



## Connecting Children and Parents to Opportunity

Every child deserves the best possible start in life. Yet many children in poverty lack access to critical opportunities; their parents struggle to meet basic needs — food, housing, medical care — and some enter school without the skills needed to learn and grow academically. Too often, kids in low-income families end up on the same road their parents traveled, with little hope of forging a new path.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is committed to building brighter futures for kids, families and communities. Recognizing that a child's well-being is deeply tied to family stability, the Foundation is exploring a strategy that simultaneously addresses the challenges facing children and their parents — eliminating barriers that impede state and federal agencies' ability to serve the whole family — with the long-term goal of reducing poverty. This two-generation approach aims to ensure kids receive high-quality early childhood education that lays the foundation for their success in school and beyond, and to help parents successfully access the work, education and income they need to foster their children's healthy development. In addition, this strategy calls for removing obstacles so that all parents, regardless of race or ethnicity, have the tools necessary to support their families.

### Family Poverty and Its Negative Consequences on Child Development

For decades, we've addressed family poverty and child development as separate issues, despite the obvious link between the two. Programs and policies designed to help adults achieve financial stability are rarely connected to those focused on improving children's early educational experiences and health. Moreover, government programs and funding are not structured in a way that fosters a holistic view of families; programs typically work in isolation.

#### Our Challenge

- More than 11.5 million U.S. children ages 0-11 live in poverty.
- About 65 percent of kids ages 0-6 have working parents.
- Nearly 50 percent of kids ages 0-8 live in low-income households.

### Putting the Whole Family in the Center

The Foundation is investing in potential solutions that focus on families by combining programs for children *and* their parents, intentionally identifying and addressing their needs at the same time, rather than separately. We also are promoting policies that make it easier to coordinate child and adult programs and remove obstacles that keep low-income families from accessing the full range of resources needed to improve their situation. Our strategy involves three key elements:

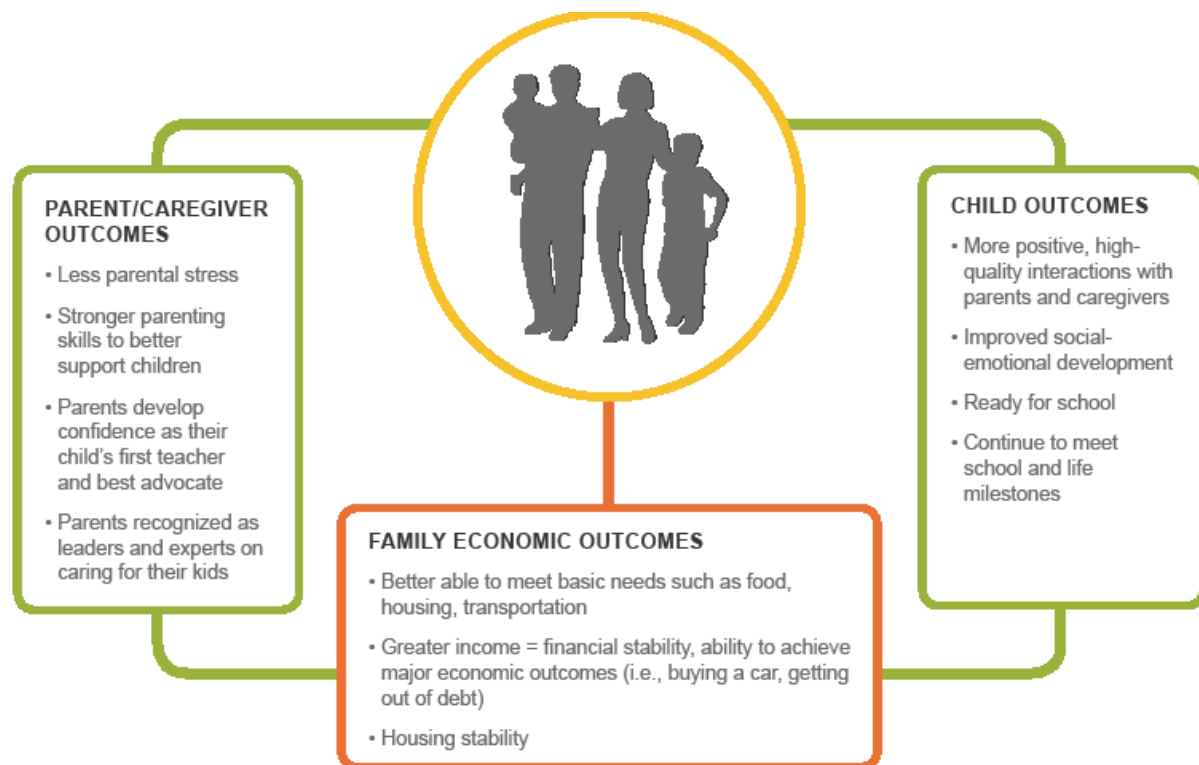
- ensuring low-income families have **access to high-quality early and elementary education** for their children;
- **equipping parents with the tools to achieve financial stability** through job training, financial coaching and income-support programs such as tax credits; and

- **strengthening parents’ skills** by building their support systems, engaging them as active partners in their child’s education and bolstering their own health and well-being.

### Why These Solutions Hold Promise

- **Poverty takes a serious toll** on child and parent well-being, making it difficult for parents to create a nurturing home environment that supports their child’s development. Being financially stable helps relieve the stress associated with living in poverty — for parents and their kids.
- **A child’s first eight years lay a critical foundation** for academic and life success. Early interactions and relationships with parents and caregivers strongly influence child development. A strong, nurturing relationship, coupled with high-quality early childhood education, helps prepare kids for school, cognitively, socially and emotionally.
- **A combination of job training, financial coaching and access to income-support programs** can help low-income families get on a path to stability, allowing them to better support their kids. Yet parents often face difficulties finding quality child care or jobs that provide the flexibility they need to be a productive employee and responsible parent.
- **Family income can have a significant impact** on child-well-being, new research shows. Especially for young children, increasing family income by just \$3,000-\$4,000 can make a huge difference, helping parents cover such basic needs as diapers, food and housing.

### The Result: More Opportunity for Families



To learn more about our efforts to reduce family poverty, contact Patrice Cromwell at [pcromwell@aecf.org](mailto:pcromwell@aecf.org).