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**North Dakota Shows Progress in Narrowing the Disparity Gaps for Minority Youth,
Yet Significant Gaps Continue to Impact Child Outcomes**

*2017 Race for Results identifies continued need
to create more opportunities for success for all children*

Fargo, N.D. — The 2017 Race for Results report shows that North Dakota is making progress in many areas of child well-being, but disparities in opportunities for success continue to hinder progress for many children in the state, especially for American Indian youth.

The 2017 report (the second in a series that began in 2014) compares how children are progressing on key milestones, from birth to adulthood, across racial and ethnic groups at the national and state level. This year's report also focuses on the challenges and well-being of children growing up in immigrant families.

The report highlights progress and also raises serious concerns that American Indian, African-American and Hispanic children, and some subgroups of Asian children, face profound barriers to success. It calls for local, state and federal policymakers to expand existing policies that work and implement new programs and policies that will benefit all children.

In North Dakota, improvement was seen for nearly every measure included in the report for American Indian and Hispanic youth when compared with the 2014 report. In addition, the disparity gaps that exist for American Indian and Hispanic youth, when compared with white children, were reduced for most measures since the 2014 release. "The 2017 report shows that, with regard to American Indian and Hispanic children and youth, a larger percentage of young children are enrolled in nursery school, preschool or kindergarten; more youth are delaying childbirth until adulthood; and a larger percentage of young adults are in school or working," said Karen Olson, Program Director for North Dakota KIDS COUNT. "North Dakota's progress means that more children have opportunities to be successful, more children have resources to help them thrive."

The report also reveals that North Dakota children living in immigrant families are more likely than U.S.-born children in the state to be enrolled in an early education program, live with two parents, and have at least an associate's degree by early adulthood. In addition, they are as likely as U.S.-born youth to be in school or working as young adults and to live in neighborhoods that are less affected by poverty.

Non-white and Hispanic children represent a growing minority in North Dakota (23 percent in 2016); American Indian youth comprise the largest minority group at approximately 8 percent. Despite the

state's progress, large barriers continue to exist for these children – disparities in child outcomes are significant.

The earliest years of a child's life are when the most brain development occurs, laying the foundation for learning and success. The gaps in the indicators in this life stage (e.g., normal birth weight) are less pronounced across racial groups, but relate to significant consequences such as higher infant mortality rates. Also, with respect to American Indian youth, the gaps widen as a child ages. With fewer opportunities early on, American Indian children are less likely to be reading well by fourth grade and much less likely to graduate high school on time. Disparities in child outcomes can have a significant, long-lasting impact on children's development.

Research has shown that growing up in severe poverty contributes directly to toxic stress that affects children's health, brain development, and social and emotional well-being. In North Dakota, at least two out of every three American Indian and African-American children live in a low-income household. A little less than half of Asian children and 40 percent of Hispanic children live in low-income families.

In addition, environments with high levels of poverty and violence can derail healthy development and lead to significant psychological and physiological trauma. Three out of five American Indian children in North Dakota live in neighborhoods and communities facing consistently high poverty. These data reveal that many children in the state face steep obstacles in their journey to adulthood.

The recommendations of the study offer targeted strategies needed to help all children have the stability, economic resources, and opportunities they will need to thrive: keeping families together in their communities, helping children meet key developmental milestones, and increasing economic opportunity for low-income parents.

The data show that North Dakota has the opportunity to invest now in its future workforce and future leadership. "Regardless of racial background and socioeconomic position, everyone is inextricably interconnected as a society – all children in North Dakota are key contributors to our nation's future. Providing opportunities for children to succeed is essential for healthy communities," said Olson.

Release Information

The 2017 *Race for Results* report will be available October 24 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org/raceforresults/. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org. The website also contains the most recent national, state and local data on numerous indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about *Race for Results* can use the Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

About North Dakota KIDS COUNT

The North Dakota KIDS COUNT program provides policymakers and citizens with benchmarks for child well-being, seeking to enrich local and state discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children. For more information, visit www.ndkidscount.org.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org.