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Annie E. Casey Foundation Releases New Report *Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two-Generation Approach*

Coordinated Approach Needed to Connect Low-Income Families With Early Childhood Education, Job Training and Other Tools to Achieve Stability

Providence, RI (November 12, 2014) – With almost half the nation’s young children growing up in low-income households, a new report from the national Annie E. Casey Foundation calls for a comprehensive effort to lift children out of poverty. The report focuses on the importance of delivering high-quality early childhood education while simultaneously providing parents with access to job training, career paths and other tools that enable them to support their families.

The report, *Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two-Generation Approach*, outlines how the public, nonprofit and private sectors must work together to reduce poverty among the 10 million low-income families with young children in the United States. The recommendations propose integrating state and federal employment, education and child care programs for parents and children to create better opportunities for the entire family.

In 2013, the federal poverty threshold was \$18,769 for a family of three with two children and \$23,624 for a family of four with two children. In Rhode Island, 19.5 percent of children live in poverty. Children are considered low-income if their family income is below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold — \$46,100 for a family of four. In Rhode Island, 40 percent of children live in low-income families.

“Poverty is a key indicator of a child’s future success because children who grow up in homes without enough resources to meet basic needs face serious obstacles in their development,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, executive director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “We know that intervening early with high-quality child care, preschool and K-12 education is a concrete pathway out of poverty. But reducing childhood poverty also requires attention to education and job-training for parents. This report presents an integrated two-generational approach to lift children and families out of poverty.”

The key findings of the report show that:

- In Rhode Island, 27% of low-income parents have concerns about their young child's development, compared to 31% of low-income parents nationally;
- In Rhode Island, 86% of low-income parents with young children do not have a postsecondary degree, compared to 79% nationally;
- In Rhode Island, 60% of low-income parents have no year round full-time employment, compared to 50% of low-income parents nationally.

These findings highlight the need to equip parents who have limited education with skills that can help them earn a family-supporting income. Additionally, the report emphasizes the need for federal and state agencies, along with businesses and community- and faith-based institutions, to work more closely together so that the whole family can succeed.

“We hope this report will spark deep commitment in Washington and in board rooms across the country to remove the obstacles that prevent millions of families from putting their kids on a path to success,” said Patrick McCarthy, the Foundation’s president and CEO. “For too long, our approach to poverty has focused separately on children and adults, instead of their interrelated needs. We’ve learned a lot about what works in separate areas, but we’re not combining these lessons to break the cycle of poverty.”

The Foundation’s two-generation approach seeks to equip families with the tools and skills to get on a path to opportunity and overcome some of the obstacles they face, such as inflexible and unpredictable jobs that do not offer high enough wages to support a family; lack of access to high-quality, reliable early child care and education; and increased stress levels for parents and children. The report describes specific strategies for addressing these challenges so that parents can fully nurture and support their children and, ultimately, build better futures for themselves and their kids.

The report outlines three broad recommendations:

- **Create policies that equip parents and children with the income, tools and skills they need to succeed — as a family and as individuals.** State and federal governments should strengthen policies that expand job-training, educational and career opportunities; adopt policies that give parents more flexibility at work, such as paid time off; increase the Child Tax Credit for low-income parents of very young children; and expand the Earned Income Tax Credit to increase the income of noncustodial parents.
 - *Under this recommendation, Rhode Island is highlighted alongside California and New Jersey as a success for implementing paid family leave – a policy that gives parents needed flexibility at work.*

- **Put common sense into common practice by structuring public systems to respond to the realities facing today's families.** State and federal governments should promote collaboration and align policies and programs through interagency commissions and innovation funds. For example, child- and adult-focused state agencies should consolidate their data to look at the whole family. Federal policymakers could take advantage of new legislation and reauthorization periods for Head Start and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, among others, to bring together child and adult programs.
- **Use existing child, adult and neighborhood programs and platforms to build evidence for practical pathways out of poverty for entire families.** Early childhood, K-12, home-visiting, job-training and supportive housing programs could partner with one another to connect parents with financial coaching, job-readiness assistance, education and other tools to achieve financial stability, while also ensuring their children have access to high-quality care and schooling.

Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two-Generation Approach will be available November 12, 2014 at 12:01 a.m. EST at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available in the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#), which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices.

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, education, safety, and development of Rhode Island's children and youth. It is one of fifty state-level organizations that work in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the social condition of children at the state and local level across the country.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.