



**UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, October 24, 2017, 12:01 a.m. EDT**

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## **State, Federal Lawmakers Must Take Steps to Enhance Opportunity, Success for Kids**

### **2017 Race for Results report recommends how policymakers can ease fears, lower barriers for immigrant communities and children of color**

SEATTLE, Wash. — Washington state's children of color are faring better today than three years ago in the realm of economic well-being, according to the *2017 Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children* report released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Yet the report notes that families of diverse backgrounds, including immigrant families, struggle against barriers to success.

"Every child has the potential to enrich our state with their time, talents and dreams for themselves and the people they love," said Paola Maranan, executive director of the Children's Alliance, which partners with the Foundation and the Washington State Budget & Policy Center to release the state-level *Race for Results* data. "Parents, elected officials and other community leaders can push for stronger measures to ease the barriers that children of color face."

The 2017 *Race for Results* shows modest progress in economic well-being among all Washington children. Sixty-two percent of children statewide are living in households earning a basic-needs income of 200 percent of the federal poverty level or more (or \$40,320 for a family of three, for example). That's a 3.3 percent increase since the 2014 *Race for Results*, which used data from the 2010-12 American Community Survey.

Incomes at or above twice the poverty level are a commonly used indicator of whether or not a family can get by and get ahead. Lower incomes put children at greater risk of material want, which can hinder their progression past key developmental milestones.

Over the past three years, children of color experienced proportionately greater gains in economic well-being: 14.6 percent more American Indian/Alaska Native children, 13.2 percent more African American children, and 9.1 percent more Latino children are living in households earning the basic-needs income.

Nevertheless, unequal access to employment and education have resulted in persistent income inequality. Despite these gains, a basic-needs income is enjoyed by 71 percent of all white non-Hispanic children but only 36, 43 and 47 percent of Latino, African American and American Indian children, respectively.

This income inequality also occurs between Washington households headed by immigrant parents and those headed by U.S.-born parents. Among the latter group, two-thirds (66 percent) of Washington children live in households with a basic-needs income or greater, while just 1 in 2 children (50 percent) in immigrant families have an income sufficient to meet their basic needs. That income gap is 20 percent greater in Washington than at the national level.

In the realm of education, Washington's children in immigrant families are 23 percent less likely to grow up with a head of household who has at least a high school diploma. However, disparities in family education status vanish when comparing young adults born in the U.S. to those born abroad. Immigrant young adults aged 25-29

possess associate's or higher degrees in equal proportion to U.S.-born adults of the same age. Foreign-born African American, white and Asian Pacific Islander young adults are more likely to have an associate's degree or other advanced degree. Foreign-born adults aged 19-26 also tend to be working or enrolled in a degree, training or certificate program at the same rates as their U.S.-born peers.

Today, as in generations past, immigrants are responsible for a significant portion of the country's economic vitality. The primary engine of labor-force growth in coming years will be supplied by immigration, according to the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine. Nearly 4 out of 5 of Washington's children in immigrant families are children of color. Therefore, the promise of that growth is threatened by the racially exclusionary policies and practices that have diminished the life chances of Americans of color for generations.

The *Race for Results* report makes several recommendations to maximize children's access to opportunity:

- **Keep families together.** Immigration authorities and family courts can protect kids from adverse experiences by exercising discretion in choosing whether to separate parents from their children.
- **Help kids in communities of color, both immigrant and U.S.-born, to meet key developmental milestones.** Policymakers can do more to link eligible families to quality early learning led by culturally competent teachers. More states, universities and colleges can help qualified students pay for college without regard to immigration status.
- **Increase economic opportunity.** Among the actions state policymakers can take is to increase access to occupational licenses and credentials to income-earning parents who entered their professions in foreign countries, boosting the prospects for higher household income.

"For Washington state to do well tomorrow, policymakers and community leaders must focus on the well-being of our state's children today," said Misha Werschkul, executive director of the Washington State Budget & Policy Center. "They must invest in programs that enhance economic security, strengthen families, and create a healthy future for everyone."

#### **Release Information**

The 2017 Race for Results report will be available Tuesday, October 24 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org/raceforresults/](http://www.aecf.org/raceforresults/). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/](http://www.aecf.org/). The website also contains the most recent national, state and local data on numerous indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about Race for Results can use the Data Center at [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

#### **About KIDS COUNT in Washington**

KIDS COUNT in Washington is a partnership of the Children's Alliance with the Washington State Budget & Policy Center, pursuing measurable improvements in child well-being through equitable public policy measures. The two organizations offer policymakers and the public the knowledge they need to remove the barriers kids face to brighter, freer, more equal futures.

#### **About the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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