

Officials urge social media safety after Snapchat incident

Deputies arrest Tennessee teen after armed encounter at girl's home

BY DRAYTON CHARLTON-PERRIN | THE SUN
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GRAVES COUNTY — Law enforcement arrested two teens Saturday after one allegedly pointed a gun with a laser attachment through the window of a girl he had been communicating with via Snapchat.

Graves County Sheriff Jon Hayden said the 17-year-old girl told investigators she had never met the suspect in person before and didn't know why he showed up at her house.

"She didn't know a last name, only knew a first name or a first name that the individual gave her," Hayden said. "She didn't know for sure who he was, other than 'I've been communicating with him on Snapchat.'"

Hayden said this is a prime example of why people should be cautious on social media, especially with adolescents.

"This could have turned out to be really bad, and we're so thankful that it didn't," Hayden said. "As parents, we need to educate our kids about the dangers of who you're talking to online."

Brittney Gilham, clinical practitioner at Four Rivers Behavioral Health, said meeting someone online always has risks.

"Anytime you're forming a new bond, you can also form unhealthy bonds," Gilham said.

Dr. Heath Cates, pediatrician at Baptist Health Paducah, said he has seen firsthand how children can get targeted online.

"I've taken care of patients that have walked through some very dangerous situations where that person wasn't just being untruthful, they're trying to put that child at risk," Cates said.

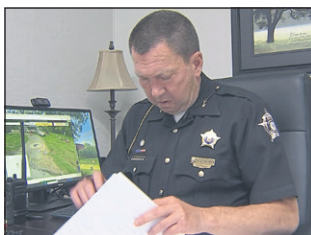
Cates said even if you feel a bond or friendship with someone online, you shouldn't blindly trust that person.

"You've got all these fun things that you talk about, but at the end of the day, you really don't know who that person is



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Dr. Heath Cates says he has worked with many children who have been targeted online and urges parents to be aware of their kids' social media activity.



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Graves County Sheriff Jon Hayden says he's pleased with how quickly his deputies responded to the scene.

on the other side of the screen, and they may not be who they say that they are," Cates said.

Hayden said Graves County deputies responded to the scene within four minutes of the call and found two males in a car in the girl's driveway at around 4:30 a.m. According to Hayden, the driver exited the vehicle for questioning; however, the passenger then moved into the driver's seat and fled the scene.

"There was a pursuit that went a pretty good distance over into the southern part of Graves County, close to the Tennessee line," Hayden said. "At some point, the deputies had to PIT (maneuver) the vehicle to get it to stop."

The driver then fled on foot before being detained and identified as 19-year-old Dequavion Yarbrough of Humboldt, Tennessee.

During a search of the vehicle, deputies found a stolen semi-automatic gun with a laser sight attachment that fit the girl's description.

Hayden said Yarbrough admitted to the deputies that he traveled from Tennessee to Graves County to see the girl he met on Snapchat with his friend, 18-year-old Jayen Ayers from Milan, Tennessee. Ayers, who was left at the scene, was charged with third-degree criminal trespassing.

Hayden said Yarbrough



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Snapchat is a popular social media platform where the 17-year-old girl alleges her only previous interactions with Dequavion Yarbrough took place.

also admitted to using marijuana and other drugs just hours before the pursuit.

Yarbrough's charges are as follows:

- First-degree wanton endangerment — five counts
- DUI — first offense
- First-degree fleeing or evading police in a motor vehicle
- No operator's license
- Third-degree fleeing or evading police on foot
- Receiving stolen property
- First-degree criminal mischief
- Third-degree criminal trespass
- Possession of a synthetic drug
- Possession of marijuana
- Other traffic offenses

As of the time of publication, Ayers and Yarbrough are incarcerated, and the Graves County Sheriff's Office's investigation remains ongoing.

"We hope to find out what their motives were, but the fact that they were armed with a semi-automatic handgun — that was actually a stolen gun with a laser sight on it — pointing it at this juvenile female through a window in the home is very concerning," Hayden said.

Report: Child poverty down in state; education, health lag

BY SARAH LADD KENTUCKY LANTERN

Fewer Kentucky children were living in poverty in 2024 than 2019, right before the COVID-19 pandemic, but nearly one in five kids still lack the resources they need to thrive.

That's according to the latest Kids Count Data Book, released Monday by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The annual report looks at indicators of wellbeing including education, health, economic success and community and family measures.

The data in the 2026 report primarily compares 2019 and 2024. The foundation gave each state a score between 0 and 1,000. Kentucky received a score of 498, which is worse than the national score of 547 but better than 2019, when it received a 465.

Kentucky is still the 36th state in the nation when it comes to child welfare, making it one of the worst places to be a child.

The commonwealth's neighbors are a mixed bag. Kentucky is doing better by its children than West Virginia and Tennessee but worse than Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

Shannon Moody, the incoming executive director of Kentucky Youth Advocates, said fewer "kids living in homes that are in poverty is always a great thing for Kentucky."

"What we're continuing to keep an eye on is how families are being impacted now, right now, with affordability of basic needs: Groceries, gas, housing and childcare continue to be something that we'll be watching," she said. "I'm really looking forward to seeing what continues to arise when it comes to that, whether or not we'll see things trend back downward."

The data, though it was just released, is still two years old, and much has changed. In 2025, Congress cut Medicaid spending over 10 years by \$880 billion as part of the sweeping One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

That same budget package made recent foster care youth, among others, no longer exempt from work requirements to receive food benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Nearly half of the people who receive SNAP assistance in Kentucky are under the age of 18.

"It's 2024 data. We did not begin to see the impacts of the pandemic funding being reduced — We're seeing that now in our biennial budget," Moody said. "I'm glad to see in 2024 less kids were living in homes in poverty, and we need to continue being vigilant about how we are supporting kids and families ... whether it's safety net programs or ensuring that there is affordability among those basic needs."

BY THE NUMBERS

Other takeaways in the report include:

- About 67% of fourth grade students in Kentucky were not proficient in reading from 2020-2024. That's worse than the four years prior, when it averaged at 59%.
- About 67% of eight grade students in Kentucky lacked math proficiency in 2024, worse than 2019,



Kentucky Lantern photo by Sarah Ladd
Youth ask questions during Children's Advocacy Day in Frankfort on March 4.

when about 65% lacked proficiency. The national average was about 70% in 2024. These proficiency points are "very concerning," Moody said.

- Kentucky's rate of high school students graduating on time improved in the 2023-2024 school year. About 8% of students didn't graduate on time, down from 9%. In this, Kentucky is better than the national average, which was at 13% in '23-'24.

- Childhood poverty has decreased, but is still worse than national averages. In 2024, 19% of children in Kentucky lived in poverty, compared with 15% nationally. That's a decline from 22% in Kentucky and 17% nationally in 2022.

- About 63% of Kentucky children ages 3 and 4 weren't in school between 2020-2024. The four years prior, 2015-2019, that number was at 59%. In both blocks of time, more Kentucky children in this age group were out of school than national averages (52% and 54% respectively).

- Teen births declined in 2024 to about 3,000.

- The number of children without health insurance was at 5% in 2024, worse than 4% in 2019.

- The number of babies born underweight increased to nearly 9% (8.8%) in 2024, slightly worse than 8.7% in 2019.

POLICIES THAT COULD HELP

As Kentucky lawmakers kick off their interim legislative session and look ahead to 2027, there are plenty of opportunities to make the commonwealth safer for kids, Moody said.

Key among those opportunities: Ensure access to affordable and accessible housing, she said.

"We know that if there is a safe place for kids to lay their head every night and it's consistent, that has resounding impacts on their ability to focus in school and to regulate their emotions," Moody said. "It's good for both their mental and physical health, as well as their education."

Ensuring access to food for kids is crucial as well, she said.

"I'm hopeful that we won't see any reduction in access to those programs, especially for our littlest kids, whether it be WIC or SNAP or school meals, because we know that access to food is essential for our overall well-being," Moody said. "Especially if they are accessing school meals and summer meal programs, we want them to be able to continue to do that for their well-being."

This article was originally published by the Kentucky Lantern, a nonprofit news site covering state government and politics, at kentucky Lantern.com.



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