



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

Contact: Rachel White | rwhite@acy.org | 410-547-9200 ext. 3019

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

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

BALTIMORE — With limited access to opportunities to advance their education and find family-sustaining jobs, Maryland's 31,000 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 Maryland, Advocates for Children and Youth, 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 six percent, Maryland is just under 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:

- 37,000 children in Maryland have young parents ages 18 to 24.
- 59 percent of children of young parents in Maryland live in low-income families.
- 18 percent of young parents ages 18 to 24 have completed an associate degree or higher.
- 54 percent of Maryland's young parents are people of color, facing challenges exacerbated by discrimination and systemic inequities, with their children standing to suffer the most.

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.”

Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) 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 Maryland, like young parents nationwide, do not have the post-secondary education or specialized skills to obtain family-sustaining jobs.

ACY is particularly committed to improving the outcomes for young parents involved in the foster care system. As the report indicates, young people in foster care are twice as likely as other youth to become pregnant or father a child by the age of 19. “Without collecting data targeted at counting the number of pregnant and parenting youth involved in the foster care system, Maryland’s Department of Human Services will have difficulty crafting sound policies to ensure babies are not separated from a parent solely because the parent is in foster care,” warned ACY’s Child Welfare Policy Director, Rachel White.

“The collection of targeted data will also ensure that parents have stable placements and that foster parents are particularly recruited and trained to support young parents and children,” White added, and with the recent passage of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, “Maryland’s Department of Human Services should opt into this funding opportunity to ensure career and education opportunities are afforded to young parents in foster care until age 26.”

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 Advocates for Children and Youth

Advocates for Children and Youth improves the lives and experiences of Maryland’s children by advancing policies and programs that tackle disparities facing our children and youth and close the equity gaps in the areas of education, child welfare, health, economic security and youth justice.

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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