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### **Anti-poverty programs cut Washington, DC's child poverty rate nearly in half**

According to "[Measuring Access to Opportunity in the United States](#)," a new Data Snapshot by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, anti-poverty programs have protected a large number of the District of Columbia's children from some of the worst effects of economic hardship. The new KIDS COUNT® Data Snapshot explores how the **Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM)** provides a better indicator of poverty than the commonly used, official poverty measure, which fails to illustrate the effect of programs designed to help families.

Unlike the official poverty measure, the **SPM** accounts for important anti-poverty programs, including non-cash assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and is adjusted for geographic differences in the cost of living.

The good news is that anti-poverty programs have cut child poverty rates in every state. While the official child poverty rate has remained unchanged since 1990, the **SPM** for children has actually declined over that same time period. Using the **SPM**, the national child poverty rate is around 18%, compared to 33% without any government intervention.

**The impact of anti-poverty programs on the District of Columbia's children is especially striking:** Without government assistance, fully half of all children in the city would live in poverty. However, when transfers from anti-poverty programs are incorporated using the **SPM**, the percentage of DC children living in poverty is reduced by 22 percentage points to 28%, the second largest difference in the nation.

"DC policymakers need information that will allow them to understand the true needs of our most vulnerable children and determine how well existing anti-poverty programs are working," said HyeSook Chung, executive Director of DC Action for Children, which serves as the home for DC KIDS COUNT. "The Supplemental Poverty Measure can help our city make smarter investments in programs and policies – those that will help lift families out of poverty and allow all children to achieve their full potential."

Since federal benefits are not adjusted for regional cost of living estimates (which are much higher than average in the District of Columbia), the large difference in pre- and post-transfer child poverty rates is especially noteworthy, and points to the District of Columbia's significant investment of local resources to supplement federal anti-poverty programs.

While the **SPM** illustrates how anti-poverty programs have significantly reduced child poverty rates in the District of Columbia, more must be done to support the remaining 28% of DC children who fall under the poverty line despite current safety-net resources. A 2014 KIDS COUNT® Data Snapshot titled, “[Creating Opportunities for Families: A Two-Generation Approach](#),” outlines several recommendations that can help families lift themselves out of poverty including:

- Expanding access to high-quality early education;
- Changing tax credit policies to help families keep more of what they earn;
- Expanding and streamlining food and housing subsidies; and
- Developing approaches that link programs for kids – like Head Start – with programs for their parents, such as education and job training.

“**Measuring Access to Opportunity in the United States**” will be available at 12:01 EST on February 25 at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

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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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Founded in 1992, DC Action for Children ([www.dckids.org](http://www.dckids.org)) is a nonprofit organization focused on improving conditions and outcomes for the District’s children, youth and families through public awareness, policy, research and technical assistance. DC Action is the KIDS COUNT grantee for the District, tracking key indicators of child and youth well-being and neighborhood well-being for children and youth. Follow us on Twitter at [@ActforDChildren](#) and like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/dcaction>.