

### Kansas Kids Living In Poverty

(KAIR)--Nineteen percent of Kansas kids under the age of eighteen live with families with income below the 100 percent of the U.S. Poverty threshold.

That, according to statistics in this year's Kids Count Report, released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. At 100 percent poverty, K-State Research and Extension youth development specialist Elaine Johannes says that families are surviving on very little. "For example, in 2015, the poverty rate for a family of four, they would be surviving on \$24,000 a year. One person though, an individual, an adult who might be having to pay for their own health insurance or their own housing costs, would be \$11,000 a year. And that narrow band of being able to pay for necessary services is getting more and more narrow, more and more thin."

Johannes says poverty is the result of several factors, and that it is not isolated to a specific area, its everywhere. "Part of it could be just the lack of jobs, or maybe low wage jobs in the service sector. If we have small towns, let's say out in rural areas, and they don't have any jobs close to them, what do they do? The parents may commute to the nearest big town, they may try to create a little entrepreneurial endeavor to try and keep the food coming and the bills paid."

Getting out of poverty can be difficult. As a family's income goes up, Johannes says they begin to lose critical, and often essential, benefits. "What happens is that the more money that goes into that family, the more apt that their public benefits will go down...the safety net benefits, TANF, SNAP, those kinds of benefits will go down, and that's called the cliff effect. And that cliff effect is something that middle class and upper middle class families need to learn about, because it does effect the neighbor across the street."

Johannes says more information on the various assistance programs available to families can be found at local county and district Extension offices.

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