

CONNECTS

CASEY

A REPORT FROM THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

FALL 2009



Making Sure New Policies Benefit Vulnerable Families

In May 2009, Providence, Rhode Island, was the only “small city” to snag a \$372,500 grant as part of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and Wal-Mart Foundation’s Green Jobs Training Initiative. The grant is helping Providence develop an innovative program that builds on city efforts to train lower-skill residents for weatherization and other green jobs while coordinating related training, literacy, workforce, and other programs to take advantage of new federal stimulus dollars.

The grant, awarded to the Apeiron Institute for Sustainable Living based in Providence, benefited from *Making*

Connections Providence Consultant Sarah Griffen’s support and expertise. A long-time technical assistance provider for the Casey Foundation initiative, she was well suited to help craft the application after working for months to identify opportunities for Casey-supported places to make best use of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

Griffen wrote two comprehensive guides that promote Casey’s two-generation strategy, advising cities on how to ensure that entry-level jobs and training don’t bypass low-skill, low-wage workers and that their children are healthy and prepared to succeed in school and beyond.

Her role is one example of how Casey has been advocating on many levels for policies to help vulnerable families and disadvantaged communities and to ensure that those policies reach their target.

“We want policies that promote what works and avoid what doesn’t work,” says Ralph Smith, Casey’s executive vice president. “Once these policies are adopted, we want to make sure that they are implemented in ways that reach the most vulnerable populations and places.”

Providence is well positioned to focus on that goal. Bert Cooper, the former family economic success director for

Making Connections Providence, oversees the city's new anti-poverty effort, which resulted from a mayoral task force that Cooper, in partnership with Mayor David N. Cicilline's Office and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, helped spearhead. He is also part of a Providence team, led by the city's Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs Matthew Stark, which is pinpointing where to spend stimulus money. The city is applying for some \$9 million in Department of Labor ARRA training funds for green jobs and health care jobs.

"We are using these new funding opportunities to help the *Making Connections*

"Having a mayor who is committed to an anti-poverty and family economic success agenda and has strong ties with grassroots organizations and the workforce community is a major asset in targeting ARRA funding to help lower-skilled workers and their families," notes Cooper.

The work in Providence is an example of Casey's efforts to engage partners and grantees in helping states and localities navigate new federal initiatives and maximize available resources to help poor urban and rural areas. "The real challenge is to make sure that the benefits flow through," says Ralph Smith.

- Reforming the nation's juvenile justice system.
- Reducing poverty and promoting opportunity.
- Improving the nation's data on children and families.

Other emerging areas of focus include:

- Responding to the mortgage foreclosure crisis by helping families avoid losing their homes, assisting dislocated renters, and helping communities blighted by foreclosures.
- Shaping new federally supported community change initiatives.



community and the City of Providence realize key goals of Mayor Cicilline's green jobs agenda," notes Stark.

The city also partners with a grassroots organization, the John Hope Settlement House, in managing *Making Connections* and benefits from strong on-the-ground advocacy by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. The Rhode Island division of Casey Family Services, based in Providence, also provides expertise in serving low-income families.

At left (from left), Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, his staff member David Costello, and Patrice Cromwell and Tony Cipollone of the Casey Foundation at a regional roundtable on implementing the stimulus package. On the right, T. Eloise Foster, Maryland State Secretary of Budget and Management.

Policies Reflect Casey Priorities

Casey's efforts to help shape, influence, and guide the implementation of new initiatives reflects its core priorities, which include:

- Rebuilding the nation's child welfare system.

- Ensuring that children can read at grade level by third grade.
- Removing obstacles to productive re-entry into society for prisoners and helping their families.

ARRA offers unprecedented opportunities to not only revitalize the economy but



Making Homes Healthier and More Energy Efficient in Baltimore

For years, Tarsha Mitchell rushed her oldest child, who suffers from asthma, to the hospital. “We’re well known in the emergency room,” she says.

But that is changing, thanks to home repairs designed to reduce health and safety hazards in the 104-year-old Baltimore house where Mitchell lives with her husband and four children. The work was done by Safe at Home, a Casey-supported program providing free repairs to the homes of asthma-diagnosed children in Baltimore City.

“They did a lot of work,” says Mitchell, whose five-year-old also has asthma. “Since then, we have not had any problems with asthma. It helped keep the dust down, the air clean, and we can open the living room window to air the place out. It’s been very helpful.”

Since 2000, Safe at Home has helped thousands of children by reducing home-based asthma triggers, safety threats, and lead-based paint hazards that cause illness and injury. “We’re trying to reduce the number of asthma episodes, school absences, and emergency room visits,” says Wes Stewart, program services director at the National Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning based in Baltimore.

The coalition and the Casey Foundation are encouraging policymakers—from the White House to local communities—to incorporate this “healthy-homes” work into weatherization and energy-efficiency projects funded by the federal stimulus package.

Tarsha Mitchell, Warren Matthews, and daughters, Shaw’dae, 16, Tekiyah, 5, and Mekaylah, 2, in their Baltimore home, which became a healthier environment after repairs by a healthy-homes program that could serve as a model for stimulus-funded projects.

“We are trying to ensure that the green, energy-efficiency movement does not leave houses unhealthy but instead ensures a triple bottom-line of healthier housing, strong green jobs opportunities, and better outcomes for children,” says Ruth Ann Norton, the coalition’s executive director.

“As we go through hundreds of thousands of housing units over the next year with stimulus funds, we want to ensure that the workers, residents, and homes are safe from potential hazards that are present or could be exacerbated by such a huge intervention. Without healthy housing and lead safety standards, you could spend millions of dollars in neighborhoods to create quick shovel-ready jobs but cause lots of harm.”

Casey also is funding the coalition to provide support and advice to help cities where Casey is heavily involved to pursue healthy-homes work. “This harmonizes with our responsible redevelopment vision and wanting to have strong neighborhoods to support strong families that ultimately support strong kids,” says Salin Geevarghese, a Casey senior associate. The healthy-homes work supports Casey’s two-generation approach to reducing poverty, encompassing efforts to improve the economic stability and success of low-income parents while ensuring that their children are healthy and prepared to succeed in school and become productive citizens.

A lead-poisoned child is seven times more likely to drop out of school, and over 14 million school days are missed yearly by children due to asthma attacks. Adding a healthy-homes component to

weatherization work also creates a pipeline for low-income people to obtain skills and get higher-paying, more sustainable jobs. “With skills in lead-safe work practices and healthy-housing training, we can move workers from \$9 an hour to \$16 to \$21,” Norton notes.

These efforts resulted in a healthier home for Mitchell and her family, with lead hazards reduced by removing chipping and peeling lead-based paint and repainting, and by replacing lead-based windows. In addition, a smoke alarm with nine-year

lithium batteries, a carbon monoxide detector, and electrical outlet caps were installed to reduce injury hazards; leaks and holes were repaired to reduce allergen-causing mold and pests; and the family received special mattress pads and pillow covers and a high-efficiency vacuum cleaner to reduce dust mites. An air filtering unit was also installed in the children’s bedroom.

“It’s a healthier environment for all of us,” says Mitchell.

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also to improve the outlook for jobs, opportunities, and the health and well-being of vulnerable families and children. Other laws and initiatives set in motion under the Bush and Obama administrations also offer potential to advance Casey priorities, such as:

- *The Second Chance Act of 2007*, which provides assistance and support services for people leaving prison to improve outcomes, support re-entry, and reduce recidivism.
- *The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*, which expands support for children and youth in foster care and promotes the goal of permanent homes.
- *The Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009*, which provides coverage to additional disadvantaged children.
- *The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009*, which increases incentives to participate in national service and creates a Social Innovations Fund to leverage public-private partnerships to replicate or expand proven solutions to community challenges. White House

officials will travel across the country to find the most promising nonprofits for these grants. President Obama has highlighted the exemplary work of two Casey grantees: the Harlem Children’s Zone and Bonnie CLAC, which provides car loans and counseling.

- *Making Home Affordable*, an initiative that is part of President Obama’s Financial Stability Plan, which brings together government, lenders, and borrowers to ensure that working Americans can afford to stay in their homes and to prevent foreclosures.
- *The Promise Neighborhoods Initiative*, an initiative proposed by the Obama administration that was inspired by the Harlem Children’s Zone, which helps children succeed in school, graduate, and achieve post-secondary success.
- *Race to the Top*, a \$4.35 billion ARRA fund that provides competitive grants for states doing innovative education reform work in: standards and assessments, teacher and principal recruitment, data systems, and turning around low-performing schools.

Networks Spring into Action

With these welcome opportunities come new challenges: to ensure that states accurately translate policy into action, that remedies reach vulnerable children and families, and that policy gains are not eroded during the legislative and budget processes.

“While we are celebrating policy wins that our network has been influential in achieving and that came about because of changing circumstances, we must pay attention to these issues of translation, reach, and erosion,” says Ralph Smith. “Much of federal policy devolves to the state, where the basic implementation and operational decisions are made. You have to watch for the chasm between the statute’s intention and states’ implementation. Without significant attention and resources, disinvested neighborhoods that may be intended beneficiaries of policies may never hear about them or benefit.”

In meeting these challenges, it helps that Casey has long prepared by building capacity, leadership, and cooperation in *Making Connections* communities like Providence. As a result, many communities



Asthma is less problematic for Shaw'dae Harrison, seen with her younger sister Mekaylah Matthews, since home repairs were done to make the girls' Baltimore house healthier.

"have been able to mobilize quickly... so people can seize these opportunities," says Frank Farrow, former director of Casey's community change initiatives and now director of the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). "It's one of the most important legacies of *Making Connections*."

As part of an intensive effort to respond to ARRA and other new initiatives through more targeted technical assistance, CSSP has aided efforts to ensure that decisions about funding, in Providence and elsewhere, reflect Casey's two-generation framework. Working through CSSP, Casey has also extended support to help *Making Connections* and Casey's Civic Sites capitalize on the stimulus and other state funds, in light of a worsening recession and state budget crises.

Vital information and technical assistance have also reached Casey places and grantees swiftly thanks to Casey's partnerships with policy advocacy groups scrutinizing

new federal policies in search of fresh opportunities to aid disadvantaged children and families. These groups are getting the word out about those opportunities via Casey-supported networks such as KIDS COUNT grantee organizations in every state and the State Fiscal Analysis Initiative (SFAI), which includes nonprofits in 31 states that focus on low- and moderate-income families' needs.

"We've spent a dozen years building infrastructure at the state and federal levels, building an interrelated network of advocacy organizations and think tanks. Now we can take advantage of that," says Michael C. Laracy, Casey's public policy coordinator.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) has disseminated data and information to guide states. It has developed numerous reports, organized dozens of conference calls and webinars, and responded to inquiries from advocates, the press, and state policymakers and administrators.

"We're doing work that is more valuable now than ever before," says Nicholas Johnson, director of the center's State Fiscal Project. "It really validates this whole notion that analytic capacity is needed to work on budget and tax issues as they relate to low-income families."

In Virginia, the Commonwealth Institute, Casey's SFAI grantee, used information

from CBPP to push for additional unemployment insurance money from the stimulus package, heightening public awareness and winning the governor's support. Although this push was defeated by the legislature, the institute will likely pursue it again.

"The center was hugely helpful, explaining, interpreting, and analyzing what was happening with the stimulus, pre-enactment and post-enactment," says Michael Cassidy, the institute's executive director. "They pushed out long in-depth emails, publishing reports, hosting conference calls and a webinar. We needed it very much because the stimulus was the fiscal issue in the state capitol."

Casey is encouraging communities not to focus entirely on quickly producing "shovel-ready jobs," which aren't often designed for the lowest-skilled workers, notes Farrow. "Let's do something short term that gets the dollars out and hopefully some of our neighborhoods and residents can benefit. But longer term, people should be thinking 'How do we build opportunities for very low-income residents?'"

The Casey network is helping communities seize this opportunity. The National Fund for Workforce Solutions prepared a memo advocating for the U.S. Department of Labor to use ARRA and Workforce Investment Act funds and

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Without significant attention and resources, disinvested neighborhoods that may be intended beneficiaries of policies may never hear about them or benefit.



Philadelphia Foreclosure Prevention Program Serves as Model

By fall 2008, Sandra I. Rodriguez was desperate. Unable to keep up with her mortgage payments when her income plummeted after losing her full-time job and taking a part-time one, Rodriguez was braced to lose her three-bedroom Philadelphia house.

"I had two little kids and was pregnant, and I was pretty much one foot outside my house and one foot inside," says Rodriguez, a single parent who now has three sons. "I was so afraid of losing my home."

Thanks to Philadelphia's innovative foreclosure prevention program, however, Rodriguez was able to renegotiate her loan, which lowered her payments and allowed her to keep her home.

The Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program—which uses city resources to help homeowners and lenders reach agreements that prevent foreclosure—has saved 1,200 homes during its first year of operation, according to June 2009 city data. The program is serving as a model for others, including a program recently piloted in Louisville, Kentucky, through the Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative, the local Legal Aid Society, the Jefferson County Circuit Court, and Kentucky's housing financing agency.

Of the 3,400 homeowners who have used the Philadelphia program, "35 percent have gotten resolutions, while over 1,500 are still being negotiated. That is a good sign," says Hiram Carmona, Philadelphia's manager of housing counseling.

The Philadelphia effort, which has received Casey support, precedes the Obama administration's anti-foreclosure plan, begun in March, which offers \$75 billion in incentives to lenders to reduce loan payments for troubled borrowers.

While the federal plan is largely voluntary for lenders, the Philadelphia program requires lenders

to meet with homeowners and their counselors before there can be a sheriff's sale. It has earned praise as an example of the vital local efforts needed to accompany the federal plan.

Louisville Follows Suit

In fact, Casey sponsored a site visit in January to Philadelphia for Louisville leaders interested in replicating the program. The visit was "incredibly important, helpful, and informative," notes Jane Walsh, Family Economic Success Coordinator of *Making Connections* Louisville.

Preventing foreclosures dovetails with one of the Foundation's key policy priorities: to help stabilize vulnerable children and families. "There's a physical stability that comes with remaining in the home and maintaining a family's connections to social networks and to schools and workplaces," says Beadsie Woo, a Casey senior associate. "From a financial perspective, there's the preservation of what is for most American families their largest asset. Instead of losing equity and being displaced, people can remain in their home and safeguard their investment."

The Philadelphia program reflects an unusual partnership between the city, the local court system, lenders, and housing advocates. Some of the features that have made it so successful include extensive door-to-door outreach, an informational hotline staffed by lawyers and paralegals, free counseling services by neighborhood agencies, and court-mandated meetings between lenders and borrowers accompanied by their counselors.

At left, Sandra Rodriguez, with her three sons. Below, with her youngest son Justin at the Philadelphia home she still owns, thanks to a foreclosure prevention program that is inspiring efforts to assist homeowners in other communities.

Homeowners receive help from a city-funded housing counselor and, if needed, legal assistance from city-funded professionals or attorneys working pro bono. Rodriguez found the diversion program through Congreso, a community-based nonprofit. "I came in there seeking help with tears in my eyes," says Rodriguez.

In December 2006, she lost her \$41,000-a-year job and found a new part-time \$21,000-a-year job in June 2007. A few years earlier, she had refinanced her home according to terms she didn't fully understand, and her interest rate ended up rising from 5 to nearly 12 percent, raising her monthly payments from \$215 to \$800.

Falling behind on her bills, Rodriguez and her children went without water, heat, and a phone. Without electricity, Rodriguez's eight-year-old couldn't get his machine-administered asthma medicine. Rodriguez couldn't afford to pay for her sons' school uniforms. The family moved in with a friend for awhile. "It became a real bad struggle," says Rodriguez. "I was ready to get evicted."

Thanks to the diversion program, her home was saved. "They were there with me through everything," says Rodriguez. Her lender agreed to lower her mortgage to about 6 percent, making the home affordable for her again. "I don't have any problems paying it," says Rodriguez. "I'm very grateful. It's been a wonderful home."



competitive grants to take advantage of existing workforce partnerships and focus on low-income populations and less-skilled workers.

The Working Poor Families Project issued principles to guide states in using ARRA funds, calling for such steps as creating jobs that pay a family-supporting wage and provide health insurance and other benefits, and investing in infrastructure projects that residents in distressed communities can work on.

State Players Convene to Share and Learn

These issues also have been raised at regional and national gatherings that offer state and local policymakers the chance to discuss how to use new federal resources.

For example, in May 120 people in teams from seven eastern states and the District of Columbia attended a Regional State Roundtable on Recovery cosponsored by Casey, the Center for State Innovation, and Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley. Governors' senior staff and agency leaders from Maryland, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Washington, DC,

shared experiences, concerns, and plans for stimulus package implementation, with information sessions on weatherization, public benefits, transportation, and workforce development.

"Federal officials and state agency staff wrestling with implementing ARRA using the most progressive approaches were able to raise key challenges and discuss practical ideas and solutions," says Patrice Cromwell, a Casey senior associate who was on loan to the governor's office and helped facilitate the Roundtable.

Federal officials attending the meeting provided guidance on upcoming initiatives. The meeting also laid the groundwork for follow-up activities, including a July Roundtable for Midwestern states and an August webinar on best practices in coordinating public benefits programs.

In addition, 140 senior city and state officials from 16 cities attended a Green Stimulus Boot Camp in Cambridge, Massachusetts, hosted by Harvard University's Kennedy School of

Government and Living Cities. Living Cities is a group of 21 of the world's largest foundations, including Casey, which aim to improve cities and the lives of low-income people. Officials received guidance as they rushed to meet deadlines to draw stimulus money for energy-saving programs.

"The session fostered great interaction and learning among peers and stimulated the cities to identify concrete next steps," says Bob Giloth, the Casey Foundation's director of Family Economic Success.

Also, Connecticut legislators attended a health care briefing at the state capitol sponsored by Casey and the Universal Health Care Foundation. The briefing focused on helping Connecticut take maximum advantage of federal stimulus funding and other initiatives.

The Foundation and its grantees and partners have also sponsored various webinars on the use of stimulus funds to support workforce, housing, and green jobs initiatives. CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

At left, Joel Rogers, director of the Center for State Innovation (left), and Mark Bailey, state and local team leader in the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Weatherization and Intergovernmental Program, at a regional roundtable on stimulus package implementation. At right, also attending, third from left, was Matthew Stark, director of policy and legislative affairs in Providence.





Advocates Convince Arizona to Use Stimulus Dollars for Child Care

For Michael Hill, the government subsidy that helped him afford child care also helped him get back on track financially after being out of work for ten months.

"It was tremendous. That took so much stress off me," says Hill, 32, a single father in Mesa, Arizona, who needed help paying for child care for his four-year-old son Braeden after the job he finally found last spring paid half of what he'd earned before.

"On that salary, there would have been no way to afford child care. It saved me," says Hill. "And Braeden is in a good, safe place."

Hill is one of many Arizonans who have benefited from the work of state children's advocates who successfully urged lawmakers to accept federal stimulus money and to use some of it for subsidized child care. The subsidy program had been threatened by looming state budget cuts in financially strapped Arizona.

The Children's Action Alliance, Casey's KIDS COUNT grantee in Phoenix, played a key role in working with community partners to convince lawmakers to use stimulus funds for subsidized child care. "If the stimulus funds hadn't been here and we hadn't been able to quickly and effectively advocate for them, 15,000 kids would have been affected," says Dana Wolfe Naimark, the organization's president and chief executive officer. "Parents wouldn't know where they were taking those kids. Many would be left alone or with older kids or moved from neighbor to neighbor, with no stability or consistency."

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), a Washington-based research organization that also receives Casey support, provided critical help to Naimark's organization in advocating for the use of the stimulus funds to benefit low-income families.

"They're sensitive to the information we need and when we need it," says Naimark. "We count on them and they always come through."

The Children's Action Alliance also received invaluable information through the State Fiscal Analysis Initiative (SFAI) network, supported by Casey and coordinated by CBPP, which includes nonprofits in 31 states that focus on low- and moderate-income families' needs.

With these connections and support, the Children's Action Alliance also helped convince state lawmakers to take advantage of a stimulus measure providing additional temporary financial help to unemployed workers. Arizona will now pay up to 13 weeks of extended unemployment insurance benefits to people who have exhausted their regular benefits. This has helped 34,000 unemployed Arizonans and their families who would, otherwise "be at risk of falling into complete financial crisis, with various threats to children's well-being," says Naimark.

The Children's Action Alliance also joined with 40 other groups to form the Arizona Budget Coalition, fighting against budget cuts in education, health, and human services.

"Being part of a network—a group supported by Casey and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities as a hub—gives us so much more confidence and power. We're not just standing on our own," says

Michael Hill, with his son Braeden, benefited from successful efforts by Arizona children's advocates to encourage state lawmakers to use stimulus dollars for subsidized child care.

Naimark. “We feel like we’re part of something very solid and very influential.”

The stimulus package is “like nothing we’ve ever seen before, with a large amount of money flowing through existing programs and new rules and regulations that policymakers need to learn and put into place very fast,” says Nicholas Johnson, director of CBPP’s State Fiscal Project.

“The best thing Casey and other funders did to help make sure that stimulus money is spent wisely at the state level was what they did years ago—they started investing in KIDS COUNT and SFAI groups that have the ability to understand federal and state budgets and the effects of federal policies on kids. Because they have this capacity, the groups are able to turn on a dime when something like this happens.”

Michael Hill, who recently got a better-paying job, credits the subsidized child care with “making things positive” and getting him through an unexpected financial setback. “If they get rid of this program it will hurt a lot of people, not only the parents but the kids,” he says.



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In the spring, Casey sponsored a webinar about the stimulus package for rural communities that have participated in Casey’s Rural Family Economic Success work. And President Obama’s senior advisor for Recovery Act Implementation, Ed DeSeve, was a keynote speaker, via teleconference, at the 2009 Philanthropy and Rural America Conference in

Little Rock, Arkansas, sponsored by the National Rural Funders Collaborative and the Council on Foundations.

Experts from the Casey Foundation, its child welfare agency Casey Family Services, and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, which focuses on easing the transition out of foster

care for older youth, also have helped brief state child welfare officials on implementing the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. Arguably the most significant child welfare legislation in nearly 30 years, it reflects many Casey principles, including involvement of extended family in making decisions and providing permanence for children, extended support for youth transitioning out of care, increased adoption incentives and assistance, and greater accountability for child welfare agencies.

“Making sure states have the knowledge, resources, and tools to implement the legislation effectively is our number one priority,” says Robert Geen, a Casey senior fellow specializing in child welfare issues. “The Foundation’s primary goal

It’s a real priority to help our national partners make sure that this is viewed as a successful opportunity to help vulnerable populations.

is to promote prevention, permanence, and equity,” adds Sania Metzger, director of policy for Casey Family Services, www.caseyfamilyservices.org.

Casey also has used Foundation publications and issue briefs, in print and on its website, www.aecf.org, to explain emerging initiatives and its work to support them. It has also used technology such as the PolicyForResults.org website, launched with Casey support by CSSP, to help governors, state legislators, budget officials, and other policymakers get reliable information about the conditions and circumstances of children and families in states and to learn about policies and practices to improve outcomes. The site offers strategies to maximize new federal funding and resources and to manage state budgets to protect vulnerable children and families.

A major hurdle is conveying to budget-strapped states the importance of implementing and funding laws that potentially benefit families and communities. The site offers concrete guidelines for states in making tough funding decisions [see text box].

Casey also is focused on upcoming opportunities—including the 2010 budget—that will be critical in ensuring that authorized monies are allocated and legislative mandates funded.

“It’s a real priority for Casey to help our national partners understand and take advantage of the stimulus and to make sure that this is viewed as a successful opportunity to help vulnerable populations,” notes Jann Jackson, a Casey senior fellow for policy reform advocacy.

Dana Wolfe Naimark, president of the Children’s Action Alliance in Phoenix, which helped secure stimulus funds for subsidized child care to assist Arizona families.

Developing Budgets in Tough Fiscal Times: PRINCIPLES FOR STATES

In hard times, state policymakers must make tough choices to balance state budgets while protecting public well-being. The following principles, drawn from www.PolicyForResults.org, a website managed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy with Casey support, offer guidance for making the best decisions for children and families.

1. **PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE.** Recessions sharply increase unemployment, homelessness, and hunger. Funding benefits and services for people who need them most not only minimizes human suffering; it also reduces future costs to the state.
2. **FOCUS ON RESULTS.** Focusing on measurable results can help set priorities and guide decisions about the best use of scarce resources.
3. **MAXIMIZE RETURN ON INVESTMENT—**over the short and long term. Especially when money is tight, it pays to invest in cost-effective services, programs, and policies that provide immediate benefits for children and families and that keep paying as children grow into productive adults.
4. **STIMULATE THE ECONOMY BY INVESTING IN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.** Providing financial support to struggling families who will immediately spend it on necessities both quickly injects money into the economy and benefits those most likely to be hurt by the economic downturn.
5. **STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY RESOURCES.** In times of hardship, many people turn to extended families, neighbors, faith groups, local food banks, and other community resources. By investing in local assets, policymakers can strengthen neighborhoods, spur local innovation and problem-solving, and tap the capacity of communities to prevent the need for more extensive assistance.
6. **SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR REFORM.** When budgets are tight, it’s easier to develop political consensus to eliminate well-intentioned but ineffective programs that don’t help vulnerable children and families. Tough times provide impetus for changing the way decisions are made and for building the capacity to make effective financing, budgeting, and policy choices.

For more guidance, visit www.PolicyForResults.org.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

CASEY CONNECTS

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.

www.aecf.org/ARRA.aspx The guides referred to in this issue of *Casey Connects* that were developed to help communities access the benefits provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) can be found in the Foundation's website Knowledge Center.

www.recovery.gov This website was created by the federal government in response to the mandate set out in the Recovery Act to establish and maintain a user-friendly, public website to foster greater accountability and transparency in the use of covered funds. The website provides a portal or gateway to key information relating to the act and provides connections to other government websites with related information.

www.PolicyForResults.org This website is designed to provide state and local policymakers, budget officials, and other decision-makers with the information, data, and strategies they need to maximize new federal funding resources and manage state budgets to protect

vulnerable children and families. It is a project of the Center for the Study of Social Policy (www.cssp.org) a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and technical assistance organization headquartered in Washington, DC.

www.cbpp.org The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is a nonpartisan research and policy institute that works at the federal and state levels on fiscal policy and public programs that affect low- and moderate-income families and individuals.

www.statefiscal.org The State Fiscal Analysis Initiative brings together nonpartisan, independent, nonprofit organizations in each of 31 states. These organizations have diverse backgrounds and missions, but they share a commitment to rigorous policy analysis, responsible budget and tax policies, and a particular focus on the needs of low- and moderate-income families.