



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

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

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

**RICHMOND, Va.** — With limited access to opportunities to advance their education and find family-sustaining jobs, Virginia's 60,000 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 Virginia, Voices for Virginia's Children, 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 8 percent, Virginia is below 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:

- 68,000 children in Virginia have young parents ages 18 to 24.
- 69 percent of children of young parents in Virginia live in low-income families.
- Only 12 percent of young parents ages 18 to 24 have completed an associate degree or higher.
- 51 percent of Virginia'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."

Voices for Virginia's Children 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 in Virginia, like young parents nationwide, do not have the post-secondary education or specialized skills to obtain family-sustaining jobs.

"Young parents have a unique opportunity — they are building vital skills for work and parenting, while their children are in the most critical years of their development, said Executive Director Margaret Nimmo Holland. "The policy solutions we put forth today impact lives across at least two generations. They pave the way for the nearly 2 million children in the Commonwealth to thrive."

### **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 Voices for Virginia's Children**

Voices for Virginia's Children champions public policies that improve the lives of Virginia's children. We are the only multi-issue, statewide child advocacy organization in the commonwealth. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, we serve as the go-to resource for data on child well-being in Virginia and release annual reports and snapshots to highlight important, timely issues that impact children. To learn more about Voices and our KIDS COUNT work, visit [vakids.org](http://vakids.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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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