

# CONNECTS

CASEY

SUMMER 2000  
A REPORT FROM THE  
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

IN THIS ISSUE: 2000 KIDS COUNT Emphasizes Connections; Summit Stresses Job Advancement; Immigrant Challenges Highlighted; Casey Family Joining Hands To Serve Children Better; Resource Corner; INSITES

## 2000 KIDS COUNT EMPHASIZES NEED FOR CONNECTIONS

Each year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation paints a statistical portrait of how children are faring in this country in its *KIDS COUNT Data Book*. The numbers track progress across the states in some areas and pitfalls in others, but the bottom line remains the same: In a land of prosperity, too many families live in conditions of concentrated poverty that stifle their children's chances for happy, healthy, and productive lives.

This year's report tells a similar story, but it offers a different framework for looking at the numbers. The report advances the theory that many of the children falling behind in this country live in families who lack a range of essential "connections" that those living in more affluent areas enjoy.

One obvious example of this kind of isolation concerns access to technology.



SUSIE FITZMAUGH

The report notes that almost 20 percent of households in low-income urban areas don't have a telephone, that 50 percent don't have cars, and that 84 percent don't have home computers.

"At a time when media experts, economists, and social observers stress that the future belongs to those on the Internet and those who can compete in a global economy, many inner-city families don't have cars to get to work,

phones to remain linked with family and neighbors, or computers that would allow them to navigate the information superhighway," said Doug Nelson, president of the Foundation.

Families in high-poverty neighborhoods lack even more critical connections as well: to strong and nurturing social networks, accessible and respectful support services, and ample educational and economic opportunities.

In an essay accompanying the 2000 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, Nelson offers an antidote to the stereotypes of class, race, place, and family structure that limit the way people perceive poverty and leave little recourse for action. By highlighting the concrete and particular conditions that make the



LARRY GLENN, PHOTOOP

At a policy briefing to release the 2000 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, columnist Arianna Huffington moderated a panel that included Jonathon Kozol, Jim Wallis, Geoffrey Canada, Ron Haskins, and Blandina Cardenas.

# THE FOCUS should be providing low-wage workers with training and supports to land PROMISING JOBS.

## CASEY CONNECTS

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*The 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.*

## SUMMIT STRESSES JOB ADVANCEMENT

A recent policy summit in Washington, D.C., focused national attention on the movement to help low-wage and low-skilled workers advance into good jobs.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation was one of five national foundations that provided funding for the May 24-25 summit, tagged Low Wage Workers in the New Economy and organized by the Boston-based research organization Jobs for the Future. The Foundation first conceived of the conference as a way to move the work of its Jobs Initiative into the national policy arena. This initiative provides funding and support for community efforts in six cities to help young, low-income workers find meaningful jobs and to help identify national employment and training models.

“We wanted the conference to have a broader agenda than the Jobs Initiative and to help focus national policy attention on the importance of career advancement,” said Bob Giloth, director of the Jobs Initiative.

More than 400 leaders from business, labor, government, education, and workforce and economic development attended the summit, which received national media attention.

The summit signals a growing desire by foundations, national organizations, and policymakers to move beyond welfare policies that push to place recipients in the first available job. Instead, they argue, the focus should be providing low-wage



Casey Foundation Vice President Ralph Smith

workers with training and other supports in order to land good jobs with advancement opportunities. The summit showcased new career advancement strategies and policies emerging across the country.

In an opening plenary session, Ralph Smith, vice president of the Foundation, stressed the need for investments that connect families living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty to the opportunities, networks, and support they need to improve their children's prospects. “There's something wrong when we can predict awful outcomes for some children simply by knowing their zip codes,” Smith said.

“The summit provided research and best practices in advancing low-wage workers to good jobs, identified some of the successes, and drew attention to what challenges lie ahead,” said Richard Kazis, vice president of Jobs for the Future. “It also raised the visibility of these issues in the public debate and the media.”

For more information about the conference, go to [www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org). For more information about the Jobs Initiative, go to [www.aecf.org/jobsinitiative](http://www.aecf.org/jobsinitiative).

# IMMIGRANT FAMILY CHALLENGES HIGHLIGHTED

A recent *Education Week* article recounts the painful stories of several California high school students with top grades—but with no hope of attending college. These children are undocumented immigrants, and as such don't qualify for the in-state tuition rates that would make higher education affordable.

Children of immigrant and refugee families are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. Currently, one in five children is either an immigrant or has an immigrant parent, and failing to harness their talent and brainpower would be a tragic loss and a blow to this country's economic future.

As it does for all children, the success of immigrant children hinges largely on how much support their families and communities can provide them. To explore ways to reinforce and build on the strengths of immigrant families and

their children, the Annie E. Casey Foundation co-sponsored a national conference June 8-10 in Miami. The meeting, also funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the Fannie Mae Foundation, was organized by Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees.

The conference addressed four key questions: What strengths do immigrant families bring with them? What erodes these strengths over time? What promotes immigrant family cohesion and adaptation? What works to connect immigrant families to resources, services, and supports in their communities? Learning objectives set by participants ranged from strengthening families and preserving cultural values to ensuring access to health care, education, employment, and crisis intervention services that can overcome barriers of language and legal status.

organizations, family representatives from 11 of the Foundation's 22 *Making Connections* sites attended the conference. The agenda was specifically designed to incorporate the voices of families, noted Irene Lee, the conference chair and a senior associate at the Foundation.

One woman recounted how she fled Guatemala and trekked across Mexico on foot at six-months pregnant. Another described how her child died ultimately as a result of insufficient health coverage. Others told of not knowing where to turn for help when they were victimized by domestic violence. These personal accounts set the stage for small-group sessions in which conferees drafted policy recommendations that will be combined in a conference report.

Jorge Morales of Miami said he learned of an innovative program to address domestic violence that he wants to try in his own community. One participant, named Said, Abdulkadir M. of Seattle, observed that the conference hit on themes of concern to his fellow Somalis, such as "how to raise good families in America and how to restrain young people from getting involved in crime."

"I learned that if we all unite in order to deal with the issues, the issues can be resolved," said Sandra Lara of Miami.

For information or materials and resources from the conference, contact Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees at [amanda@gcir.org](mailto:amanda@gcir.org).

In a paper prepared for the conference, Michael Fix of the Urban Institute noted that policies denying benefits to adults who are not citizens often have a chilling effect on children, whose parents may be afraid to enroll them in services for which they are eligible. Fix reported that, in 85 percent of immigrant families, at least one child is a citizen and one parent is not.

Along with state legislators, researchers, and public and private funding



Abriendo Puertas Children's Choir performs at the conference on immigrant and refugee families.

# CASEY FAMILY JOINING HANDS TO SERVE CHILDREN BETTER

On a recent spring day, Doug Nelson, Ray Torres, and Anna Williams donned hard hats and stood side by side with shovels poised to break ground for the new Casey Family Services headquarters in East Baltimore.

This ceremony symbolized a renewed commitment by Nelson, president of the Casey Foundation; Torres, executive director of Casey Family Services; and Williams, director of the Baltimore division of Casey Family Services, to work together with communities on behalf of children and families.

Besides showcasing some spirited singing and drumming by community residents, the recent groundbreaking marked an exciting achievement for Casey Family Services. Now renting office space nearby, the Foundation's direct service arm is moving into its own dynamic, newly renovated building. The new facility will accommodate group meetings, child care, training, and a drop-in family center in addition to programs in teen parenting, young families, and foster care. "Our goal is to build on the division's existing programs to create a center to support family life," says Lee Mullane, director of communications for Casey Family Services in Shelton, Connecticut.



DARRYL GREEN

The complex will incorporate a historic building that was once a trolley barn and later served as the studio to a local painter and sculptor. The original building will be restored and an annex added for more office and community space.

Doug Nelson, Anna Williams, and Ray Torres breaking ground for new Casey Family Services headquarters.



SUSIE FITZHUGH

The site is expected to be a resource for families included in the Casey Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative in Baltimore.

"I hope you will see this groundbreaking as more than the beginning of a building. I hope you also see it as the beginning of a long and deep commitment by the Foundation to work with all of you to build stronger families and better futures for all the children of this city," Nelson told Baltimore residents, officials, and program participants gathered at the groundbreaking.

As the direct services arm of our Foundation, Casey Family Services provides an array of foster care and family support programs in Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The Foundation drew heavily on the lessons of Casey Family Services when it launched a new generation of work dedicated to the notion that children do better when their families are strong and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods. Casey Family Services staff members are playing crucial roles in several cities involved in our *Making Connections* initiative.

To acknowledge its pioneering work in strengthening families, we have devoted our INSITES supplement to Casey Family Services. More information about the agency is available at [www.caseyfamilyservices.org](http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org).

The Foundation drew heavily on the lessons of **CASEY FAMILY SERVICES** when it launched a **NEW GENERATION** of work to strengthen families.

# RESOURCE CORNER

## *In Print:*

- **2000 KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK AND POCKET GUIDE:** This 11th edition of the Data Book provides a state-by-state report on the educational, economic, social, and physical well-being of children in the United States. The Pocket Guide contains an overview, graphics on national trends, state-by-state data and rankings, and contacts for state KIDS COUNT projects. Copies of the book and guide can be ordered from the Foundation's publications voice mailbox, 410.223.2890 or from our website, [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). You can also view state profiles, graphs, maps, and rankings, and download raw data using an interactive online database at [www.kidscount.org](http://www.kidscount.org).
- **VOICE:** This new quarterly newsletter is produced by the Foundation's direct services arm, Casey Family Services, which offers high-quality long-term and treatment foster care; post-adoption services; family reunification, preservation, and advocacy; and assistance to families affected by HIV/AIDS. It contains news, conversations with board members, a section for sharing perspectives, resources, contributed art work and poetry, and a regular research supplement. Copies are available by contacting the editor, Lee Mullane, Casey Family Services, One Corporate Drive, Suite 515, Shelton, CT 06484.
- **GOOD WORKS:** Highlights of a Study on the Center for Family Life. This monograph summarizes a comprehensive evaluation of the Center for Family Life in Brooklyn's Sunset Park. The center, one of the

Foundation's Families Count honorees for 2000, is a highly regarded family service agency providing comprehensive, neighborhood-based services. Copies can be ordered from the Foundation's publications voice mailbox, 410.223.2890 or from our website, [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

- **WELFARE AND HOUSING: *How Can the Housing Assistance Programs Help Welfare Recipients?*** Produced by the National Housing Law Project, this report discusses changes to the welfare programs; analyzes the extent to which subsidized housing does and can fulfill housing needs of welfare recipients; and reviews the programs and tools available to public and private housing providers to assist them in offering stable, affordable homes to tenants making the transition to self-sufficiency. Copies can be downloaded from the Foundation website, [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org), or ordered from the National Housing Law Project, 614 Grand Avenue, Suite 320, Oakland, CA 94610.

## *On the Web:*

*The following websites offer information specific to economic opportunity and jobs.*

- **AMERICA'S JOB BANK:** This network links job seekers with "the largest pool of active job opportunities available anywhere." In addition to the Internet, the job openings and resumes found in America's Job Bank are available on computer systems in public libraries, colleges and universities, high schools, shopping malls, transition offices on military bases worldwide, and other places of public access: [www.ajb.dni.us](http://www.ajb.dni.us)

**EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION:** ETA attempts to "connect employment, education, and training services into a coherent network of resources at the local, state, and national level." The site offers access to online publications, such as the interactive newsletter *eWorkforce*, and other employment and training resources: [www.ttrc.doleta.gov/onestop](http://www.ttrc.doleta.gov/onestop)

- **COALITION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS:** The coalition "promotes access to capital and economic growth by directly investing in and supporting community development financial institutions and expanding financial service organizations' lending, investment, and services within underserved markets." This site includes access to online publications and related Internet resources: [www.treas.gov/cdfi](http://www.treas.gov/cdfi)
- **JOBS FOR THE FUTURE:** This group seeks to "create successful transitions for youth, build effective partnerships to promote lasting reform, and create economic opportunity for those who are now ill-prepared to get good jobs." This site provides access to online publications and related Internet resources: [www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org)



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lives of these families different from those who are more affluent, the Casey Foundation hopes to generate support for more practical and comprehensive strategies to reconnect families in challenging neighborhoods to the help and support they need.

The main vehicle for this work is our Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development initiative, a long-term agenda to garner more active public support for family-strengthening strategies. The most concrete expression of that strategy is *Making Connections*, an effort under way in 22 cities to help communities connect and support families living in tough neighborhoods.

At a June 20 briefing, Nelson issued an invitation for partners to join the Foundation in these efforts.

“We are in search of allies equally eager to find national, state, and local approaches that will move millions more of our children to the positive side of the KIDS COUNT ledger,” Nelson said.

The briefing featured a panel of experts selected for their wide-ranging experience and diversity of viewpoints on children’s issues. Moderating the panel was Arianna Huffington, a nationally syndicated columnist and author who serves on several boards promoting community solutions to social problems. Panelists included:

- Geoffrey Canada, an acclaimed author and child advocate who founded the Beacon School program in Central Harlem as president and chief executive officer of the Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families in New York City;
- Blandina Cardenas, an associate professor of educational leadership and director of the Hispanic Research Center at the University of Texas at San Antonio and former commissioner of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families;
- Ron Haskins, staff director for the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives;
- Jonathon Kozol, author of more than 30 books chronicling the lives of inner-city children, the most recent of which is *Ordinary Resurrections: Children in the Years of Hope*; and
- Jim Wallis, a religious author and founder of Sojourners Community, an organization with a Christian commitment to social justice.

The briefing aired on C-SPAN and also was broadcast live on the Foundation’s website. For more information about the 2000 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* or to view the June 20 briefing, go to [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).



Jonathon Kozol’s books illustrate the challenges faced by families living in unconnected communities.

## GRANTEE FORMS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

The forms grantees need to fulfill their reporting requirements can now be downloaded directly from our website. Just go to [www.aecf.org/granteeforms.htm](http://www.aecf.org/granteeforms.htm).

# INSITES

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CASEY FAMILY SERVICES

With hands-on experience in helping urban and rural families help themselves, Casey Family Services is playing a critical role in *Making Connections* work nationwide.

## **CASEY FAMILY SERVICES: HELPING FAMILIES BEAT THE ODDS**

Jim Casey, founder of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, understood that there is nothing more critical to a child's success than a supportive family. In 1976, Casey founded a foster care agency to help vulnerable children in Connecticut, then home base to the Casey Foundation. With divisions across New England and in Baltimore, Maryland, Casey Family

Services now serves more than 1500 families a year. "We have adapted to the changing needs of children at risk by adding an array of critical services that both help children and strengthen families," observes Executive Director Raymond Torres.

Casey Family Services' hands-on expertise with families makes it a critical partner in our Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development agenda. In several of our *Making Connections* cities, Casey Family

Services staff members are helping the Foundation build stronger relationships with families and institutions. With this goal in mind, we devote this issue of *INSITES* to the work of Casey Family Services in three of its divisions.

## **PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND**

Bobby was a student with a lot of energy, which sometimes got him into trouble at school. And, although his younger sister

# WITH TIME, YOU CAN HELP CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES DEVELOP BETTER COPING SKILLS.

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was doing very well, his older brother had some of the same problems that Bobby did. Bobby's teacher knew his mother was doing her best to help the boys and keep her daughter on track. In fact, attending school meetings had cost Bobby's mother more than one job.

Concerned about all of them, Bobby's teacher stopped by the Casey Family Services office at the Dr. Martin Luther King Elementary School to see what Casey's Family Preservation program might be able to do for Bobby and his family.

"We have a consulting psychiatrist," explains Odessie Preston of Casey Family Services' Rhode Island Division, "who was able to prescribe medications that helped Bobby with his academic and behavioral problems. We were also able to help his older brother, who began to thrive when he went to Job Corps for a year."

As things were really looking up for this family, the oldest son was shot and killed just a block and a half from home. "We just did all we could to help them," says Preston, "including getting help with the burial." Bobby's mom got a job in a department store, which occupied her and helped her through her grief. "In spite of losing her child, she's managed to keep it together and make things better for

her other children," says Preston with admiration. In spite of the traumas they endured, the family discovered its own resilience, and they've been able to channel that resilience into accomplishments: The mother has a full-time job with benefits, and Bobby and his sister are doing well in school.

Founded in 1994, Family Preservation has helped 78 families from the Dr. Martin Luther King Elementary School, a school of 750 children in grades K through 5 in Providence, Rhode Island. "Anyone in the school can refer a child to us," says Preston. "We work with the entire family, not just the child in our school. Sometimes they need recreational activities, academic help, medical services, or something even more basic, like clothes to wear, food to eat, and a bed to sleep on," she explains. "We try to find what they need in the community. If it's not there, we try to create it with our Casey resources."

There are no strict time limits on how long a family may participate in Family Preservation. Preston thinks this is a distinct advantage. "You can't always erase the problem. But, with time, you can help children and their families develop better coping skills."

Most of the Family Preservation contacts are in the home so parents don't have to come in for appointments. The



Family Preservation team also facilitates parent meetings with school officials and others by providing transportation and going with them, if necessary. "It's not just a referral service," says Preston. "We help them to access services so they and the children are getting what they need. We do a lot of matching with families and community services."

In this work, as in its expanding school-based family preservation and *Making Connections* work in the city, Casey Family Services draws heavily on its statewide experience in long-term foster care, treatment foster care, assistance to foster youth making the transition to independent living, and post-adoption services.



## WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, VERMONT

When Jody Pelletier's 4-year-old nephew comes to live with her this summer, his arrival will mark the culmination of more than a year's worth of effort on his behalf. Working closely with Casey Family Services' Vermont Division in White River Junction, as well as with the boy's birth parents; the state Division of Children, Youth and Families; and the boy's court-appointed guardian, Pelletier and her husband have crafted a plan for this young child, who could no longer live with his parents.

Together, through a Casey program known as Family Group Decision Making, all the parties decided that a stable, nurturing home was the best option for the little boy. Shortly before the process began about a year ago, Pelletier's nephew was removed from his parents' home and placed in foster care by the state of New Hampshire. Through regular visits with Pelletier's family, which includes a 4-year-old girl, both children have been prepared for the transition.

Begun in 1995 in Waterbury, Vermont, Family Group Decision Making has expanded widely over the past five years. The work is focused on decision-making techniques and planning processes. Staff make use of the MAPS (McGill Action Planning System) developed by McGill University, which helps families learn techniques for reaching decisions and setting action plans to address their safety and well-being. To provide help to families of abused and neglected children, Casey also is collaborating with the court system as well as the state Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Agency of Human Services to train professionals and others in the MAPS process statewide. To broaden understanding of the approach, Casey staff have presented it at national conferences and now are working with the Foundation's Technical Assistance/Resource Center (TARC) to provide technical assistance at *Making Connections* sites.

"We want to learn as well as share what we've experienced," explains Sara Kobylenski, the Vermont division director for Casey Family Services. Approaches under discussion include: identifying and working through key decision points and the timing for integrating family group decision making into the work of local agencies, understanding training and professional development needs, and considering how the use of family group decision making might influence and ultimately promote other child protection and family-strengthening activities.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CASEY FAMILY SERVICES

## BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT

During a 1999 statewide conference sponsored by Casey Family Services, Joyce Daniels told an audience of state officials, legislators, and practitioners about the difficulties of raising children after being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. With little state support available to her, and troubled by the social stigma the disease visits on its victims, Daniels found herself isolated and overwhelmed. Afraid to disclose her illness to her children, she struggled to care for them and keep them from worry when they saw her too tired or ill to even get out of bed. Frightened for their future, Daniels turned to Casey Family Services and its Family Connections program for help.

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Now assisting Daniels is a collaborative team made up of a Casey clinical social worker and family support worker, as well as physicians, therapists, and case managers from other community agencies. Daniels works with the team in developing and implementing a plan for her family. Services Daniels and other families receive include individual and group therapy for children, child-focused support groups for parents, and legal and school advocacy. Legacy work done with the family includes videotaping and compiling a “Life Book” filled with family memories for the children.

“Families affected by the AIDS epidemic often need outside support to overcome the obstacles they face,” says Pedro Ortiz, a Casey foster parent, schoolteacher, and volunteer mentor with Family Connections. “Through this program I have



PHOTO COURTESY OF CASEY FAMILY SERVICES

become a mentor to an 11-year-old boy who lives with his mom and siblings,” Ortiz continues.

Largely out of the success of the Family Connections mentoring program, Casey Family Services has begun a pilot community involvement program. At the same time, the division has become a leading advocate for improved public policies and services to families affected by HIV/AIDS.

BRIDGE REPORT