

Securing America's Future

Children and the 2018 Elections



Six Questions about Child Policy
Congressional Candidates Need to Address

Table of Contents

- 3** Introduction
- 4** Congress's Role in Child Policy
- 5** Healthy Development
- 7** Early Learning
- 9** School Success
- 11** Safety and Permanence
- 13** Economic Security
- 15** Equality and Opportunity
- 17** Appendix



About this Guide

This guide was produced for voters, child advocates and those interested in federal policy—and candidates themselves—to have an overview of national child policy issues the next Congress will need to address.

The partners shown on the back page are non-partisan, multi-issue child policy organizations. Each supports broader attention to child policy in federal

policy. Each also has its own, more detailed set of policy analyses and recommendations that provide much more information than given here. These organizations have partnered in sponsoring this guide to highlight common and basic questions that all congressional candidates should address as they take their campaigns to the people.

Introduction

Our children bring us together around our aspirations for the future. Across political affiliations, we all want our children to grow into productive adults equipped to lead the nation. Whether we come from a red state or a blue state, we want to leave our children a future that energizes their potential.

At the same time, many of us are not entirely clear on government's role in ensuring the health, safety, education, security and opportunity for the next generation—let alone how we can hold policy makers and elected officials accountable.

Policies focused on children often receive little discussion by voters, candidates or the media during election season.

This is not because candidates and the public do not care about these issues.

They do.

But child policy issues often do not lend themselves to simple sound bites. They are not considered “hot button” issues that shape campaigns.

The result is that the pressing needs of children have not been the subject of the type of political discourse required in a democracy to reach consensus and take action.

There is no such thing as “benign neglect” of children and their future.

Raising child policy to greater prominence can reorient our political process to common concerns and practical solutions. This guide offers a starting point for raising children's issues during the 2018 congressional elections.



Raising child policy to greater prominence can reorient our political process to common concerns and practical solutions.

What is Congress's role in child policy?

Particularly around the budget, Congress sets a course for our future prosperity. Among the highest priorities for any member of Congress is ensuring the health, safety, security, education and opportunity for today's children and youth—our next generation.

The United States is recognized internationally for its commitment to providing all children with strong educational opportunities and for meeting their basic needs for safety and security. At the same time, the U.S. is in a world economy where retaining our position as a world leader requires ever higher levels of child health, education and productivity.

In particular, the next Congress will have to respond to new challenges and opportunities facing children related to:

- Healthy development
- Early learning
- School success
- Safety and permanence
- Economic security
- Equality of opportunity

Currently, the federal government plays a key role in each of these areas—particularly through the federal budget. Most public funding to ensure children's economic security, health and nutrition comes through federal investments, and almost half of all funding for early learning and safety and permanence comes through federal funding (see appendix for details). While funding directed to children constitutes a small share of the overall federal budget, it represents one-third of all public (federal, state and local) investments in children. It is key to ensuring that children, in whatever state or community they live, have basic opportunities for success.

If the electoral process is to help voters decide on what is most needed to secure the future, voters must know the positions that congressional candidates have on each of these vital issues. Candidates have an obligation to spell out their vision for children and the specific steps they would take to achieve it.

Congressional candidates have an obligation to spell out their vision for children and the specific steps they would take to achieve it.

Healthy Development

Why does it matter?

Healthy development is key to children's educational, social and economic success. Although children are not a major driver of current health care costs, many chronic adult-health conditions that drive costs have their roots in childhood and can be prevented by establishing healthy patterns in the earliest years.

The first step to good health is ensuring children have health insurance coverage and a regular source of care. Beyond that, children need comprehensive primary and preventive health services and good nutrition for their and the nation's health.

What is the federal role today?

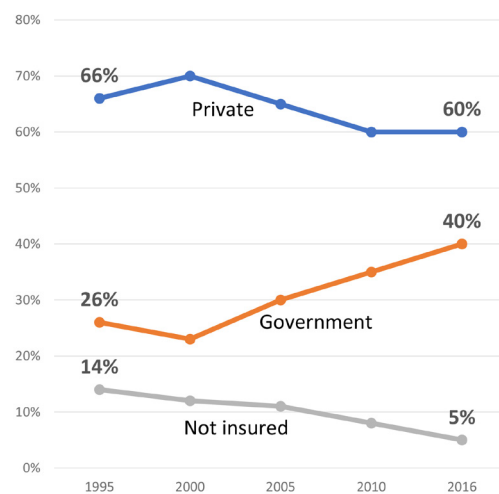
As health costs have risen dramatically over the last two decades, family health coverage has become increasingly difficult for employers to offer and families to afford. The federal government has expanded its role in providing health coverage for lower-income children without employer coverage and helped reduce the proportion of children who are not insured from 14 percent in 1995 to 5 percent in 2016.

The federal government provides support for child health and nutrition in the following ways:

- The Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) program provides nutritional counseling and food supplements to pregnant women and young children; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food stamps for low-income families with children; and child nutrition programs provide support for school lunch, breakfast and summer programs.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health and Institute of Medicine sponsor research and disseminate effective practices on health overall, including child health.
- Title V Maternal and Child Health block grants to states ensure high-quality prenatal and infant and child health services and responses to special health care needs.
- Medicaid and the state child health insurance program (CHIP) provide health coverage to approximately 36 million low-income U.S. children.

Many chronic adult health conditions have their roots in childhood and can be prevented by improving child health starting in the earliest years.

Percent of children insured by type of coverage, 1995-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Numbers total more than 100 percent because children may have both private and government coverage. The decline in private coverage from 2000-16 in large part reflects increased costs of employer-sponsored family coverage. The average annual premium for such coverage nearly tripled during the period, from \$6,438 to \$18,764, according to Kaiser Family Foundation surveys.

What does the public want from government?

Public opinion polling has consistently shown strong support for providing health care for children and for a greater emphasis on preventive health services for children:

- Voters rank “providing health care for poor children” as one of the very top responsibilities for government.
- Voters believe more emphasis should be placed by lawmakers on prevention and health promotion activities to ensure children with a strong and healthy start in life.

America are insured. Many others have difficulty accessing care. Health coverage does not equate with healthy development, both because much child health coverage is based on an adult model of maintaining health rather than promoting healthy development and because many issues affecting child health go beyond the health care system. Congressional candidates need to describe how they will:

- Ensure that children have health insurance, including Medicaid and CHIP, to meet their basic needs for care.
- Ensure that children’s health insurance covers developmental health services.
- Respond to “social determinants of health” that can undermine healthy development, including environmental and economic issues and concerns.

What do congressional candidates need to do?

While major gains have been made in ensuring health coverage for children, not all children in

6

Starting the Dialogue...

Questions for Voters and Advocates to Ask and Congressional Candidates to Address

Over the last two decades, the percentage of children with health insurance has increased, largely as a result of federal and state actions to expand coverage under Medicaid and CHIP. Still, 5 percent of all children remain uninsured. Further, children need more preventive and developmental services because they are growing and developing. For the first time in our country’s history, children face the prospect of growing up less healthy and living shorter lives than their parents.

Q. What actions will you take to ensure all children have health coverage and that this coverage is effective in responding to their needs for healthy growth and development?

Early Learning

Why does it matter?

A strong start in life contributes not only to educational success, but to health, social well-being and adult earnings. It reduces delinquency and crime. Both neuroscience and economics have demonstrated the critical importance of the earliest years to later success in school and life. Investments in high-quality early-learning programs have demonstrated high rates of return.

Currently, however, as many as 40 percent of America's children start school well behind what it expected for their age and, even with high-quality K-12 education, have difficulty catching up. This is called the readiness gap.

What is the federal role today?

Unlike the school-aged years, the time when most investments in children are made at the state and local level, the federal government provides a major share of funding directed to early-childhood development. For instance, the federal government invests in young children and their families through:

- Head Start, which provides preschool services to America's lowest-income 3- and 4-year-olds.
- Early Head Start, which provides early learning environments for very young children and their families.
- Early intervention services and preschool programs for children with disabilities and developmental delays through Parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).
- Child care assistance through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Child

Although many programs support early learning, the overall level of public investment in young children is a fraction of what is invested in school-aged children.

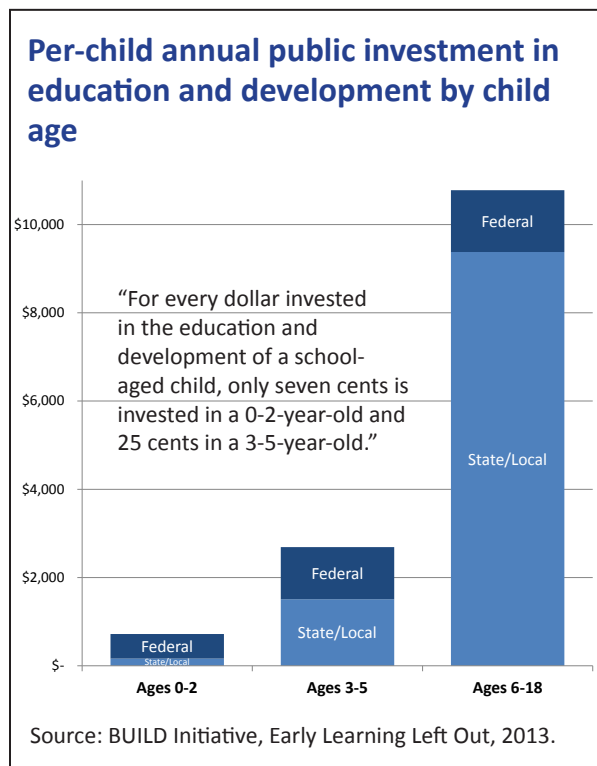
Care and Development Fund (CCDF) block grants, which helps low-income families pay for child care while the parents work, with an increasing emphasis on raising the quality as well as affordability of care for low-income families.

- The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV), which provides home visiting to parents of young children.

Although many different public programs support early learning, most, including those above, serve only a small fraction of children who are eligible and could benefit. The overall level of public (state, federal and school) investments in the earliest years remains a small fraction of what is invested in school-aged children.

What does the public want from government?

Public opinion polling shows strong support—



across gender, age, income and party affiliation—for additional public investments in early childhood. While voters recognize that parents have the primary right and responsibility to raise their children, they also recognize parents cannot do it alone. Public opinion polls show that:

- Voters are very concerned about the next generation and want government to do more, not less, to invest in children so they “start school with the proper knowledge to succeed.”
- Voters see “ensuring children get a strong start” through investments in early learning as second only to jobs and economic growth as a national priority.
- Voters see Head Start and preschool as particularly effective programs deserving of greater public investment.

What do congressional candidates need to do?

There is a wealth of science (neurobiology, epigenetics, resiliency, adverse childhood experiences, social determinants of health, protective factors and toxic stress) showing the need to invest in early childhood. Congressional candidates should describe how they will:

- Promote federal investments in young children that ensure each and every child starts school healthy and prepared for success.
- Champion actions within states to expand and improve early childhood services.
- Balance the responsibility of society to provide children what they need for a healthy start in life with supporting families as their child’s first teacher and guide to the world.

Starting the Dialogue...

Questions for Voters and Advocates to Ask and Congressional Candidates to Address

Too many American children start school behind and will have trouble catching up. Gaps in development start early, but investments do not. Through a variety of programs, the federal government plays a much larger role in supporting early learning than it does K-12 education. Still, with current state and federal investments, for every dollar invested in the education and development of a school-aged child, only seven cents is invested in an infant or toddler and 25 cents in a preschooler. Research on brain development points to the birth-to-5 years as absolutely critical to success in the school years and adulthood.

Q. What actions will you take to close the “readiness gap” that appears before kids start school?

School Success

Why does it matter?

Americans value education. Much of our nation's economic growth can be attributed to an educated and productive workforce. The U.S. was one of the first nations to have universal, compulsory public education and has boasted one of the world's highest literacy rates. In the 21st century world economy, education after high school is increasingly important for individual job seekers and for the nation's economic security.

Proficiency Levels of U.S. Students on Reading and Math at Fourth and Eighth Grades, 2005 and 2015

	2015	2005	Change
Fourth Grade Reading			
All	36%	31%	5%
FRM	21%	16%	5%
Not FRM	52%	42%	10%
GAP – Not FRM to FRM	31%	26%	5%

Eighth Grade Reading			
All	34%	31%	3%
FRM	20%	15%	5%
Not FRM	47%	39%	8%
GAP – Not FRM to FRM	27%	24%	3%

Fourth Grade Mathematics			
All	40%	36%	4%
FRM	24%	19%	5%
Not FRM	58%	49%	9%
GAP – Not FRM to FRM	34%	30%	4%

Fourth Grade Mathematics			
All	33%	30%	3%
FRM	18%	13%	5%
Not FRM	48%	39%	9%
GAP – Not FRM to FRM	30%	26%	4%

Note: The reason the changes are less overall than for either of the subgroups is there is a much larger percentage of FRM children in 2015 than 2005 – from 41 percent to 52 percent in fourth grade and 36 percent to 48 percent in eighth grade. Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

While the United States has historically been a leader in education, other countries are catching up. Too many American children are lagging in their educational development. The high school graduation rate among American youth now ranks well behind many trading partners and competitors. U.S. students rank only average among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member nations on literacy and below average on mathematics and science.

On national tests, fewer than two in five students is considered proficient in reading in fourth grade, and there are large disparities by both race and income. Fourth grade literacy is considered a particularly crucial marker of educational performance, as it is a very strong predictor of future educational success. It roughly marks the time when children move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.”

While the United States has made some gains over the last decade in overall student proficiency in reading and mathematics, according to National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, there are large and growing disparities between low-income children (as measured by participation in free- and reduced-school meals, FRM, programs) and their more affluent peers. Further, the proportion of students receiving FRM has increased during this period. Further gains in educational achievement will require concerted attention to raising proficiency levels among FRM students.

What is the federal role today?

States and communities play the major role in funding K-12 education and setting standards for students, teachers and schools. There is very strong support for community and state ownership of education, as reflected in publicly elected school boards and strong local oversight of school administration.

At the same time, the federal government plays an important role in supporting K-12 education, particularly in ensuring equal opportunities for children across states and by socio-economic status, race and language. In 1965 as part of the War on

Poverty, President Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) providing funding to states and local districts, with a special emphasis on providing additional resources to low-income and struggling students. In 1975, Congress enacted the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

While the federal government provides a small share of funding for K-12 schools, the funding through ESEA and IDEA represent critical supports to help ensure all children have access to quality education settings. Approximately 6 percent of all funding for primary and secondary education comes from the federal government.

In 2002, ESEA was reauthorized under the title “No Child Left Behind,” which added several controversial new requirements, including requiring states to establish standards and hold districts accountable for making progress in meeting them.

What does the public want from government?

Voters recognize the need for public education and regard it as key to America’s economic future. They view it as the primary way to ensure equality of opportunity. They believe in the need for government, including the federal government, to invest in education and ensure every child has the opportunity for a strong public education.

But voters also believe in community schools and local decision-making. They believe parents share responsibility in the education of their children

and that they should be able to make choices on appropriate educational settings. They recognize that all children need a high-quality education, but they do not want their own children’s education to be diminished in this pursuit.

Voters also are concerned with the quality of education. There was much broader consensus among the public on the overall quality of public education 50 years ago than there is today. This has sparked debate around developing alternatives to public education, including charter schools, vouchers and home schooling.

What do congressional candidates need to do?

A child’s educational opportunity should not depend on the state or community in which he or she lives. Federal education funding has been designed to ensure that children—particularly those who require compensatory or special educational services—receive them.

Congressional candidates should describe how they will:

- Ensure equitable educational opportunities and close disparities in achievement while supporting states and communities in their education roles.
- Work to improve overall educational achievement and reduce the number of children not completing high school and not going on to college or job training.

Starting the Dialogue...

Questions for Voters and Advocates to Ask and Congressional Candidates to Address

While Americans highly value education, too many American students lag in performance and achievement. While states and communities play the primary role in educating primary and secondary students, the federal government plays a key role in ensuring that the needs of all students, whatever their backgrounds and special concerns, are met.

Q. What actions will you take to ensure that the United States has a strong primary and secondary education system that meets every child’s needs and that close educational disparities?

Safety and Permanence

Why does it matter?

Exposure to violence, abuse and neglect can have lifelong consequences. Research on resilience, toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) points to the critical importance of family stability and safety for healthy child development. Children who are removed from parental care because of abuse or neglect still need people in their lives they can rely on. Unfortunately, too many children who are removed from their parents experience many moves while in foster care and end up disconnected from their community and family.

The foster care system currently serves 400,000 of the country's most vulnerable children, and the larger child protective service system responds to approximately 2 million reports of child abuse or neglect each year. If these children are not kept safe in their homes or provided permanence through family preservation, adoption or other stability in care, they experience extremely high rates of school failure, human trafficking, depression and other mental illness, and are more likely to experience homelessness and disconnection as adults.

What is the federal role today?

The federal government provides support to states to develop child welfare programs. It provides additional funds to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. In recent years, the federal government has emphasized prevention services aimed at strengthening families who are under stress—with the intent of avoiding out-of-home placement—and services to support kinship care and adoption when children cannot return to their families. Despite these efforts, the majority of

federal funding continues to support placement rather than prevention services.

Specifically, the federal government provides funding to states through:

- Title IV-E of the Social Security Act for maintenance payments for children in foster care, subsidized adoptions, and select services that can prevent placement
- Title IV-B of the Social Security Act for other foster care and prevention services
- Medicaid (largely by state determination) for a variety of mental-health services
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) block grant funds for other state services to prevent and treat child abuse.

What does the public want from government?

Voters consistently rate government's role in "protecting children from abuse and neglect" as at the very top of its responsibilities. They also voice strong support for the rights of parents to determine how to raise their children and of the dangers of government intruding on these roles.

Voters also believe that older youth in foster care should have a greater voice in planning for the future. Associations of foster and former foster youth in several states have helped to define and advocate for changes that provide for that involvement and give those youth support and contact with peers.

What do congressional candidates need to do?

Currently, the largest share of federal funding for child welfare services is through Title IV-E, which primarily funds out-of-home placement, and varies widely across states in the level of support it provides. While the overarching goal of the foster

Despite growing interest in strengthening families under stress, the preponderance of federal funding is for placement rather than prevention services.

care system is to ensure child well-being, most of the emphasis in states is in dealing with immediate issues of safety and then providing some level of permanence in placement.

Congressional candidates should describe how they will:

- Reduce the number of children who experience abuse, neglect or other adversity that jeopardizes their development.
- Ensure that children experiencing maltreatment receive what they need and have a community that supports them and they can count on as they grow and develop.
- Reduce racial and ethnic disparities in foster care.

Starting the Dialogue...

Questions for Voters and Advocates to Ask and Congressional Candidates to Address

In 2015, 683,000 children were found by state child protective service systems to be victims of maltreatment, and 428,000 children were in foster care. Since the establishment of the Social Security Act in 1935, the federal government has partnered with states to develop child welfare services to prevent or respond to child abuse and neglect and to provide for the safety, permanence and well-being of children who are removed from home. Despite such attention, too many children enter and remain in foster care and do not have permanency in their lives. Each year over 20,000 children age out of foster care with major barriers to success. The current federal financing system provides much greater emphasis on placement than prevention.

Q. What actions will you take to reduce the number of children who are subject to abuse and neglect, improve foster care, and ensure a promising future for those aging out of foster care?

Economic Security

Why does it matter?

Children cannot provide for themselves. They need their families to meet their essential needs for food, shelter and health care and to make investments in their future. While many families go to great lengths to provide stability and opportunity for their children, the simple fact is that poverty remains a major risk factor and often reflects other forms of deprivation that jeopardize healthy growth and development.

Today, children are the age group most likely to live in poverty. Since the start of the War on Poverty in 1965, poverty among seniors has declined by nearly 70 percent, while poverty among children has risen. It may not be possible to eliminate poverty among children overnight, but it is possible to reduce the impacts poverty can have.

What is the federal role today?

Medicare, Social Security and other pension programs have dramatically reduced senior poverty, but solutions to child poverty are more complex. Federal and state governments continue to provide different types of assistance, such as subsidized housing, energy assistance and supplementary nutrition assistance (SNAP or food stamps) to help families get by, but these do not fully counter the impact of living in poverty.

As part of welfare reform in the 1990s, the federal government shifted from economically supporting families when they stay at home to care for their children (Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or AFDC) to providing time-limited assistance to families as they work or look for a job (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF). A large share of funding has been redirected to child care

for parents as they work. The federal earned income tax credit and child tax credit programs, which support families who work but earn low wages, are now the largest poverty-reduction programs in the country.

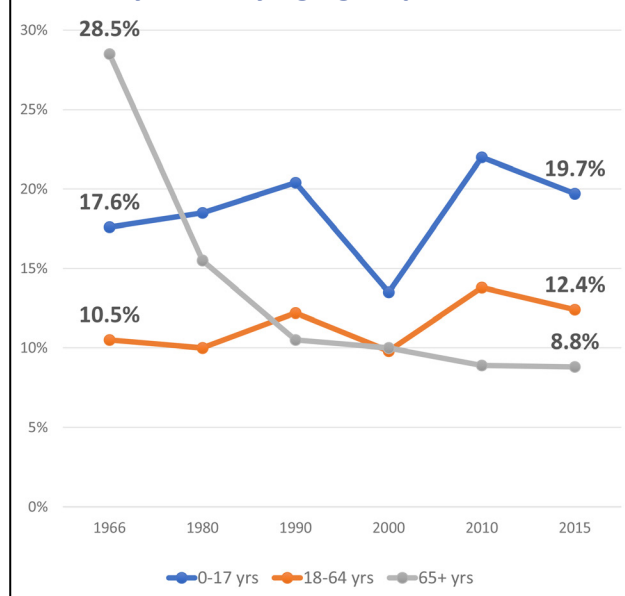
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance to Needy Families (SNAP) program also is a much larger program than is TANF, but even with its current support, one in five American children faces food insecurity.

What does the public want from government?

Voters are of two minds when it comes to poverty and children. Voters believe that the primary responsibility falls on parents to work or delay having children until they can afford to do so. Voters also strongly believe that all children should have their basic needs met and have the opportunity to succeed, even if their parents do not provide for this. Polls consistently show strong public concern for children growing up in poverty,

13

Poverty rates by age group, 1966-2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Poverty Tables, Table 3. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/historical/people.html>

Since the War on Poverty, poverty among seniors has declined by nearly 70 percent, while poverty among children has risen.

and a desire for government to do more, rather than less, to ensure that those children have stability in their lives and encouragement and opportunity to succeed.

What do congressional candidates need to do?

Poverty not only threatens healthy development, but also acts to exclude and discriminate against children. While it may not be possible to end poverty among children immediately, income should not be a primary predictor of future success. Congressional candidates should describe how they will:

- Ensure that all children have opportunities to succeed and grow into productive and economically secure adults.
- Make it possible for all parents to economically provide for their children.
- Develop two-generation approaches to child poverty that help parents and children gain the skills they need to rise out of poverty.

Starting the Dialogue...

Questions for Voters and Advocates to Ask and Congressional Candidates to Address

One in five American children live in poverty and more than twice that amount live in households struggling to make ends meet. Poverty, particularly persistent poverty, is one of the strongest predictors of future health, education and social well-being. Children whose families lack economic stability experience stress that compounds the barriers they face in growth and learning.

Q. What actions will you take to reduce poverty among children and otherwise ensure that all children have the resources and supports they need to become successful adults?

Equality and Opportunity

Why does it matter?

The United States is a nation rich in diversity and is becoming even more diverse, with children leading the way. Today, half of all children born in the U.S. are children of color. This is a source of both opportunity and challenge in an increasingly world-wide economy, where competition for higher skilled workers is coming from across the globe.

The nation's future prosperity will be determined, in large measure, by how well we educate and support all our children. To do so requires addressing what currently are large disparities in child well-being across different racial and ethnic groups. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's recent *Race for Results* report shows profound differences in child well-being by race, based on 12 indicators of well-being.

What is the federal role today?

Federal policy has done much to end legal discrimination in all its forms—from anti-discrimination laws in education, employment and education to voting rights and rights to public accommodation.

A large share of federal funding is directed to children who otherwise would be disadvantaged—in terms of disability, income or educational status. The role of the federal government has been to ensure that children, regardless of where they live or the color of their skin, have the same opportunities to succeed.

Despite these actions, disparities remain.

The future prosperity of the U.S. will be determined, in large measure, by how well we educate and support all children.

What does the public want from government?

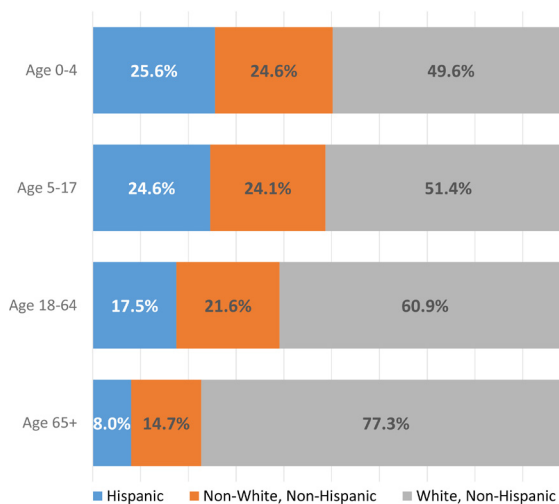
While voters remain uncomfortable talking about issues of race and discrimination, they are broadly supportive of every child having equal opportunity for success. The vast majority of Americans believe anti-discrimination laws should be strictly enforced and there should be equal opportunities for all.

While children do not vote, their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, teachers and doctors do. Children bring Americans—across age, gender, race, party affiliation and parenting and grand-parenting status—together in our aspirations that each and every child grows up in a society that, without prejudice or exclusion, offers him or her an opportunity to succeed.

What do congressional candidates need to do?

The federal government requires states to ensure that investments in health, education, safety and economic security contribute to reducing disparities. Given the differences in both income and racial and

Distribution of the U.S. population by race/ethnicity and age, 2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

ethnic make-up across the 50 states, the federal government also plays a key role in ensuring that children have the same opportunities regardless of where they live. This includes establishing funding formulas that recognize the differing needs and capacities within states and communities.

Congressional candidates should describe how they will:

- Address disparities among children by race, income and place in a way that fosters solutions.
- Ensure that federal resources and guidelines close disparities and improve child well-being across all U.S. political jurisdictions.

Starting the Dialogue...

Questions for Voters and Advocates to Ask and Congressional Candidates to Address

The United States is becoming more diverse, and children are leading the way. A land of immigrants, American society has seen diversity as a source of strength and innovation in the past, and there continues to be a strong inclination toward inclusion and equal opportunity. At the same time, there are profound disparities in child well-being—across measures of health, safety, economic security and school readiness and success—across racial and socio-economic lines that must be addressed for America's future prosperity.

Q. What actions will you take to ensure that all children have equal opportunities for success and to eliminate inequities that limit them in achieving their potential?

Appendix

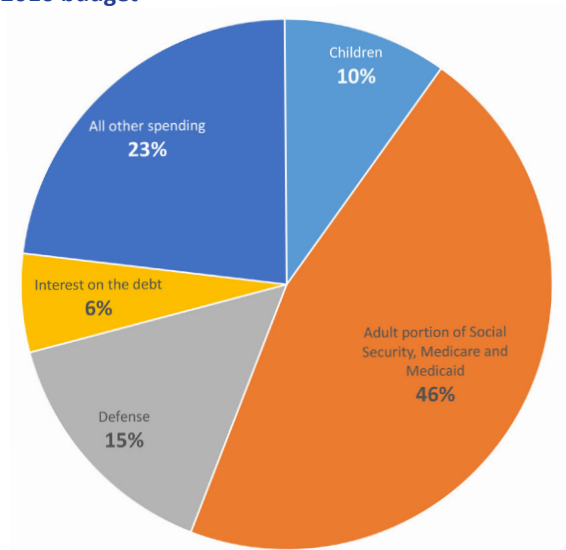
The federal government plays a major role in providing for the health and economic security of U.S. seniors and adults with disabilities. Medicare, Social Security and other federal programs for seniors and those with disabilities account for 46 percent of the federal budget. National defense accounts for another 15 percent, and interest on the national debt 6 percent.

By comparison, children are 24 percent of the population, but federal investments in children account for only about 10 percent of the federal budget. While relatively small, these investments represent an essential foundation for states to meet children’s health, education, safety and security needs.

The table below shows federal, state and school investment in children. It provides both dollars invested and the share that federal investments represent of total public spending.



Share of federal budget focused on children
2016 budget



Source: Kids’ Share 2017 (Urban Institute)

Federal, state and local funding for children (in billions), 2016

	Federal Budget	State/School Budget	Total Investments	Federal Share of Total Investments
Education (K-12)	\$41	\$600	\$641	6%
Health	\$110	\$85	\$195	56%
Economic security	\$128	\$20	\$148	86%
Nutrition	\$59	\$5	\$64	92%
Early learning	\$20	\$22	\$42	48%
Safety (child welfare)	\$11	\$14	\$25	44%
Housing/social services	\$8	\$4	\$12	67%
Total	\$377	\$750	\$1,127	33%

NOTE: The \$377 billion represents 10 percent of the \$3.9 trillion federal budget. These figures are drawn from Kids’ Share 2017, which has apportioned different governmental spending programs for children (e.g. 47 percent of SNAP benefits are apportioned to children). There have been minor adaptations to the figures (e.g. to reflect TANF spending that goes to child care and Medicaid spending that goes to child welfare services). Two excellent sources for information on the federal budget are: Kids Share 2017: Federal Spending on Children in 2016 and Children’s Budget: 2016 (First Focus). The First Focus report does not include the earned income tax credit and child tax credit refunds going to families, while the Urban Institute report does. Therefore, the First Focus report shows 8 percent, rather than 10 percent of the federal budget directed to children.

About the national partners

The Every Child Matters Education Fund, established in 2001, is a non-profit, non-partisan organization working to make public investments in children, youth and families a nationwide priority. ECM focuses on raising the visibility of children's issues during elections, urging candidates to support—and the public to demand—greater investments in programs that address the needs of America's families. Visit www.everychildmatters.org.

The Partnership for America's Children is a network of over 50 state and community child-advocacy organizations in over 40 states representing children and their needs in communities and state capitols and dedicated to improving the lives of all children through public policies to ensure equity and diversity, child health, school readiness, school success, child safety and family stability and economic security. Visit www.4americaschildren.org.

The Children's Leadership Council (CLC) is a coalition of over 50 national organizations dedicated to improving the lives and opportunities of America's children and youth. Nationwide, CLC members work to advance the health, education and well-being of children and youth in order to prepare them for school, work and life. CLC members support investments in the health, safety, education, nutrition and economic security of children, youth and families. Visit www.childrensleadershipcouncil.org.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy has as its primary goal to influence public policy affecting poor children and families, the elderly and the disabled. CSSP's overarching mission is creating new ideas and promoting public policies that produce equal opportunities and better futures for all children and families, especially those most often left behind. Visit www.cssp.org.

First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions. First Focus leads a comprehensive advocacy strategy, with its hands-on experience with federal policymaking and a commitment to seeking policy solutions. Visit www.firstfocus.net.

Starting the Dialogue...

Six key questions about child policy

What actions will you take to:

- 1. Health**
Ensure all children have health coverage and this coverage is effective in responding to their needs for healthy growth and development?
- 2. Early Learning**
Close the “readiness gap” that appears before kids start school?
- 3. School Success**
Ensure the United States has a strong primary and secondary education system that meets every child’s needs?
- 4. Safety and Permanence**
Reduce the number of children who are subject to abuse and neglect, improve foster care, and ensure a promising future for those aging out of foster care?
- 5. Economic Security**
Reduce poverty among children and otherwise ensure that all children have the resources and supports they need to become successful adults?
- 6. Equality and Opportunity**
Ensure that all children have equal opportunities for success and eliminate inequities that limit them in achieving their potential?

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