



UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, September 25 at 12:01 a.m. ET

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Arkansas Missing Opportunities to Give Young Adult Parents and Their Kids a Boost

New Casey Foundation report illuminates needs and barriers facing Arkansas's young parents and their children

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — With limited access to opportunities to advance their education and find family-sustaining jobs, Arkansas's 34,000 young adult parents face hurdles to support their children and fulfill their own potential, according to *Opening Doors for Young Parents*, the latest KIDS COUNT® policy report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT grantee in Arkansas, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, joined the call for action so these young parents can contribute to the state's communities and economy.

The fifty-state report reveals that, at 13 percent, Arkansas is above the national average (10 percent) of youth ages 18 to 24 who are also young parents.

The report highlights the following statewide trends and areas of concern:

- 38,000 children in Arkansas have young parents ages 18 to 24.
- 67 percent of children of young parents in Arkansas live in low-income families.
- Only 13 percent of young parents ages 18 to 24 have completed an associate degree or higher.
- 35 percent of Arkansas's young parents are people of color, facing challenges exacerbated by discrimination and systemic inequities, with their children standing to suffer the most.

"We need to make sure these young parents have opportunities to reach their full potential, which of course will open doors for their children, as well," said Rich Huddleston, executive director of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. "It's one of the smartest investments we could make as a state, because it's a double opportunity. High-quality early childhood

programs, tax credits for low-income parents – these are the economic investments that will really pay off for Arkansas.”

The report spotlights a national population of more than 6 million, including 2.9 million young adult parents, ages 18 to 24, and 3.4 million children nationwide living with young parents. *Opening Doors for Young Parents* illuminates the most common obstacles young adult parents face, including incomplete education, lack of family-sustaining employment opportunities, lack of access to quality child care, inadequate and unstable housing and financial insecurity.

These barriers threaten not only these young adults, but also their young children, setting off a chain of diminished opportunities for two of our nation’s future generations. But the report includes recommendations for addressing the obstacles that young parents face, most of which can be driven by policy solutions at the state level.

The Casey Foundation stresses the importance of a two-generation approach to equip young parents for success. “If we don’t support young people when they become parents, we are cheating two generations out of having a positive future,” warned Casey Foundation President and CEO Patrick McCarthy. “We can help young adult parents develop the skills they need to raise their children, contribute to their communities, and drive our national economy forward.”

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families further stresses the importance of helping the state’s young parents access educational and employment opportunities. In an increasingly competitive workforce landscape, education can make a significant difference in earning power for families. However, as the data demonstrate, young adult parents here in Arkansas, like young parents nationwide, do not have the post-secondary education or specialized skills to obtain family-sustaining jobs.

Release Information

Opening Doors for Young Parents will be available September 25 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at <https://www.aecf.org/opening-doors-for-young-parents>. Reporters may request an embargoed copy beginning September 18.

About Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families is a statewide, nonprofit child advocacy organization established in 1977. Our mission is to ensure that all children and their families have the resources and opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives and to realize their full potential. For more information, visit www.aradvocates.org.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

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.

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