



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

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

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

ST. PAUL, Minn. — With limited access to opportunities to advance their education and find family-sustaining jobs, Minnesota's 35,000 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 Minnesota, Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota, 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 eight percent, Minnesota 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:

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

In recent years, despite the state's increased investment in early childhood education programs and work force development, the report shows many young Minnesota parents are still struggling. "When nearly half of children with young parents (46.7 percent) have at least one parent who is not attending school or working, we need to identify the obstacles that get in the

way of their participation in educational or employment options, and determine whether that parent and their child has access to supports that provide for their basic needs,” said Bharti Wahi, Executive Director of Children’s Defense Fund – Minnesota.

“Policymakers must invest in solutions that have proven two-generational approaches to improving outcomes for young parents and their children, like creating a statewide Paid Family and Medical Leave Program, fully funding the Child Care Assistance Program, and increasing the Minnesota Family Investment Program cash grant,” Wahi said.

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.”

Children’s Defense Fund-Minnesota 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 Minnesota, 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 the Children’s Defense Fund – Minnesota

Children’s Defense Fund-MN releases an annual state KIDS COUNT Data Book every fall. Download the 2017 *Minnesota KIDS COUNT Data Book* at <https://cdf-mn.org/programs/minnesota-based-programming/minnesota-kids-count/>. The Children’s Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood

with the help of caring families and communities.

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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