



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

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Nation Is Missing Opportunities to Strengthen More Than Six Million Futures as Young Adult Parents Lack Resources and Policies to Ensure Families Thrive

2018 KIDS COUNT® Policy Report illuminates needs and barriers facing nation's young parents and their children

BALTIMORE — The Annie E. Casey Foundation today reminded policymakers and child advocates of the barriers young families face — and potential solutions that can help them thrive — with the release of *Opening Doors for Young Parents*, the latest KIDS COUNT® policy report. The fifty-state report spotlights a 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. With limited access to opportunities to advance their education and find a family-sustaining job, young parents face barriers to supporting their children and fulfilling their own potential.

The Foundation emphasized that without adequate support and resources, young parents and their children are at risk of being left behind permanently. “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.”

According to the report, roughly 70 percent of children with young adult parents live in families with incomes less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. More than half of young parents (55 percent) are people of color, facing challenges exacerbated by discrimination and systemic inequities, and their children stand to suffer the most.

Data for the U.S. Virgin Islands are not included in the report, because the Territory is not included in most nationwide surveys and datasets. For example, the USVI is not eligible to participate in the annual *American Community Survey*. Instead, the Eastern Caribbean Center at University of the Virgin Islands conducts the *Virgin Islands Community Survey*, designed to provide accurate estimates for the population and housing units for the United States Virgin Islands on an annual basis.

While the VICS provides limited comparable data, 2014 data (the most recent available) indicates a total of 542 females ages 16-24 with one or more children (out of a total of 8,740 females with children under age 18). Reflecting the vulnerability of young children – although the data do not allow determinations about the ages of their parents – about half (49.7 percent) of the USVI's children under age 6 live in poverty.

The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI), as the Territory's KIDS COUNT grantee, also produces a comprehensive Data Book for the Virgin Islands annually, reflecting local data from various agencies and sources. The most recent report is available at <http://cfvi.net/programs/kids-count.php> and a new report will be released in the coming months. In addition, the most current data for the VI are also available via the KIDS COUNT Data Center, hosted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>.

"This report sheds light on a vulnerable demographic largely hidden in plain sight," says USVI KIDS COUNT Director Anna Wheatley Scarbriel, who also serves as the director of grants and programs at CFVI. "Anecdotally, we are aware of the challenges facing young parents locally – particularly since the 2017 hurricanes – but we lack reliable data to support these concerns, and to measure our progress to address them. We hope the findings are able to be generalized to our population and can be used to spark conversations and consideration about how to provide better supports for vulnerable young parents and their families."

The Casey Foundation's report underscores the following national trends as well as areas of concern:

- Education can make a significant difference in earning power for families; single mothers with associate degrees earn an average of \$152,927 more over their lifetimes than high school graduates, and \$296,044 more with bachelor's degrees. Young parents, however, are less likely to be in school than nonparents their age and more likely to be working full time.
- Family-sustaining jobs increasingly require post-secondary education and specialized skills, and young parents who have limited resources, education and time are unable to stay competitive in this workforce landscape.
- Inflexible programs and lack of access to supportive services remain barriers to opportunity and family stability for young parents. Just 5 percent of young parents receive childcare subsidies, even though 63 percent require child care, and 41 percent of young parents attributed jobless spells to challenges with child care.
- Young parents are more susceptible to psychological distress, yet many young parents have limited or no access to mental health services.
- Fathers have a critical influence on children's development, whether or not they live together, but they are often left out of programs to support young families.

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 Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands

For more than 25 years the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands has been a catalyst for positive change in the Territory through initiatives committed to youth, learning, family support and the environment. With a professional staff and a volunteer Board of Directors composed of community leaders, CFVI is a trusted advocate and supporter of programs that ensure opportunity and sustainability for current and future generations. Most recently, CFVI has been serving as a vehicle for receiving and distributing funds to support hurricane relief efforts throughout the Territory. In addition to providing administrative oversight to over 100 named funds and programs, CFVI is focused on meeting the emergency, intermediate and long-term needs of children, youth and families in the aftermath of two Category 5 hurricanes. CFVI is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization entirely supported by individual donors, grants, trusts, corporate donations and estate planning.

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