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New report shows areas of improvement needed for North Carolina's babies

Raleigh, NC – A report released today by early childhood development nonprofit ZERO TO THREE and children's research organization Child Trends shows that North Carolina has a lot of room for improvement when it comes to supporting babies and their families.

The *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019* is a first-of-its-kind resource that looks holistically at the well-being of America's babies, providing a national snapshot and comparisons across states. The Yearbook compiles nearly 60 indicators—specifically for children ages 0 to 3—to measure progress across three policy areas: Good Health, Strong Families, and Positive Early Learning Experiences.

Despite North Carolina's relatively high scores in Good Health and Positive Early Learning Experiences, the *Yearbook* provides a look at the many areas the state must improve to give infants and toddlers the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

"Each of the 365,273 babies in North Carolina was born with a bundle of unlimited potential and the first three years of their life will shape every year that follows," said Myra Jones-Taylor, chief policy officer of ZERO TO THREE. "But far too many babies face persistent hardships—such as food insecurity, unstable housing, and exposure to violence—that undermine their ability to grow and thrive."

"Our brains are built, not born. Brain development during the first few months and years of life has an enormous impact on how a child learns and grows throughout his or her lifetime," said Michele Rivest, Policy Director at the NC Early Education Coalition. "Where a baby is born makes a big difference in their chance for a strong start in life, and it's up to us to make sure that every county in North Carolina is a place where we prepare babies to grow, learn, and succeed."

The *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019* reveals where you are born—and factors like race, ethnicity, and income level—can make a difference in your chances for a strong start in life. The wide variation among and within states shows how policy supports for babies and families give babies the chance to overcome adversity and reach their full potentials.

"To do better for our children and our nation's future, we need North Carolina's leaders and Congress to make our youngest and most valuable resource a priority by investing in things that work," said Rivest. "Increasing funding for child care subsidies would allow more families to work and make sure more children receive high-quality early learning experiences; expanding home visiting programs would

provide critical support for families during a time when they are most stressed; and closing the health insurance coverage gap would help ensure healthy births and on-track development for our kids. It's time to adopt policies built on the science of brain development and support budgets that put babies and families first."

North Carolina's young children fare worse than the national average in:

- Infant mortality rate with 7.2 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to a national average of 5.9.
- Babies born at a low birth weight with 9.2 percent, compared to a national average of 8.2 percent.
- Infants and toddlers living in poverty or low-income households
- Prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) with 11.1 percent of North Carolina's babies experiencing two or more ACEs, compared to the national average of 8.3 percent.

North Carolina's young children fare better than the national average in:

- Uninsured infants and toddlers with 4.4 percent, compared to a national average of 5.8 percent.
- Infants and toddlers receiving recommended immunizations with 77.8 percent, compared to a national average of 70.7 percent.
- Rate of maltreatment of infants and toddlers with 4.4, compared to a national average of 16.
- Percent of low/moderate-income infants and toddlers in CCDF-funded care with 5.1 percent, compared to a national average of 4.2 percent.
- Percent of infants and toddlers who received a developmental screening with 47.6 percent, compared to a national average of 30.4 percent.

From poverty and racial inequalities to access to affordable housing and child care, the littlest in America face big challenges, according to the Yearbook:

- Almost half of U.S. babies live in poor or low-income families that struggle to make ends meet.
- Almost 1 in 4 babies live in poverty, making children under age 3 the age group most likely to experience poverty.
- More than 8 percent of babies and toddlers have already had two or more adverse experiences, such as maltreatment or parental separation or divorce.
- Only six states and the District of Columbia offer paid family leave, a policy that enables families to support the well-being of infants and other family members

The *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019* uses a transparent ranking process to group states into one of four tiers to provide a quick snapshot of how states fare on the selected indicators and domains. For more information and to see the national profile and state data, please visit www.stateofbabies.org.

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About the North Carolina Early Education Coalition

The North Carolina Early Education Coalition works to ensure that all children have access to high-quality early care and learning experiences. Since 1990, the organization has highlighted the proven

power of quality early childhood education by sharing information and resources with parents, professionals and policymakers. The Coalition is a proud partner in the national ZERO TO THREE Think Babies™ campaign and in the Pritzker Children's Initiative's National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers. For more information, please visit www.nearlyeducationcoalition.org, facebook.com/nearlyedcoalition or follow [@NCEarlyEdCo](https://twitter.com/NCEarlyEdCo) on Twitter.

About ZERO TO THREE

ZERO TO THREE works to ensure all infants and toddlers benefit from the family and community connections critical to their well-being and development. Since 1977, the organization has advanced the proven power of nurturing relationships by transforming the science of early childhood into helpful resources, practical tools and responsive policies for millions of parents, professionals and policymakers. For more information, and to learn how to become a ZERO TO THREE member, please visit zerotothree.org, facebook.com/zerotothree, or follow [@zerotothree](https://twitter.com/zerotothree) on Twitter.

About *Think Babies*™

ZERO TO THREE created the *Think Babies* campaign to make the potential of every baby a national priority. When we *Think Babies* and invest in infants, toddlers, and their families, we ensure a strong future for us all. Learn more at thinkbabies.org or follow [@ZEROTOTHREE](https://twitter.com/ZEROTOTHREE) on Twitter.