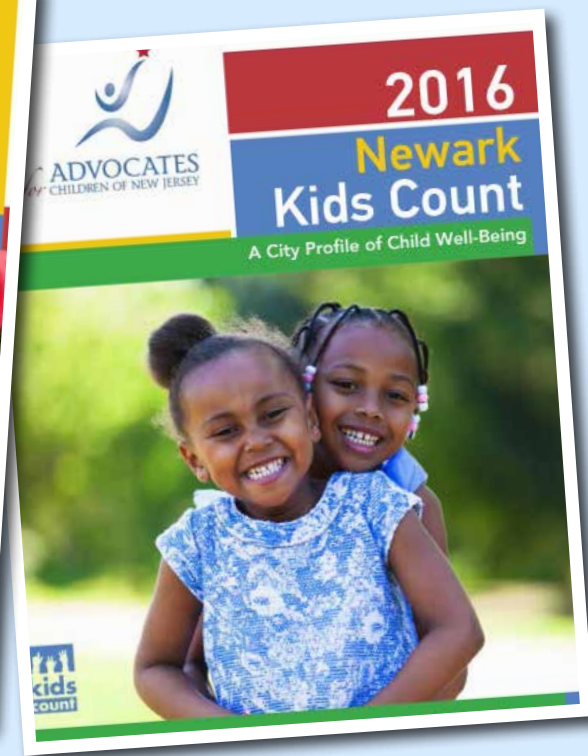
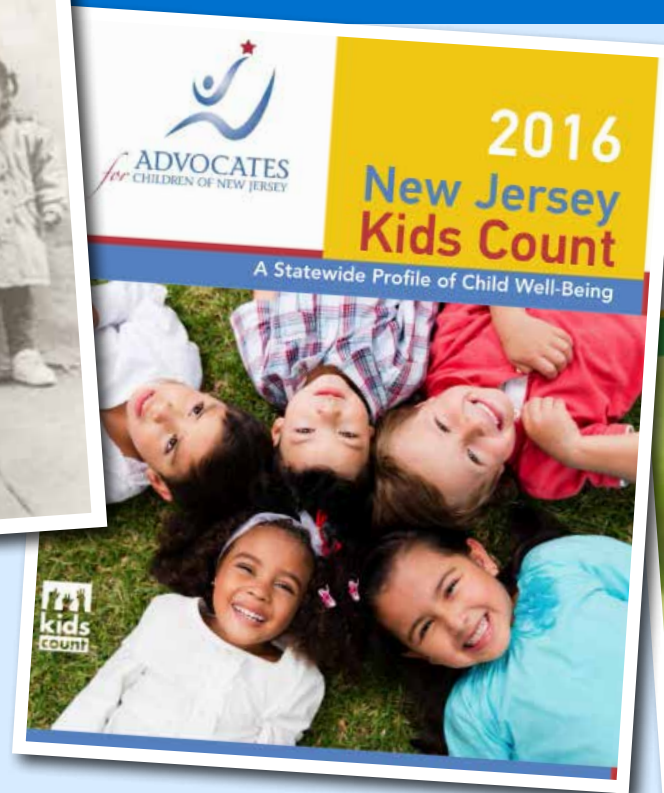
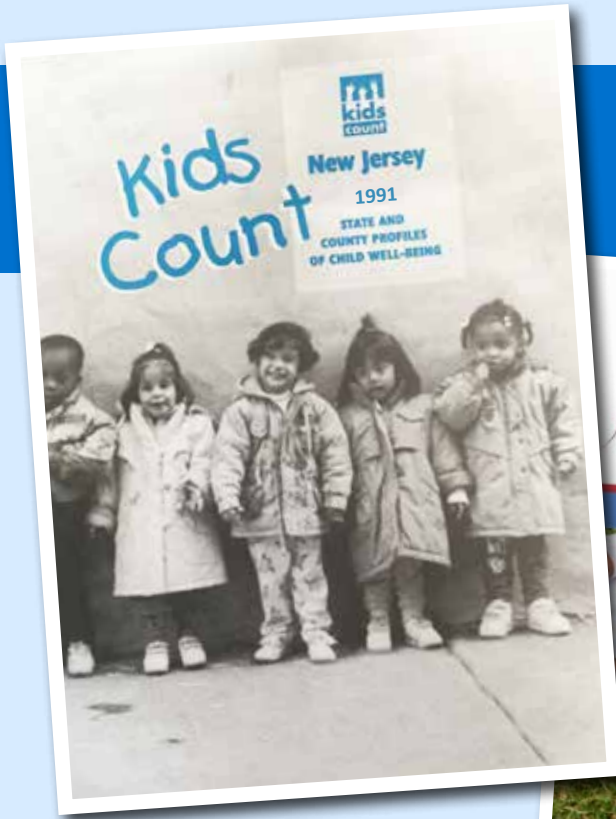


Advocates for Children of New Jersey

2016 Annual Report

Celebrating 25 years of Making Kids Count!



25 Years of Success

Dear Friends,

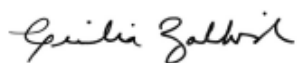
The year was 1991.

There was no health insurance program for low-income children. The state Earned Income Tax Credit did not exist. Doctors were not required to screen children for lead poisoning. Kids still languished too long in foster care – permanency options did not include kinship legal guardianship. And there was no resource that gave a full picture of how New Jersey children were faring.

In 1991, Advocates for Children of New Jersey produced the first NJ Kids Count to begin measuring how well New Jersey was taking care of its children. For the first time, lawmakers, community members and advocates could find the latest available data on child well-being all in one place, empowering them to make informed policy decisions, strengthen critical programs and improve outcomes for children.

Thanks to your support, NJ Kids Count has grown to become the “go-to” resource about child well-being. Along with the state report, ACNJ publishes an annual pocket guide with county-level data and an annual Newark Kids Count. ACNJ has reported on child well-being in other cities, like Paterson, Trenton and Camden, and on specific issues – juvenile justice, child care and school breakfast. The findings have resulted in better laws, stronger programs and greater opportunities for all New Jersey children to grow up healthy, safe and educated.

This year, we take a look back on what NJ Kids Count has helped accomplish and a look forward at the work ahead. And we thank you deeply for the support you give ACNJ to make these – and future – gains possible for all our children.



Robert Sterling
Chair, Board of Trustees



Cecilia Zalkind
President & CEO

Then and Now

▶ Then: No access to quality, public preschool.

In 1991, universal, quality public preschool did not exist for thousands of 3- and 4-year-olds who lived in New Jersey's most disadvantaged communities. That changed in 2000 when the NJ Supreme Court ruling embraced preschool quality standards recommended by the ACNJ-led Early Care and Education Coalition and set the stage for New Jersey to become a national leader in preschool.

▶ Now: 51,000 3- and 4-year olds - those at greatest risk - attend quality, public preschool.

▶ Then: Thousands of kids started the school day hungry.

In 1991, more than two-thirds of the state's 30 poorest districts failed to serve breakfast in all their schools. Only 40,000 low-income children received breakfast every school day. Many high-poverty districts did not offer a morning meal. ACNJ co-leads the *NJ Food for Thought Campaign* which has increased the number of children eating breakfast at school by over 105,000 since 2010.

▶ Now: 240,000 - 45 percent - of NJ children from low-income households start their day with a healthy meal at school.



▶ **Then: More than 800 youth were locked up in overcrowded detention centers on any given day.**

ACNJ worked with other advocates to bring about early reforms to the juvenile justice system. Through the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), stakeholders used data to reduce the population of county detention by 60 percent. ACNJ is working with state departments and community advocates to ensure that school discipline issues are not inappropriately referred to law enforcement and that young offenders are treated fairly and receive the services they need to become productive adults.

▶ **Now: Less than 300 youth are held in detention on a daily basis.**

▶ **Then: Far too many children were without health insurance.**

During the 1990s, more than 500,000 children lacked access to health care. In 2000, even as families began to enroll in NJ FamilyCare, the state's child health insurance program, application barriers and limited outreach stalled the process. ACNJ was at the forefront of a public-private partnership effort to enroll more children in NJ FamilyCare, resulting in tens of thousands of uninsured children receiving coverage.

▶ **Now: Less than five percent of children – 75,000 are uninsured.**

▶ **Then: Too many kids missed too much school, and no one noticed.**

ACNJ has focused on the long-term implications of student absences on academic success. More than ten percent of K-12 students in NJ miss more than 18 days or 10 percent of the school year – a significant loss of instructional time. By reviewing attendance data and listening to parents and school officials, ACNJ has sparked conversation and action on both state and district levels to tackle absenteeism.

▶ **Now: Districts are stepping up to make every school day matter.**



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About Us

Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) is the trusted, independent voice putting children's needs first for more than 35 years. A cornerstone of ACNJ's success is our independence. We are non-partisan and accept no state funding for advocacy, giving us the freedom to speak up for children who have no voice and no vote. Our work results in better laws and policies, more effective funding and stronger services for children and families. This means more children are given the chance to grow up safe, healthy and educated.

On the Horizon

ACNJ is working with you to make sure that state systems charged with helping youth, children and their families are accountable and that every child has the chance to grow up healthy, safe and educated.

Some of our priorities continuing into 2017 include the following:

- Build on the success of the *NJ Food for Thought Campaign* by improving access to summer and afterschool meals and breakfast at the high school level.
- Expand high-quality public preschool to the 35,000 at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds waiting for this strong start.
- Promote a state child care tax credit and increase subsidy rates to make quality child care affordable and accessible, especially for our youngest children, ages 0-3.
- Work on the federal, state and school district levels to improve student attendance.

#NJVotes4Kids 2017

Next year New Jersey will elect a new governor and legislature.

ACNJ plans to do what we do best: educate the candidates, inform the public and mobilize advocates to make children a priority in the 2017 election and beyond. Your support is essential. It enables ACNJ to continue to be the independent, trusted voice for children in New Jersey.

CONNECT WITH US!

Follow our election advocacy campaign by using the hashtag #NJVotes4Kids.



Building for Tomorrow's Children



We have a new look at our headquarters, located at 35 Halsey Street in downtown Newark. With fresh paint, a brand new awning and updated facilities, our renovation provided much needed updates to our building.

ACNJ purchased the building in 1989 to serve as a resource center for New Jersey families. Since then, we have dedicated nearly all of our resources to advocacy work, but in 2015, the time came to re-invest in our infrastructure and our future.

To those who donated to our campaign, thank you for enabling us to grow our facilities so they match the quality of our advocacy.



ACNJ Donors 2014- 2015

**Includes contribution to ACNJ's Building for Tomorrow Campaign*

\$25,000+

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