STATE BABY FACTS

A Look at Infants, Toddlers, and Their Families in 2015

Alaska

Do you know what lies ahead for Alaska? No need to consult a crystal ball. The clearest way to envision what the future holds is to take a look at the babies. They tell us an important story of what it is currently like to be a very young child in this state and the important resources that can change the future life course for the many children who are not getting off to the best start.

A baby's early experiences shape the brain's architecture into a strong—or fragile—foundation for learning, health, and success in the workplace. Adverse early experiences, such as poverty, can weaken babies' brain development and follow them their entire lives. A state's ability to build a strong, competitive economy in an increasingly global marketplace is jeopardized when the future of so many young children is compromised. By evaluating these facts and using them to improve relevant programs and services, Alaska can re-prioritize infants, toddlers, and their families and change the future for all of us.

All babies in Alaska, and across the United States, need **good health**, **strong families**, and **positive early learning experiences** to foster healthy brain development and realize their full potential. How does Alaska compare with the United States in providing these supports?

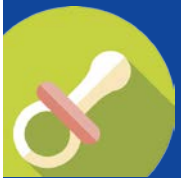
The Basics about Infants and Toddlers in Alaska

	Total population under age 3	Percentage of children under age 18 who are infants and toddlers	Live in families with parents who are unemployed	Live with an unmarried parent	Mothers in the labor force with infants
STATE	34,172	18%	10%	33%	63%
NATIONAL	11,886,860	16%	11%	34%	62%

KIDS COUNT RANKING:

33

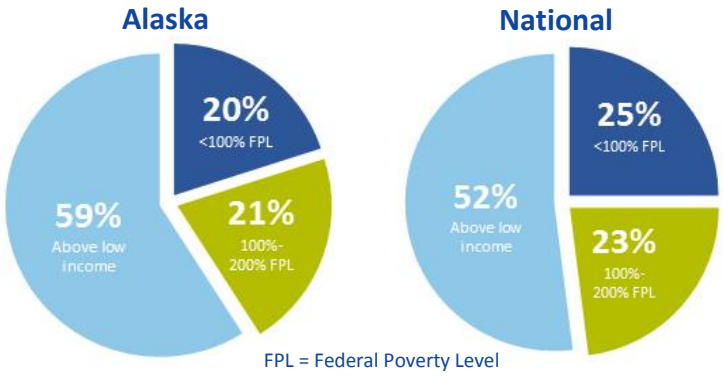
STATE RANKING FOR CHILDREN 0 -18 WELL-BEING



BABIES AT RISK:

Infants and toddlers by family income level

In Alaska, a significant percentage of infants and toddlers live in low-income families, leaving them particularly vulnerable. Research shows that poverty at an early age can be especially harmful, affecting later achievement and employment.



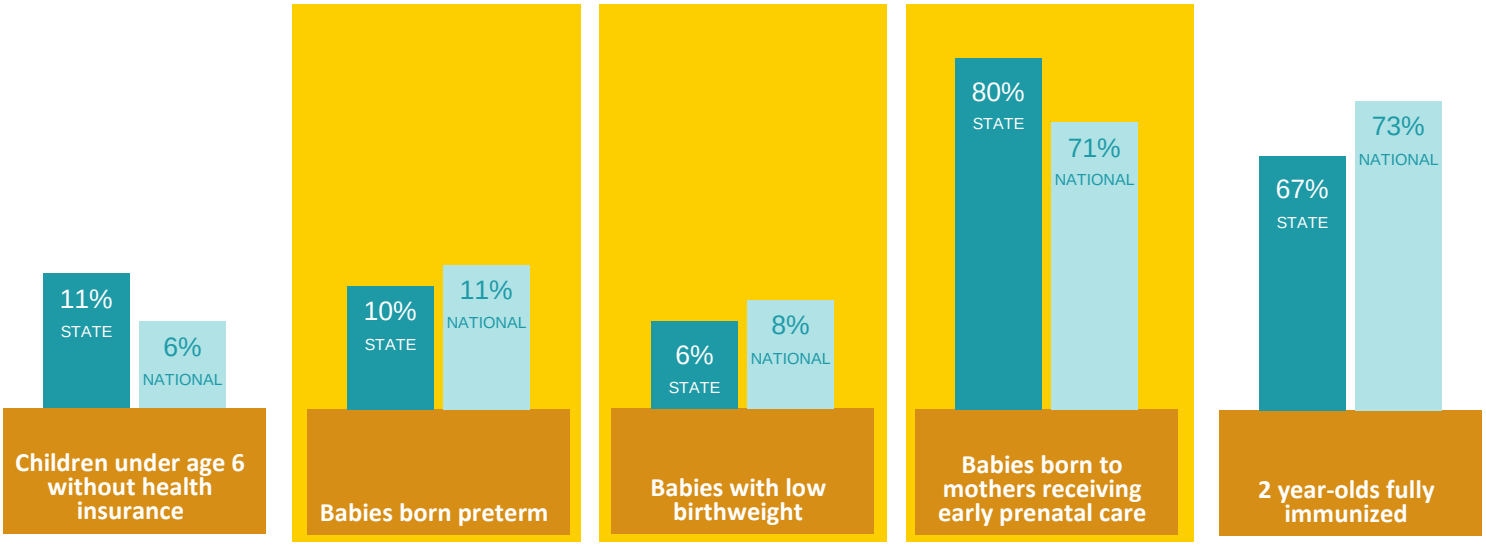
FPL = Federal Poverty Level

SOURCE: National Center for Children in Poverty

ALASKA'S GOOD HEALTH

Good health is the foundation from which young children grow and develop physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially. The need for high-quality medical care and adequate nutrition before birth and during a child's earliest years is more crucial than at most other times in life. Preventive care and screening can catch problems early and are key building blocks for healthy early development.

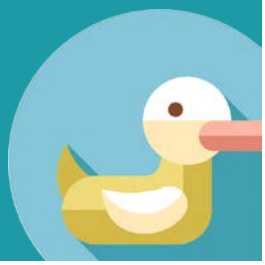
HOW DOES ALASKA'S GOOD HEALTH COMPARE WITH U.S.?



HOW CAN WE SUPPORT GOOD HEALTH?

Programs can help ensure that Alaska's babies get a healthy start in life, as health and nutrition programs play a key role in protecting the health of the most vulnerable infants and toddlers. These programs include **Medicaid**, the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, and the **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**. For more information on these programs, go to www.zerotothree.org/goodhealth.

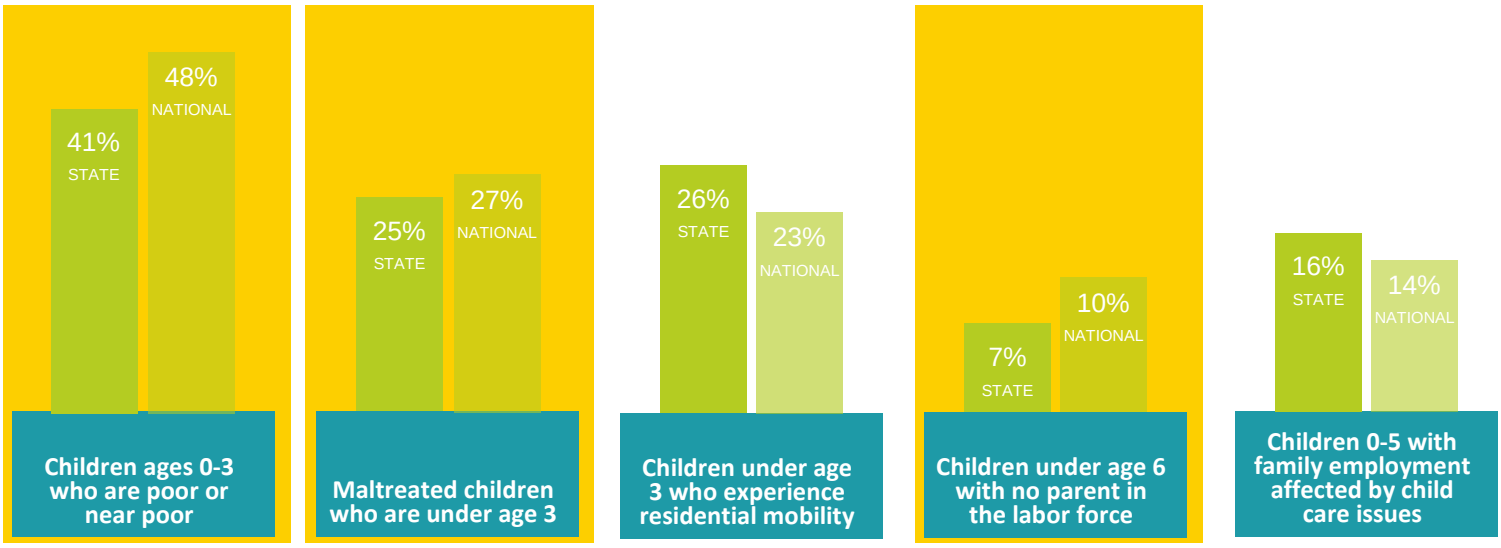
	BIRTHS COVERED BY MEDICAID	INFANTS ON MEDICAID THAT RECEIVE AT LEAST ONE EPSDT SCREENING	SNAP RECIPIENTS UNDER AGE 5	WIC RECIPIENTS THAT ARE INFANTS
STATE	53%	89%	14%	25%
NATIONAL	45%	90%	14%	23%



ALASKA'S STRONG FAMILIES

Young children develop in the context of their families, where supportive relationships nurture their growth. Especially during an economic downturn, it can be challenging for parents to provide their children the necessities of life. During these early years, factors like family stress, multiple moves, fluctuating family structure, difficult economic situations, negative environmental effects, and abuse and neglect can impair the development of infants and toddlers.

HOW DO ALASKA'S STRONG FAMILIES COMPARE TO THE U.S.?



HOW CAN WE SUPPORT STRONG FAMILIES?

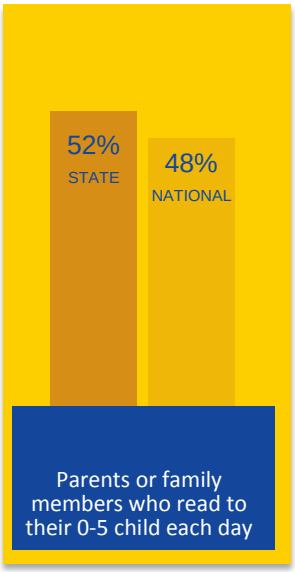
Programs like **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**, **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**, **Home Visiting**, **Child Welfare**, and **Paid Family Leave** play an important role in helping Alaska's families support their child's healthy growth and development. For more information on these programs, go to www.zerotothree.org/strongfamilies.

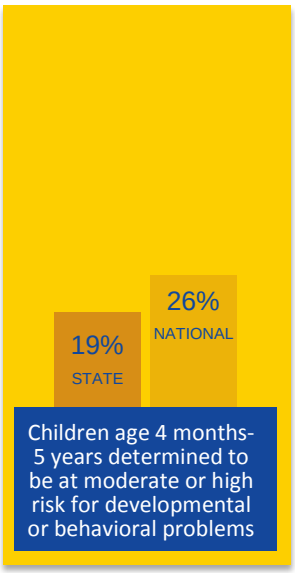
	FAMILIES ON TANF WITH AT LEAST ONE CHILD UNDER AGE 3	HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING LIHEAP HEATING ASSISTANCE WITH CHILD UNDER AGE 6	CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE THAT ARE UNDER AGE 3
STATE	40%	27%	35%
NATIONAL	37%	22%	31%

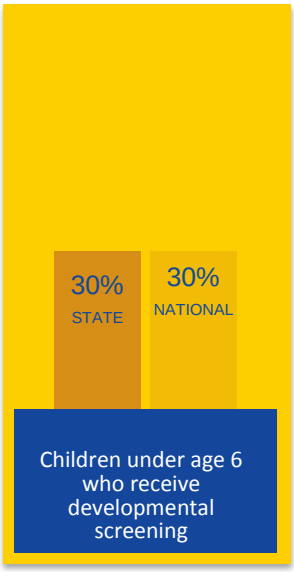
ALASKA'S POSITIVE EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

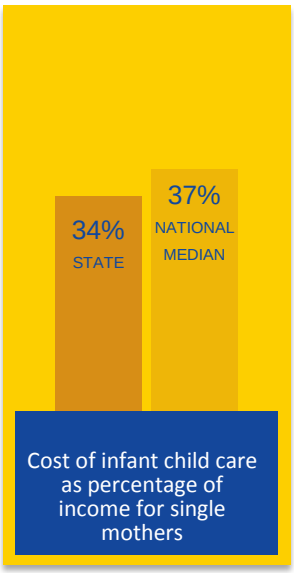
For very young children, learning takes place through play, the active exploration of their environment, and, most importantly, through positive interactions with the significant adults in their lives. Gaps between children of different income levels in the amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of interaction appear early and widen long before a child enters school. Relationships with parents, early childhood professionals, and caregivers are critical as the brain forms the complex web of visual, language, motor, and social-emotional connections essential for later learning.

HOW DO ALASKA'S POSITIVE EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES COMPARE TO THE U.S.?









HOW CAN WE SUPPORT POSITIVE EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES?

For infants and toddlers, learning unfolds in many settings, including the home, **child care centers, Early Head Start (EHS), family child care homes**, and **family, friend, and neighbor care**. High-quality care that promotes positive early learning can have lasting effects into adulthood, particularly for children who are at risk for starting school behind their peers. For more information on these programs, go to www.zerotothree.org/earlylearning.

579	30%	2%	STATE
107,393	27%	3%	NATIONAL
INFANTS, TODDLERS, AND PREGNANT WOMEN WHO PARTICIPATE IN EHS	PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN RECEIVING FEDERAL CHILD CARE SUPPORT THAT ARE UNDER AGE 3	INFANTS AND TODDLERS WHO RECEIVE PART C EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES	