 teen births \div 365 days in a year = 19 births per day

Percent

A percent is the amount per 100. To calculate a percent, divide the number of events (numerator) by the population size (denominator) and multiply by 100.

EXAMPLE

How many babies are born low birthweight in Georgia?

In 2019, there were 12,661 births classified as low birthweight (5.5 pounds or less). There were 126,250 total births.

12,661 low birthweight births ÷ 126,250 total births = 0.1002 x 100 = 10%



What is the child poverty rate for Fulton County?

In 2019, there were 48,950 children in poverty in Fulton County. There were 224,541 children birth to 17 in Fulton County.

48,950 Fulton children in poverty ÷ 224,541 Fulton children = 0.2180 x 100 = 21.8%

Rate of Change

Knowing how much or how little things have improved or worsened helps you to understand and interpret patterns in data.

To calculate a rate of change: [(value 1 - value 2) \div value 2] x 100.

EXAMPLE

Has the teen birth rate increased or decreased over the past five years in Georgia?

The teen birth rate was 19.6 per 1,000 in 2019. The rate was 25.5 in 2015.

$$(19.6 - 25.5) = -5.9 \div 25.5 = -0.231$$

 $-0.231 \times 100 = -23.1\%$

The teen birth rate improved by 23.1% from 2015 to 2019.

Mean, Median, and Range

The mean is the "average," which is useful for comparisons. Median value is the "middle" of a set of numbers. Range helps you understand the magnitude of differences in a set of numbers.

To identify patterns of disparities for an indicator, compare the value for a county or a subgroup of people to the mean. For example, compare the high school graduation rate for your county to the mean rate for the state; compare the high school graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students in your county to the high school graduation rate for all students in your county.

To calculate a mean, add a set of numbers and divide the sum by how many numbers you have. For example, add a set of numbers: 56, 24, 188, 92, and 3. Divide the total of 363 by 5 to get the mean of 72.6.

A median is often used in reporting income data, such as household income. To determine the median, rank order the set of numbers and find the one in the middle. The median is 56 (3, 24, 56, 92,188).

When determining the best or worst in a series of data, calculate the range and rank order values. To determine the range, subtract the smallest value from the largest value. The range for the data set in the previous example is 185 (188 - 3).



The margin of error is a statistic that describes the amount of random sampling error in survey data.

In using KIDS COUNT data, the margin of error is significant when looking at survey data such as the U.S. census. The margin of error, published in most census tables, is a statistic that describes the amount of random sampling error in a survey. The larger the sample size, the smaller the margin of error. If the margin of error is large in comparison to the estimated value, then you should use the results with caution.

This table shows census data for the number of Georgians age 25 or older who have only a high school diploma or GED. The impact of sample size is in the margin of error—the larger the population sampled, the smaller the margin of error relative to the sample size. When using census data, always preface numbers with the word "estimated."

Location	Population Age 25 or older	Adults with High School Diploma or GED	Margin of Error	Possible Range Due to Margin of Error
Georgia	6,888,279	1,909,067	+/- 15,805	1,924,872 to 1,893,262
Baker County	2,249	852	+/- 247	1,095 to 605
Bibb County	99,931	30,468	+/- 1,618	32,086 to 28,850



CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Time Lag

The reporting of data lags considerably behind real time and varies, depending on the data collection agency. Census data is generally released a year after collection. For example, American Community Survey (ACS) data were released in December 2020 for data collected during 2019. The release of vital statistics often lags one to two years behind data collection. Unemployment figures are generally current to real time.

Small Numbers

When the number of events or the sample size is too small, data will be suppressed or not reported. For Georgia KIDS COUNT, a rate is not calculated if fewer than five events occurred for vital statistics or 10 events for education data.

Consistency in Data Definition

Georgia KIDS COUNT publishes data definitions—but be cautious when comparing data from one source to another. For example, poverty data is published by the census in Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) and in the ACS. Those estimates are not comparable to each other because different methods were used to derive the poverty estimate.

With education data, pay attention to when definitions change. The definition of high school graduation, for example, changed in 2011. Don't compare older data to newer data.

Consider policy changes when looking at trend data. The state Board of Education dropped the Georgia High School Graduation Test in 2013, which resulted in more students graduating from high school on time. State agencies may enact policy changes that can have an impact on trend data.

Let Data Inform Our Narrative

VISUAL PRESENTATION

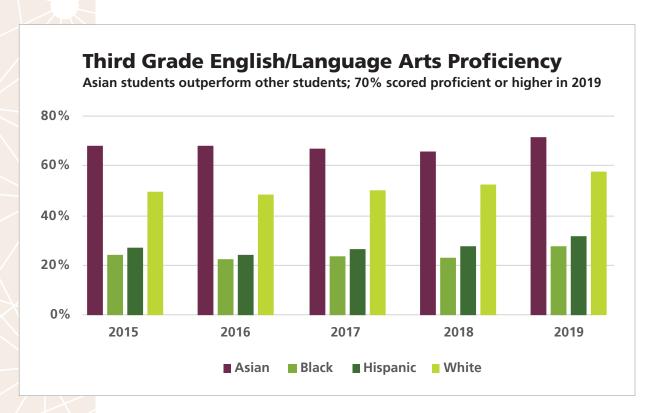
Presenting data visually allows people to see the information you're trying to convey. Charts, colors, pictures, and symbols open up possibilities for looking at data in different ways, for illuminating patterns and relationships. Charting or graphing complex data helps the people you're attempting to reach to quickly grasp relationships among disparate pieces of data. A simple graph can tell a compelling story that connects to our narrative, which tells the bigger story that unfolds over time.

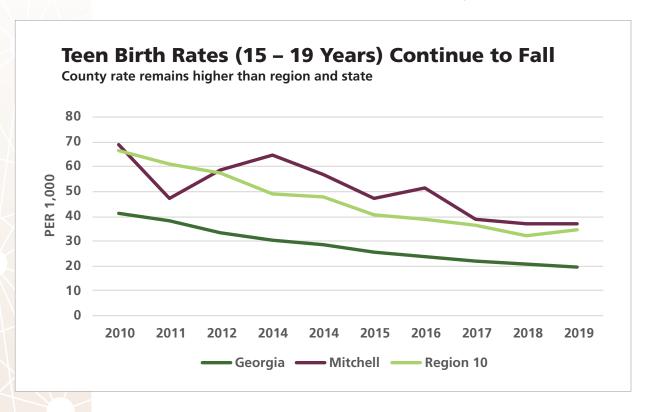
For all visual presentations:

- use the Frutiger font family and color palette;
- keep graphs uncluttered by using only crucial information;
- use shading or patterns to easily distinguish differences in groups;
- use titles that clearly explain the data; and
- always label the x and y axes.

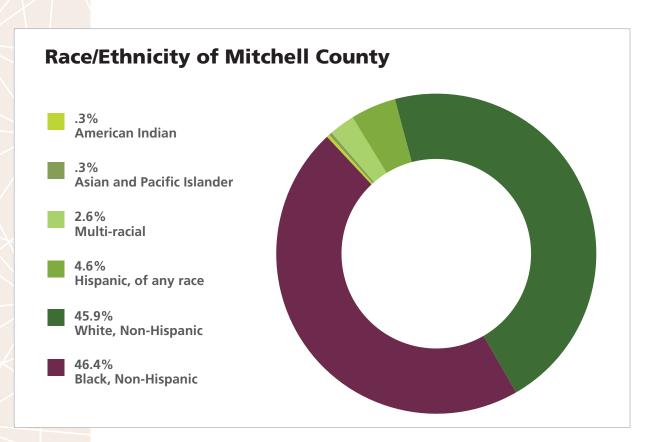
There are three basic charts that best visually convey information.

BAR GRAPHS ARE GOOD FOR COMPARING GROUPS OF DATA.





PIE CHARTS ARE BEST FOR DISPLAYING PROPORTIONAL DATA, SUCH AS POPULATION OR INCOME LEVELS.





Social Math

Social math makes numbers more interesting and understandable. By presenting numbers in a real-life context, readers can better relate to the numbers. Social math gives readers a mental image of the proportion or relative size of an issue.

EXAMPLE

The 2020 high school graduation rate for Georgia was 83.8%, with 21,397 youth not finishing high school on time.

BETTER

It takes 428 school buses to hold the 21,397 Georgia youth who did not graduate from high school on time in 2020.

EXAMPLE

The child poverty rate for Georgia was 19.5% in 2019, with 479,379 children living in poverty.

BETTER

1 in 5 Georgia children lives in poverty. The number of children in Georgia living in poverty is larger than the combined population of the cities of Augusta, Columbus, and Albany.

FRAMING YOUR STORY

Simply putting data about child and family issues in front of people is never enough for them to take action. Our prior knowledge, experience, and expectations shape our viewpoint. Over time we develop habits of thought and expectation. Patterns of pre-existing beliefs can persist even when confronted with facts and evidence to the contrary. We must always frame our data in story.

Collaborative work involves getting local leaders and decision-makers to think about child and family issues in a way that motivates them to help resolve the issues through public policies and strategies that support personal actions. We attempt to get an issue on the public agenda through news stories, presentations, and framing the issue in such a way that we can enrich local, state, and national discussions.

Here are some effective ways to start a conversation around a complex data issue that will encourage local leaders and decision-makers to act on behalf of the children and families in their communities.



Appeal to universal values that appeal to all Georgians—equality, prosperity, opportunity, ingenuity, stewardship, shared fate, responsible management.

EXAMPLE

The future prosperity of Georgia depends on its ability to foster the health, education, and well-being of the next generation. Starting early is wise. When we initiate (ingenuity) and replicate high-quality child care programs, more young children participate (opportunity) and benefit from quality care. These children show significant long-term improvement in cognitive development, socio-emotional development, and language development, and have greater success in school.

Set the context by using a wide-angle lens that broadens the story appeal to targeted audiences, while reaching the general public, and frames a positive discussion.

EXAMPLE

Children's daily experiences and interactions with caregivers in the first few years of life determine whether their developing brains provide a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health.

Use metaphors and models to clarify a complex problem or issue and help people understand new information in a familiar context.

EXAMPLE

Developing a young child's brain is like constructing a home. The building process begins with laying a firm foundation, framing the rooms, and wiring the electrical system in a predictable sequence. Early experiences shape how the brain gets built. A strong foundation increases the odds of positive outcomes.

Establish a positive tone by presenting a reasonable discussion of the problem, its causes, and potential solutions.

EXAMPLE

Children who receive the nurturing and attention they need early in life do better in school. Child care in high-quality settings during the early years is related to children who exhibit fewer reports of problem behaviors, have higher levels of cognitive and language development, and are better prepared to succeed in school. Information is available to help parents select affordable quality child care programs near their homes.

When we integrate all these elements into compelling stories and connect those stories to our broader narrative, we can engage local leaders and decision-makers in discussion and move them to action. By sharing stories with state and local partners and investors, they see the value of the work we're accomplishing across the state. Current, reliable data framed in stories are critical in making a case for continued investment and support from legislators and other funders of health, education, and economic development efforts in your community.



Resources

A variety of materials and data tools are available online at **gafcp.org/kidscount**.

Complete data definitions with technical notes and detailed listings of data sources are available on the GaFCP website.

Georgia KIDS COUNT produces and updates **Georgia Profiles** of child, family, and community well-being to inform planning, budget decisions, and work priorities for children and families in communities across the state. This product is valuable to state and local partners and legislators. The profiles organize the most current data available by result area and indicator for all 159 counties, 21 city school systems, and 12 Family Connection regions in Georgia.

The **Birth to 21 Snapshot** provides an overview for counties of nine indicators, showing the county rank and using a red/yellow/green color schematic to show indicators that are above or below 10% of the state mean.

Comparable Counties Tool enables users to locate similar counties based on eight indicators and demographic variables. The tool has contact information for similar counties.

Use the **Indicator Explorer** to create trend graphs of indicators, find demographic data for a county, and see how a county compares to state means on indicators. Graphs can be saved or downloaded.

The **Online Calculator** helps users calculate a 5-, 10-, 15-, or 20% improvement rate for 11 indicators of child well-being. The calculator is especially useful when counties are writing grant proposals, engaged in strategic planning, or implementing practices known to work to improve key indicators and move benchmarks.

The **Interactive Maps** allow a user to drill down to a county, Census tract, State House district or Senate district level for the KIDS COUNT indicators. For Census tracts, a table pops up with useful information for the Census tract, including demographics and key Census indicators.

The **Data Disaggregated by Race and Ethnicity Tool** provides data by race and ethnicity for up to 24 indicators. Data are paired with messaging that helps identify root causes of disparities.

Georgia KIDS COUNT produces data snapshots, fact sheets, blogs, news stories, and research briefs throughout the year that are available on the website.



The KIDS COUNT On Us—Make Data COUNT for KIDS guide to using data was made possible, in part, through a grant from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States.

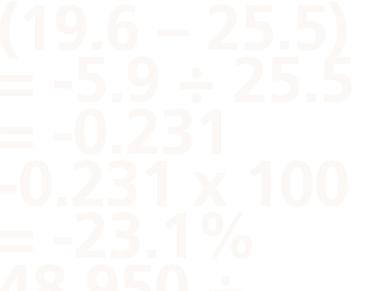
For technical assistance, presentations, and additional information, contact **communications@gafcp.org**.

Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) represents and promotes the work of Georgia Family Connection.

We support the Georgia Family Connection statewide network by providing expertise in planning and governance, and by administering the state-appropriated funds for the local Collaboratives. We also set standards of excellence and help Collaboratives evaluate their progress in addressing the challenges in their communities by bringing together:

- representatives and leaders from state agencies;
- civic groups, local businesses, and faith communities;
- elected officials; and
- concerned citizens.

The state's designated KIDS COUNT grantee, GaFCP also provides state agencies and policymakers at all levels with current, reliable data they need to inform decisions about improving outcomes for the children, families, and communities they serve. Our value at GaFCP is in synthesizing and interpreting data into customized information and tools specific to our Collaboratives' and partners' needs.







224,541 ÷
0.2180
x 100 =
21.8%
126,250 =

Georgia Family Connection connects and convenes key community members committed to improving the well-being of children and families. We connect our partners to the resources they need, coordinate and manage efforts, and empower our communities to craft local solutions based on local decisions

235 Peachtree Street Suite 1600 Atlanta, GA 30303-1422 404-527-7394

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