



Giving Every Child A Chance

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

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## **New Jersey Missing Opportunities to Give Young Adult Parents and Their Kids a Boost**

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

**NEWARK, N.J.** — With limited access to opportunities to advance their education and find family-sustaining jobs, New Jersey's 44,000 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 New Jersey, Advocates for Children of New Jersey, 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 5 percent, New Jersey is 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:

- 55,000 children in New Jersey have young parents ages 18 to 24.
- 67 percent of children of young parents in New Jersey live in low-income families.
- Only 10 percent of young parents ages 18 to 24 have completed an associate degree or higher.
- 66 percent of New Jersey's young parents are people of color, facing challenges exacerbated by systemic inequities, with their children standing to suffer the most.

"Once again, the data emphasizes the importance of creating supports for young parents, including educational and employment opportunities," said Cecilia Zalkind, president and CEO of Advocates for Children of New Jersey. "Access to affordable, quality child care remains a challenge, and programs and services intended to help at-risk families, like home visitation, are not reaching enough new parents in New Jersey. Helping young parents succeed as their child's first and best teachers is essential in ensuring positive outcomes for their child's healthy growth and development."

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 of New Jersey 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 New Jersey, 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 Advocates for Children of New Jersey**

Advocates for Children of New Jersey is the trusted, independent voice putting children's needs first for 40 years. Our work results in better laws and policies, more effective funding and stronger services for children and families. And it means that more children are given the chance to grow up safe, healthy, and educated. For more information, visit [www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org). Follow ACNJ on Twitter @acnjforkids and on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/acnjforkids>.

#### **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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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