

CONNECTS

CASEY

SUMMER 2000
A REPORT FROM THE
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

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2000 KIDS COUNT EMPHASIZES NEED FOR CONNECTIONS

Each year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation paints a statistical portrait of how children are faring in this country in its *KIDS COUNT Data Book*. The numbers track progress across the states in some areas and pitfalls in others, but the bottom line remains the same: In a land of prosperity, too many families live in conditions of concentrated poverty that stifle their children's chances for happy, healthy, and productive lives.

This year's report tells a similar story, but it offers a different framework for looking at the numbers. The report advances the theory that many of the children falling behind in this country live in families who lack a range of essential "connections" that those living in more affluent areas enjoy.

One obvious example of this kind of isolation concerns access to technology.



SUSIE FITZMAUGH

The report notes that almost 20 percent of households in low-income urban areas don't have a telephone, that 50 percent don't have cars, and that 84 percent don't have home computers.

"At a time when media experts, economists, and social observers stress that the future belongs to those on the Internet and those who can compete in a global economy, many inner-city families don't have cars to get to work,

phones to remain linked with family and neighbors, or computers that would allow them to navigate the information superhighway," said Doug Nelson, president of the Foundation.

Families in high-poverty neighborhoods lack even more critical connections as well: to strong and nurturing social networks, accessible and respectful support services, and ample educational and economic opportunities.

In an essay accompanying the 2000 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, Nelson offers an antidote to the stereotypes of class, race, place, and family structure that limit the way people perceive poverty and leave little recourse for action. By highlighting the concrete and particular conditions that make the



LARRY GLENN, PHOTOP

At a policy briefing to release the 2000 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, columnist Arianna Huffington moderated a panel that included Jonathon Kozol, Jim Wallis, Geoffrey Canada, Ron Haskins, and Blandina Cardenas.

THE FOCUS should be providing low-wage workers with training and supports to land PROMISING JOBS.

CASEY CONNECTS

Summer 2000

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The Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.

SUMMIT STRESSES JOB ADVANCEMENT

A recent policy summit in Washington, D.C., focused national attention on the movement to help low-wage and low-skilled workers advance into good jobs.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation was one of five national foundations that provided funding for the May 24-25 summit, tagged Low Wage Workers in the New Economy and organized by the Boston-based research organization Jobs for the Future. The Foundation first conceived of the conference as a way to move the work of its Jobs Initiative into the national policy arena. This initiative provides funding and support for community efforts in six cities to help young, low-income workers find meaningful jobs and to help identify national employment and training models.

“We wanted the conference to have a broader agenda than the Jobs Initiative and to help focus national policy attention on the importance of career advancement,” said Bob Giloth, director of the Jobs Initiative.

More than 400 leaders from business, labor, government, education, and workforce and economic development attended the summit, which received national media attention.

The summit signals a growing desire by foundations, national organizations, and policymakers to move beyond welfare policies that push to place recipients in the first available job. Instead, they argue, the focus should be providing low-wage



Casey Foundation Vice President Ralph Smith

workers with training and other supports in order to land good jobs with advancement opportunities. The summit showcased new career advancement strategies and policies emerging across the country.

In an opening plenary session, Ralph Smith, vice president of the Foundation, stressed the need for investments that connect families living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty to the opportunities, networks, and support they need to improve their children's prospects. “There's something wrong when we can predict awful outcomes for some children simply by knowing their zip codes,” Smith said.

“The summit provided research and best practices in advancing low-wage workers to good jobs, identified some of the successes, and drew attention to what challenges lie ahead,” said Richard Kazis, vice president of Jobs for the Future. “It also raised the visibility of these issues in the public debate and the media.”

For more information about the conference, go to www.jff.org. For more information about the Jobs Initiative, go to www.aecf.org/jobsinitiative.

IMMIGRANT FAMILY CHALLENGES HIGHLIGHTED

A recent *Education Week* article recounts the painful stories of several California high school students with top grades—but with no hope of attending college. These children are undocumented immigrants, and as such don't qualify for the in-state tuition rates that would make higher education affordable.

Children of immigrant and refugee families are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. Currently, one in five children is either an immigrant or has an immigrant parent, and failing to harness their talent and brainpower would be a tragic loss and a blow to this country's economic future.

As it does for all children, the success of immigrant children hinges largely on how much support their families and communities can provide them. To explore ways to reinforce and build on the strengths of immigrant families and

their children, the Annie E. Casey Foundation co-sponsored a national conference June 8-10 in Miami. The meeting, also funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the Fannie Mae Foundation, was organized by Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees.

The conference addressed four key questions: What strengths do immigrant families bring with them? What erodes these strengths over time? What promotes immigrant family cohesion and adaptation? What works to connect immigrant families to resources, services, and supports in their communities? Learning objectives set by participants ranged from strengthening families and preserving cultural values to ensuring access to health care, education, employment, and crisis intervention services that can overcome barriers of language and legal status.

organizations, family representatives from 11 of the Foundation's 22 *Making Connections* sites attended the conference. The agenda was specifically designed to incorporate the voices of families, noted Irene Lee, the conference chair and a senior associate at the Foundation.

One woman recounted how she fled Guatemala and trekked across Mexico on foot at six-months pregnant. Another described how her child died ultimately as a result of insufficient health coverage. Others told of not knowing where to turn for help when they were victimized by domestic violence. These personal accounts set the stage for small-group sessions in which conferees drafted policy recommendations that will be combined in a conference report.

Jorge Morales of Miami said he learned of an innovative program to address domestic violence that he wants to try in his own community. One participant, named Said, Abdulkadir M. of Seattle, observed that the conference hit on themes of concern to his fellow Somalis, such as "how to raise good families in America and how to restrain young people from getting involved in crime."

"I learned that if we all unite in order to deal with the issues, the issues can be resolved," said Sandra Lara of Miami.

For information or materials and resources from the conference, contact Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees at amanda@gcir.org.

In a paper prepared for the conference, Michael Fix of the Urban Institute noted that policies denying benefits to adults who are not citizens often have a chilling effect on children, whose parents may be afraid to enroll them in services for which they are eligible. Fix reported that, in 85 percent of immigrant families, at least one child is a citizen and one parent is not.

Along with state legislators, researchers, and public and private funding



Abriendo Puertas Children's Choir performs at the conference on immigrant and refugee families.

CASEY FAMILY JOINING HANDS TO SERVE CHILDREN BETTER

On a recent spring day, Doug Nelson, Ray Torres, and Anna Williams donned hard hats and stood side by side with shovels poised to break ground for the new Casey Family Services headquarters in East Baltimore.

This ceremony symbolized a renewed commitment by Nelson, president of the Casey Foundation; Torres, executive director of Casey Family Services; and Williams, director of the Baltimore division of Casey Family Services, to work together with communities on behalf of children and families.

Besides showcasing some spirited singing and drumming by community residents, the recent groundbreaking marked an exciting achievement for Casey Family Services. Now renting office space nearby, the Foundation's direct service arm is moving into its own dynamic, newly renovated building. The new facility will accommodate group meetings, child care, training, and a drop-in family center in addition to programs in teen parenting, young families, and foster care. "Our goal is to build on the division's existing programs to create a center to support family life," says Lee Mullane, director of communications for Casey Family Services in Shelton, Connecticut.



DARRYL GREEN

The complex will incorporate a historic building that was once a trolley barn and later served as the studio to a local painter and sculptor. The original building will be restored and an annex added for more office and community space.

Doug Nelson, Anna Williams, and Ray Torres breaking ground for new Casey Family Services headquarters.



SUSIE FITZHUGH

The site is expected to be a resource for families included in the Casey Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative in Baltimore.

"I hope you will see this groundbreaking as more than the beginning of a building. I hope you also see it as the beginning of a long and deep commitment by the Foundation to work with all of you to build stronger families and better futures for all the children of this city," Nelson told Baltimore residents, officials, and program participants gathered at the groundbreaking.

As the direct services arm of our Foundation, Casey Family Services provides an array of foster care and family support programs in Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The Foundation drew heavily on the lessons of Casey Family Services when it launched a new generation of work dedicated to the notion that children do better when their families are strong and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods. Casey Family Services staff members are playing crucial roles in several cities involved in our *Making Connections* initiative.

To acknowledge its pioneering work in strengthening families, we have devoted our INSITES supplement to Casey Family Services. More information about the agency is available at www.caseyfamilyservices.org.

The Foundation drew heavily on the lessons of **CASEY FAMILY SERVICES** when it launched a **NEW GENERATION** of work to strengthen families.

RESOURCE CORNER

In Print:

- **2000 KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK AND POCKET GUIDE:** This 11th edition of the Data Book provides a state-by-state report on the educational, economic, social, and physical well-being of children in the United States. The Pocket Guide contains an overview, graphics on national trends, state-by-state data and rankings, and contacts for state KIDS COUNT projects. Copies of the book and guide can be ordered from the Foundation's publications voice mailbox, 410.223.2890 or from our website, www.aecf.org. You can also view state profiles, graphs, maps, and rankings, and download raw data using an interactive online database at www.kidscount.org.
- **VOICE:** This new quarterly newsletter is produced by the Foundation's direct services arm, Casey Family Services, which offers high-quality long-term and treatment foster care; post-adoption services; family reunification, preservation, and advocacy; and assistance to families affected by HIV/AIDS. It contains news, conversations with board members, a section for sharing perspectives, resources, contributed art work and poetry, and a regular research supplement. Copies are available by contacting the editor, Lee Mullane, Casey Family Services, One Corporate Drive, Suite 515, Shelton, CT 06484.
- **GOOD WORKS:** Highlights of a Study on the Center for Family Life. This monograph summarizes a comprehensive evaluation of the Center for Family Life in Brooklyn's Sunset Park. The center, one of the

Foundation's Families Count honorees for 2000, is a highly regarded family service agency providing comprehensive, neighborhood-based services. Copies can be ordered from the Foundation's publications voice mailbox, 410.223.2890 or from our website, www.aecf.org.

- **WELFARE AND HOUSING: *How Can the Housing Assistance Programs Help Welfare Recipients?*** Produced by the National Housing Law Project, this report discusses changes to the welfare programs; analyzes the extent to which subsidized housing does and can fulfill housing needs of welfare recipients; and reviews the programs and tools available to public and private housing providers to assist them in offering stable, affordable homes to tenants making the transition to self-sufficiency. Copies can be downloaded from the Foundation website, www.aecf.org, or ordered from the National Housing Law Project, 614 Grand Avenue, Suite 320, Oakland, CA 94610.

On the Web:

The following websites offer information specific to economic opportunity and jobs.

- **AMERICA'S JOB BANK:** This network links job seekers with "the largest pool of active job opportunities available anywhere." In addition to the Internet, the job openings and resumes found in America's Job Bank are available on computer systems in public libraries, colleges and universities, high schools, shopping malls, transition offices on military bases worldwide, and other places of public access: www.ajb.dni.us

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION: ETA attempts to "connect employment, education, and training services into a coherent network of resources at the local, state, and national level." The site offers access to online publications, such as the interactive newsletter *eWorkforce*, and other employment and training resources: www.ttrc.doleta.gov/onestop

- **COALITION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS:** The coalition "promotes access to capital and economic growth by directly investing in and supporting community development financial institutions and expanding financial service organizations' lending, investment, and services within underserved markets." This site includes access to online publications and related Internet resources: www.treas.gov/cdfi
- **JOBS FOR THE FUTURE:** This group seeks to "create successful transitions for youth, build effective partnerships to promote lasting reform, and create economic opportunity for those who are now ill-prepared to get good jobs." This site provides access to online publications and related Internet resources: www.jff.org



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lives of these families different from those who are more affluent, the Casey Foundation hopes to generate support for more practical and comprehensive strategies to reconnect families in challenging neighborhoods to the help and support they need.

The main vehicle for this work is our Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development initiative, a long-term agenda to garner more active public support for family-strengthening strategies. The most concrete expression of that strategy is *Making Connections*, an effort under way in 22 cities to help communities connect and support families living in tough neighborhoods.

At a June 20 briefing, Nelson issued an invitation for partners to join the Foundation in these efforts.

“We are in search of allies equally eager to find national, state, and local approaches that will move millions more of our children to the positive side of the KIDS COUNT ledger,” Nelson said.

The briefing featured a panel of experts selected for their wide-ranging experience and diversity of viewpoints on children’s issues. Moderating the panel was Arianna Huffington, a nationally syndicated columnist and author who serves on several boards promoting community solutions to social problems. Panelists included:

- Geoffrey Canada, an acclaimed author and child advocate who founded the Beacon School program in Central Harlem as president and chief executive officer of the Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families in New York City;
- Blandina Cardenas, an associate professor of educational leadership and director of the Hispanic Research Center at the University of Texas at San Antonio and former commissioner of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families;
- Ron Haskins, staff director for the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives;
- Jonathon Kozol, author of more than 30 books chronicling the lives of inner-city children, the most recent of which is *Ordinary Resurrections: Children in the Years of Hope*; and
- Jim Wallis, a religious author and founder of Sojourners Community, an organization with a Christian commitment to social justice.

The briefing aired on C-SPAN and also was broadcast live on the Foundation’s website. For more information about the 2000 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* or to view the June 20 briefing, go to www.aecf.org.



Jonathon Kozol’s books illustrate the challenges faced by families living in unconnected communities.

GRANTEE FORMS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

The forms grantees need to fulfill their reporting requirements can now be downloaded directly from our website. Just go to www.aecf.org/granteeforms.htm.