

# At A Glance



The Annie E. Casey Foundation

## THE ROLE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN ACHIEVING THE SIX CORE RESULTS

**Research indicates that at least half of all negative outcomes experienced by American children occur in a limited number of disinvested inner-city neighborhoods and declining rural areas.**

Economic factors that contribute to the demise of these communities include unemployment and low-wage jobs that don't offer benefits or advancement opportunities, low home ownership rates and predatory lending practices.

Child care, transportation, health services and other support mechanisms are often inadequate in low-income neighborhoods. Ensuing results include homelessness, disengaged youth, increased crime and other factors that feed a cycle of poverty.

### Making Connections

In 1999, the Annie E. Casey Foundation initiated *Making Connections*, an impact strategy to improve the lives of children and families by transforming impoverished neighborhoods in 10 cities throughout the United States.

In an effort to address social isolation, economic disinvestment and service fragmentation, *Making Connections* links underserved community residents to economic opportunities, strong social networks and effective support services.

### Quick Facts

- 8.4 million American children do not have health insurance. More than 2.2 million of these children are from low-income working families.
- 7.2 million working people live below the poverty line.
- Families earning less than \$14,000 per year spend an average of 25 percent of their income on childcare.
- If all eligible families with children participated fully in Food Stamps, SSI, TANF, and EITC programs, poverty could fall by 20 percent and extreme poverty by 70 percent.

### Six Core Results

The *Making Connections* initiative measures progress toward breaking the cycle of poverty through six core results:

- I. Families have increased earnings and income.
- II. Families have increased levels of assets.
- III. Families and youth increase their civic participation.

talents and use these gifts to strengthen their organizations. As a result, faith-based organizations expand their resources and influence within communities.

### Promising Practices

Over the last six years, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has identified more than 100 emerging and promising practices

8 million Americans need two or more jobs to make ends meet.



- IV. Families have strong supports and networks.
- V. Families have access to services that work for them.
- VI. Children are healthy and ready-to-succeed in school.

Faith-based organizations, particularly congregations in low-income communities, provide services that address the six core results of the *Making Connections* initiative. Congregations and related faith-based organizations are changing their communities by changing the lives of individuals and families.

As religious institutions meet the physical and spiritual needs of individuals and families, they become aware of their

implemented by faith-based organizations that address the needs of vulnerable populations and disadvantaged communities.

Promising practices used by faith-based organizations to meet the needs of vulnerable families have been explored in detail in numerous reports commissioned by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

*The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Achieving the Six Core Results* highlights the work of nine specific congregations. The complete research paper, and other Casey papers, are available on the Annie E. Casey Foundation web site [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org) under publications.

The vision and commitment of faith leaders and partnering organizations is inspiring faith-based institutions to perform work that enriches the lives of families and transforms communities.

### **Core Result #1: Families have increased earnings and income**

Faith-based institutions are well-suited to provide job training to populations considered difficult to serve, including

such as resume writing assistance and training in computer fundamentals. Collaboration and volunteerism have been key factors in providing employment and job training services.

### **Core Result #2: Families have increased levels of assets**

Homeownership often represents the most important source of wealth for the lowest income earners. With the assistance of faith-based organizations,

commonly buying their first home, paying for post-secondary education, or starting a small business.

Faith-based organizations are uniquely positioned to provide the support services and mentoring that often help families successfully complete the programs and continue to practice saving and asset-building habits.

### **Core Result #3: Families and youth increase their civic participation**

Civic engagement is a responsibility that faith-based organizations traditionally hold in keeping with the core religious practices of acting justly and serving those in need. Initiatives led by faith-based organizations have increased voter registration, created housing for the homeless, and, most notably, overturned discriminatory practices.

Interfaith groups throughout the U.S. collaborate for numerous civic causes, including ending unfair labor practices, improving education services and revitalizing underserved communities. One such organization making substantial improvements in its community is BREAD, a Columbus, Ohio-based alliance of 43 congregations of diverse faith, race and socio-economic backgrounds.

By engaging congregations to extend beyond their social service offerings to participate in resolving social justice issues, BREAD has transformed neighborhoods in many ways, including successfully lobbying for a joint city-county Affordable Housing Trust that has received more than \$10 million in grants.

Civic engagement has also been used as a strategy to foster youth development. For instance, ministries featured in this report have deterred gang violence by engaging youth in leadership development and community service programs.



8.4 million children in the U.S. are currently uninsured for health care

people re-entering the community from prison and people recovering from substance abuse. In some cases, congregations have become employers. Employment training is offered based on perceived needs, as well as opportunities to collaborate.

The North Carolina-based Jobs Partnership is a faith-based initiative that currently partners with faith-based organizations in 21 U.S. cities. The program combines spiritual keys and practical steps with mentoring and volunteerism to secure jobs for more than 1,700 people, many of whom are considered hard to employ. The program tracks retention for one year, with an average rate of 83 percent.

Other faith-based programs have also been successful in providing training in the skills required to attain employment,

families with earnings near and below the poverty line have increased their savings, improved their credit ratings and purchased new homes.

Congregations and related community development corporations offer financial literacy programs that provide training in skills from budgeting to securing mortgages to building equity. This training can be essential for low-income earners who may not be fiscally ready to purchase a home, but who want to evaluate their spending habits and improve their credit worthiness as a first step.

Individual Development Accounts augment financial literacy training and move low-income families towards home ownership. The programs provide matching funds for average yearly savings of \$900 for low-income families to use for purchasing an asset – most

## ► Questions for *Making Connections* sites and community leaders to address

- 1 How many low-income families live in your community?
- 2 What are the most pressing issues for low-income families living in your community?
- 3 Which services are most needed to achieve economic outcomes for your community and its low-income families?
- 4 What kind of services are available to support the core results?
- 5 How can *Making Connections* site teams work with low-income families to achieve economic outcomes that benefit families and the community?
- 6 How can *Making Connections* site teams facilitate peer networking with other organizations supporting the core results?
- 7 How can *Making Connections* site teams share what they learn with each other?

#### **Core Result #4: Families have strong supports and networks**

Faith-based organizations play a crucial role in developing and sustaining social networks and supports within communities. Informal networks are associated with access to employment opportunities, promotion of child well-being, higher quality housing, improved neighborhood safety and local economic development.

Congregations and faith communities provide trusted advocates through which family services and supports, like marital counseling and child care, are received.

Many community services are also housed in faith-based organizations, including after-school programs, job training, substance abuse counseling and transitional housing.

The social networks fostered by churches and other religious institutions have facilitated partnerships with related organizations. The Alliance for Community Peace, a coalition formed within Chicago's Wayman, A.M.E., drew the attention of local community development corporations and non-profit organizations that work with faith-based organizations to develop Individual Development Accounts programs.

Through this expanded network, Wayman's



congregation members and other community residents now benefit from these organizations' relationships with local financial institutions, and collectively participate in an asset building program.

#### **Core Result #6: Children are healthy and ready-to-succeed in school**

Faith-based organizations are often based within communities serving uninsured children. Faith institutions are well-suited to partner with health care organizations to increase access to primary and preventive care,

80% of congregations discuss international, national, and/or local political issues in regular worship services, according to a 2000 survey of African-American clergy.

#### **Core Result #5: Families have access to services that work for them.**

Faith-based organizations in underserved communities are often the first institutions to call attention to the inadequacy of services provided to low-income families and their communities.

In partnership with social justice groups, faith institutions call for actions to address limited access to reasonably priced goods, poor transportation service, inaccessible medical services, insufficient child care subsidies and poor quality child care services.

Many faith-based organizations have developed the networking and bargaining power to negotiate for improved services in their communities.

Since its program's inception in 2004, the Church of New Life Christian Ministries of Minneapolis, Minnesota has helped 13 uninsured families, including three expectant mothers and 12 children, access health insurance. New Life identifies low-cost health insurance programs, helps complete applications, transports expectant mothers and other parents and children to appointments, and monitors the immunizations and wellness check-ups of young children.

Faith-based organizations have also been successful in mobilizing their congregation members and other residents to participate in community action campaigns and serve on local boards, improving existing neighborhood services, and attracting new businesses and service providers to their communities.

improve the delivery and quality of care, and improve patient self-management of disease.

Church-administered health fairs provide pre-screening and essential information within a familiar, accessible environment. Religious institutions place a spiritual value on health and healing that can make congregation members more receptive to health services promoted there.

The *There is a Balm* initiative, administered by the Stairstep Foundation, unites 16 congregations in Minnesota that support programs to eliminate health disparities. Sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Health, the initiative employs coordinators who provide health care information at the churches and link them with services at area hospitals and clinics.

Since 2002, more than 2,500 congregation members and non-members have received education regarding child and teen wellness, 500 of whom received instruction specifically about infant mortality. In addition, more than 600 were educated about the importance of immunizing children, with 138 children under 18 receiving immunizations as a result.

Child care is another essential service that faith-based organizations provide to promote the health and school readiness of children. In addition to being readily accessible and having adequate space, many have built strong relationships with children and their families through Sunday school and other youth service programs.

Attentive care and enriched curricula at the pre-school level have been credited with helping students successfully transition into elementary school.

# ▶ ▶ ▶ Addressing the problems, fulfilling the needs

Many practices, programs and policies exist that are making a difference in the lives of individuals, families and communities.

For more information about these organizations please see the full six core results report at

[www.aecf.org/publications](http://www.aecf.org/publications)

## Getting started on the six core results

Potential exists within faith institutions to transform the lives and neighborhoods of disadvantaged families. Faith-based organizations have been successful in helping residents in their communities secure gainful employment, purchase affordable housing, engage youth in productive activities and improve neighborhood safety.

Faith leaders offer the following recommendations to help faith-based organizations achieve the six core results:

### Start slowly

Identify the community needs, the congregation's resources and external resources that may be available:

- Survey congregation members and community agencies or conduct formal needs assessments.
- Assess internal resources, including staff, finances and skills of congregation members.
- Research local and national organizations that support the establishment of community development corporations. These organizations may also help you assess existing organizational strengths and identify programs that can enhance them.

## Select and develop committed staff members

Supportive, competent staff members will help meet commitments involved in providing community services.

- Evaluate congregation members' skill sets and engage them in the search for staff members.
- Consider program volunteers and participants for staff positions.
- Provide developmental opportunities and/or identify partners who offer training.
- Consider engaging industry experts as volunteers and trainers.

## Measure results

Documentation will help assess program effectiveness, determine the direction of new initiatives and attract supporters.

- Record the number of program participants.
- Survey service recipients to assess program effectiveness.
- Collaborate with organizations that offer to evaluate program outcomes.

## Prepare for success

While many ministries are initiated to meet a specific concern, they can quickly grow to attract and serve additional populations and community needs.

- Seek additional partnerships, including collaborations with the private sector.
- Consider expanding national programs locally.
- Tap existing resources for technical assistance.
- Share successful practices with constituents.

## Casey's recommendations

The recommendations of faith leaders echo those prescribed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to help build the capacity of faith-based and community organizations to support families and transform neighborhoods. Casey's strategies include:

- Enhance connections between faith-based organizations and families/communities for spiritual and material support.
- Support connections between faith-based organizations and families/communities for economic success strategies.
- Enhance connections among faith-based organizations for support and sector development.
- Support connections between clergy, laity and members for leadership development opportunities.



### The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Achieving the Six Core Results

Report prepared by The Faith Center For Community Development, with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation

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### The Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for vulnerable children and families in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, and his siblings, who named the foundation in honor of their mother.



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## Read the complete report

To obtain a copy of the full report, visit: [www.aecf.org/publications](http://www.aecf.org/publications)