

ENDING CHILD POVERTY NOW

LOCAL APPROACHES FOR CALIFORNIA



WHO WE ARE

The Children's Defense Fund – California (CDF-CA) is the state office of the Children's Defense Fund, a national child advocacy organization founded by Marian Wright Edelman that has worked relentlessly for over 40 years to ensure a level playing field for all children. CDF-CA was established in 1998 to meet the needs of underserved children in the state of California. With offices in Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento and Long Beach, CDF-CA champions policies and programs that lift children out of poverty, ensure all children have access to health coverage and care and a quality education, and invest in our justice-involved youth.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective and independent voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor children, children of color and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by individual donations, foundation, corporate and government grants.

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INTRODUCTION

The crisis of child poverty devastates the health and vitality of communities across the state. Nearly one in four (23.8%) California children were living in poverty between 2013 and 2015, according to a California Budget & Policy Center analysis of the Supplemental Poverty Measure.¹ Child poverty has negative consequences that last a lifetime: poor children are less healthy, less likely to enter school ready to learn, and less likely to graduate from high school than their peers. As a result, these children are more likely to be poor as adults and more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system. The urgent challenge of child poverty leaves community members, policymakers and child advocates asking: **what can be done at the local level to lift children out of poverty?**

In January 2015, Children's Defense Fund – California (CDF-CA) released *Ending Child Poverty Now: California* to call on the Governor and Legislature to enact eight recommendations to reduce child poverty at the state level.² Over the past two years, four of the recommendations have been fully or partially implemented: the state's minimum wage will increase to \$15 per hour by 2022, a state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was enacted, the Maximum Family Grant rule in CalWORKs was eliminated, and the state increased its investment in child care, although more funding is needed to meet the needs of poor families.

UPDATED STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO END CHILD POVERTY

1. Expand the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) to reach all working poor families
2. Support parents to find well-paying jobs
3. Expand the number of child care slots for low-income children
4. Make the state Tax Credit for Child & Dependent Care Expenses refundable
5. Increase CalWORKs basic needs benefits
6. Fund transportation for low-income children
7. Increase participation in CalFresh by integrating enrollment with health care enrollment
8. Invest in affordable housing for extremely low-income families

While progress has been made on state policy, the number of poor children across California remains staggeringly high. According to the California Poverty Measure (CPM), the child poverty rates in 26 of California's 58 counties exceeded 20% between 2011 and 2013.³ It is clear that policy change at the state and federal level must be accompanied by bold action by cities and counties to lift children in local communities out of poverty.

CDF-CA has connected with local leaders across the country to shine a light on promising models that have been implemented at the local level to reduce child poverty. **This report outlines six strategic priorities that cities and counties should consider when addressing child poverty.** These recommendations were developed after in-depth interviews and discussions with local leaders and policy experts between June and September 2016, in addition to a review of the literature. While this report does not represent an exhaustive evaluation of the many effective local strategies that invest in poor children and families, each strategic priority includes local highlights of significant promising practices for city and county leaders to consider.

LOCAL STRATEGIES TO REDUCE CHILD POVERTY

1. Enable parents and caregivers to find work that pays a living wage
2. Develop a robust safety net to help families when they fall on hard times
3. Implement financial capability and asset-building programs to promote youth and family economic success
4. Create dedicated funding mechanisms to support local anti-poverty strategies
5. Identify specific local needs and develop strong partnerships to coordinate and target resources
6. Invest in education, health, and youth development to break the cycle of poverty

STRATEGY 1

ENABLE PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS TO FIND WORK THAT PAYS A LIVING WAGE

Recommendation: Increase the Minimum Wage

Research suggests that providing a living wage is critical to efforts that reduce child poverty.⁴ Raising the minimum wage is one avenue to ensure that working parents and caregivers have the income they need to support their families. California's minimum wage will increase to \$10.50 in 2017, \$11.00 in 2018, \$12.00 in January 2019, \$13.00 in January 2020, \$14.00 in January 2021, and \$15.00 in January 2022, with annual indexing to the Consumer Price Index beginning in 2023. Small businesses with 25 or fewer employees will have an extra year to comply, and the Governor has the authority to temporarily suspend scheduled increases under certain circumstances.⁵ Municipal governments have the authority to increase minimum wage requirements at the city or county level above the state minimum wage or on a quicker timeline.

In 2015, **Los Angeles, CA** and **Los Angeles County, CA** raised their minimum wages above the state level. Both the County's and the City's minimum wages are projected to increase to \$15.00 effective July 1, 2020. Cities in the Bay Area have been particularly active in raising their local minimum wage: **San Francisco, Emeryville, El Cerrito, San Mateo, Oakland, Palo Alto, Berkeley, Mountain View, Santa Clara, Richmond, and Sunnyvale, CA** all have higher minimum wages than California.⁶ Local minimum wage policies should include annual indexing for inflation and efforts to include smooth implementation through outreach, education, employee notification and enforcement.

RESOURCE ALERT

The Economic Policy Institute's Minimum Wage Tracker maps the states and localities that have raised their minimum wages. www.epi.org/minimum-wage-tracker

Recommendation: Increase Participation in State and Federal Earned Income and Child Tax Credits and Implement Similar Local Credits

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is one of the most effective tools to lift families out of poverty, and research shows the credit benefits children by raising family income, boosting academic achievement, and improving health.⁷ The federal government offers a refundable EITC and California implemented a refundable state EITC (CalEITC) targeted at very poor working families beginning with 2015 tax returns.

Unfortunately, many low-income Californians face barriers that prevent them from accessing the federal and state EITCs. Approximately one million Californians failed to receive \$1.8 billion of federal EITC payments they qualified for in 2012.⁸ Local outreach, education and free tax preparation services can effectively increase participation in the federal and state tax credit programs already available to low-income families, and draw additional federal and state dollars into local communities. The Human Services Department in **Sonoma County, CA** provided a grant to support United Way of the Wine Country's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program, enabling the program to help

RESOURCE ALERT

CFED provides the Taxpayer Opportunity Network and recently published a report that offers strategies mayors can use to strengthen financial capability through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), including a year-round calendar of opportunities. Visit www.cfed.org/programs/taxpayer_opportunity_network/ to learn more.

CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

“The opportunity costs of education for individuals with family and work responsibilities can be offset by offering education that truly leads to educational and economic mobility.”

Integrated Education and Training: Model Programs for Building Career Pathways for Participants at Every Skill Level

27% more families than the previous year claim their tax refunds in Sonoma County.

In addition, city and county government can consider instituting a local EITC. While the vast majority of cities and counties in California do not have a local income tax, a credit could be implemented as a cash transfer to offset sales and property taxes paid by low-income families.

San Francisco, CA offers the Working Families Credit (WFC) program. Between tax year 2004 and tax year 2015, the WFC credit was awarded to approximately 33,000 unique recipients. The WFC program began as a tax credit for San Francisco residents and allowed eligible applicants to receive the WFC each year. Due

to budget cuts, WFC funding was reduced by 75% in tax year 2010 to approximately \$300,000. Accordingly, a one-time credit policy was implemented. More recently, the WFC program has sought to incentivize applicants to establish bank accounts and began offering a larger credit to applicants that choose direct deposit as their method of delivery. In addition to a monetary credit, one of the program’s goals is to connect families to existing benefits and assistance programs they may be eligible for, including the EITC, food and nutrition assistance, discounted car share services, low-cost health coverage, and banking services.

New York City, NY has offered a refundable local EITC since 2004. Similar to federal and state EITCs, the local credit is designed to incentivize work while supplementing wages and reducing the tax burden of low-income working households.⁹ New York City’s EITC is offered as a percentage of the federal credit, currently set at five percent. When combined with the federal EITC and New York’s state EITC, working families can receive up to \$8,427.¹⁰

Recommendation: Increase Access to Employment for Low-Income Parents and Caregivers

Low-income parents and caregivers often face additional barriers that make it difficult to get and keep a job that pays a living wage. Local job training programs have often failed to meet the needs of low-income workers. For example, only about half of training participants in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I - Adult program are low-income, less than a decade ago.¹¹ Fortunately, according to the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), authorized in 2014 by President Obama, provides opportunities for local workforce development agencies to improve services for individuals with barriers to employment, including parents.

CLASP recommends that Local Workforce Development Boards (Local Boards) prioritize a career pathways framework that links education and training services to enable individuals to progress in jobs with a clear career ladder. One promising practice is the Integrated Education and Training (IET) model, which integrates adult education and literacy, workforce preparation, and workforce training. Local Boards should also integrate subsidized employment opportunities, including transitional jobs, for low-income workers into their regional plans. While not required, Local Boards can allocate as much as 10% of Title I – Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to transitional jobs for individuals with barriers to employment.¹³

Cities and counties can also take action to remove or address barriers to employment faced by low-income parents.

RESOURCE ALERT

The Center for Law and Social Policy’s Funding Career Pathways provides a toolkit for state and local career pathway partnerships.¹²

For example, several cities and counties in California have implemented “Ban the Box” policies to advance employment opportunities for people with past convictions. San Francisco, CA has required that all private employers remove requests for criminal history information on initial job applications. Compton, CA and Richmond, CA delay conviction history inquiries in hiring for contractors doing business with the cities.¹⁴

Recommendation: Increase Access to Quality Child Care and Early Education for Low-Income Families

Access to child care is critical for low-income, working families. High-quality child care enables parents to work and helps break the cycle of poverty by fostering children’s brain development and building the skills that enable future academic and economic success. Unfortunately, less than one in five eligible children under age six benefit from child care subsidies because of inadequate state funding.¹⁵ City and county investments that provide additional child care slots to low-income children and their families can help close the gap.

A collaborative initiative in San Mateo County, CA, The Big Lift, has raised over \$30 million from private and public funds to improve access to early education and boost educational outcomes of low-income children by the third grade. As a recipient of a federal Social Innovation Fund grant, the County of San Mateo contributes matching funds to the initiative and hundreds of organizations have joined the collaborative effort to implement an evidence-based plan to improve reading by third grade. Local leadership includes the San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

A core component of The Big Lift is the goal of providing two years of high-quality preschool for approximately 3,000 low-income children who currently lack access.¹⁶ Beginning in seven target communities, the collaborative invests in the creation of new preschool spaces and enhances the quality of existing preschools, with a particular focus on providing full-day, full-year opportunities for families. Preschool is then combined with other services such as inspiring summer programs, parent engagement programs and a focus on school attendance. Evaluation of the effort is a significant focus, with the eventual goal of countywide expansion.

In Los Angeles, CA, Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) has also made a significant commitment to increasing quality early education opportunities for low-income children. Founded in 2005, LAUP prioritized accessibility,

affordability, and quality early education opportunities and has served more than 130,000 children through both center-based provider and family child care providers.¹⁸ Key achievements include LAUP’s 5-Star Quality Rating and Improvement System that has been cemented as a statewide model. Although LAUP’s direct funding of preschool was significantly reduced in June 2016 with the end of a ten-year grant from First 5 LA, the organization continues to leverage its expertise to improve the quality of and access to early childhood education.

LAUP SERVED AS A NATIONAL MODEL BY:

- Creating new preschool spaces efficiently
- Making preschool more affordable
- Giving preschools the funding they need
- Continuously improving quality
- Letting families choose a program that works for them
- Connecting programs to their communities¹⁷

“It’s important to work statewide, but local communities can really move the needle on access to childcare.”

Jennifer Greppi, Statewide Lead Chapter Organizer, Parent Voices

STRATEGY 2

DEVELOP A ROBUST SAFETY NET TO HELP FAMILIES WHEN THEY FALL ON HARD TIMES

Recommendation: Promote Enrollment in State-Funded and Federally Funded Safety Net Programs

The social safety net is a critical resource that helps lift children and their families out of poverty and helps keep others from falling in to poverty. CalWORKs, CalFresh, housing subsidies, and other programs provide assistance to low-income children and families in need. Between 2009 and 2012, the social safety net lifted more than 1.4 million California children per year out of poverty, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.²⁰ Unfortunately many low-income families face barriers to accessing the social safety net including lack of awareness, stigma, and enrollment difficulties.

Municipalities can take action by promoting enrollment in state and federally funded safety net programs. Local leadership can begin by forming a partnership to address community needs. Goals might include increasing participation in CalFresh or CalWORKs, increasing enrollment in afterschool and summer meal programs, promoting health benefits outreach programs, or connecting families with housing subsidies. These outreach initiatives have the ability to bridge the gap between community-based organizations, local government agencies often charged with enrollment procedures, and families who are eligible for public benefits.

Contra Costa County, CA is home to the CalFresh Partnership Group that has effectively increased enrollment in CalFresh. Initiated by the Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) of Contra Costa County, the group includes several community-based organizations: Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, First 5/Family Economic

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITY LEADERS TRYING TO EXPAND AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER MEAL PROGRAMS

- Use visibility and status
- Sponsor a meal program
- Incorporate child nutrition into larger city-led programs
- Establish a task force or workgroup to spearhead efforts

National League of Cities¹⁹

SPOTLIGHT ON CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

The CalFresh Partnership Group has employed several promising strategies to increase CalFresh enrollment:

- Monthly data reviews, and an evaluation of the application process to identify necessary improvements
- Dedicated “CalFresh Express Events” where enrollment agents can determine eligibility and enroll people in benefits during the same day
- Collaboration with a local school district to implement AB 402, which allows the school districts to share information with their CalFresh Office
- A direct mail campaign to households currently receiving Medi-Cal, but not CalFresh
- Collaboration with six school districts to mail applications to families enrolled in free school meal programs

SERVICES AVAILABLE FROM THE FREMONT FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

- Adult and youth employment
- Child care information, referral and subsidies
- Counseling and case management
- Substance abuse treatment
- Housing information
- Parent support
- Immigration services
- Services for the disabled
- Nutrition services
- Domestic violence services
- Health insurance counseling
- Financial coaching

The Fremont Family Resource Center (FRC) in **Fremont, CA** provides a “one-stop shop” collaborative that helps children and families enroll in benefits and access the resources they need. Located in southern Alameda County, FRC is a 55,000 square foot facility that houses 24 city, county and nonprofit agencies that are co-located to best work together and address family needs. Funded through several streams, FRC offers nonprofit agencies below market rental space to support co-location. Approximately 90% of the families served are low-income. The FRC Division of the City of Fremont Human Services Department coordinates the collaboration and also runs three direct service programs: Family Support Services, the Family Service Team, and SparkPoint, a model created by United Way Bay Area to provide low-income people with financial coaching to build assets, grow income and manage debt. The Family Services Team provides wraparound support services and case management for CalWORKs families. FRC boasts a commitment to evaluation, such as the Family Development Matrix, a customized assessment tool, to measure the progress of clients in the Family Support Services program.

Security Partnership (FESP), Multi-Faith Action Coalition, and the Ensuring Opportunity Campaign. One successful practice was the development of common agreements that established trust among its members. Consistent representation from one or two staff members of each organization has also been critical to developing a successful partnership. Together, the collaborative helped drive an increase in CalFresh participation rates in the county from 50% to 57% between 2012 and 2014, despite a likely overall decrease in eligible recipients.²²

Alameda County, CA also has a strong collaborative, entitled All In, that is building cross-sector partnerships to end poverty.²³ The initiative has a dedicated CalFresh Working Group that is piloting an initiative to increase enrollment in CalFresh. The effort will target 20,000 residents that are currently enrolled in Medi-Cal but not enrolled in CalFresh to provide pre-populated CalFresh applications with their Medi-Cal re-enrollment forms. Encouraging cross-enrollment between public assistance programs is an important strategy cities and counties can use to increase participation in safety net programs and draw resources into local communities.

RESOURCE ALERT: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Local governments can implement policies to address the housing affordability crisis, which is a significant driver of poverty in California. The Center for American Progress developed a comprehensive report of local policies to increase economic security, Cities at Work, that includes a broad list of local housing strategies.²¹

STRATEGY 3

IMPLEMENT FINANCIAL CAPABILITY AND ASSET-BUILDING PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE YOUTH AND FAMILY ECONOMIC SUCCESS

Recommendation: Incorporate Financial Capability and Asset-Building Strategies into Municipal Programs

Research suggests that increasing access to jobs alone is not enough to ensure financial stability. Access to safe and affordable financial services, knowledge about financial practices, and incentives to promote savings are also important mechanisms to increasing family economic success.²⁴ Local leaders can play a central role in building financial inclusion programs to help families gain access to safe and affordable financial services, build assets, and achieve greater financial stability.

RESOURCE ALERT

CFED's New Municipal Strategies for Asset Building and Financial Empowerment documents local strategies to advance economic security.²⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITY LEADERS TRYING TO IMPLEMENT FINANCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMS

- Increase visibility of programs
- Provide additional resources such as funding or staff support
- Increase coordination to streamline services
- Accelerate marketing to ensure all residents in need are aware of the programs and services available to them
- Develop or promote methods to assess program effectiveness and measure their impact

National League of Cities²⁵

The Office of Financial Empowerment in **San Francisco, CA** is a dedicated agency that leads several initiatives to help poor and low-income residents achieve greater financial security. Prompted by the growing concern that many residents did not have a checking or savings account, San Francisco city and county officials formed a committee in 2005 to address the financial needs of their unbanked residents.²⁷ The committee included the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, the Treasurer's Office, New America Foundation, and EARN, a nonprofit organization that worked with local banks, credit unions and other organizations. Together the group became "Bank On San

Francisco" and has opened over 10,000 checking accounts annually since 2006. Bank On San Francisco is now a national model for other cities across the country.

Research also suggests that children with savings accounts are more likely to attend and finish college.²⁹ **San Francisco, CA's** Kindergarten to College (K2C) Program automatically opens a college savings account for each student entering kindergarten in San Francisco Unified School District. Each account begins with \$50,

RESOURCE ALERT

Cities planning Bank On initiatives can visit www.joinbankon.org for tools and resources.²⁶

RESOURCE ALERT

Highlighting the potential of Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs) to expand educational and economic opportunity for low-income families, CFED provides a blueprint for designing CSA programs in Investing in Dreams.²⁸

with an additional \$50 for low-income children, and families are able to add savings and earn additional incentives.³⁰ **Oakland, CA**, as part of The Oakland Promise cradle-to-career initiative, will pilot the K2C program at 16 schools in 2016 with plans to expand to all of Oakland's public schools by 2018. Across ten years, the initiative plans to provide 44,600 children in Oakland with a K2C college savings account.³¹

More recently, the City of San Francisco launched an initiative to incorporate financial empowerment into the city's summer youth employment program. The city's Office of Financial Empowerment, the Department of

Children, Youth & Their Families, and the nonprofit organization MyPath partnered with 15 community-based organizations that offer youth employment programs and local credit unions to implement a comprehensive program, MyPath Savings. The program served about 1,500 youth ages 14 to 24 by helping them open noncustodial accounts, guiding them through a comprehensive financial literacy curriculum, and encouraging employers to offer direct deposit. In seven weeks during the summer of 2016, the program helped open approximately 850 accounts and youth saved about \$360,000. The initiative was supported through the Summer Jobs Connect program through the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund and the Citi Foundation.

RESOURCE ALERT

The National League of Cities conducted a City Scan of Local Financial Inclusion Efforts that provides best practices and case studies.

STRATEGY 4

CREATE DEDICATED FUNDING MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT LOCAL ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGIES

Recommendation: Create a Specific Funding Mechanism to Support Low-Income Children and Families

Local governments across the country are increasingly turning to ballot initiatives to institute city and county level funding streams to support investments in children's programs. Often these ballot initiatives have been used to mobilize voters, create community support behind children's initiatives, and garner backing by public officials. Funding can be generated through budget carve-outs, property taxes, sales taxes or taxes on specific goods like soda. Dedicated "Children's Funds" typically focus on prevention and early intervention, and can direct investment toward after school, support services, early childhood, youth development and social services.

The process can be lengthy, often requiring tenacity and persistence from community leaders, but advocates reinforce the notion that the result is worth the invested effort. These funds yield more than half a billion dollars annually, according to The Forum for Youth Investment.³⁴ Approximately 21 localities across the country, primarily in California, Florida and Missouri, have instituted some type of Children's Fund.³⁵ Funding the Next Generation, a statewide organization, is actively working in California to encourage city and county stakeholders to consider this approach.

San Francisco, CA is home to the country's largest dedicated Children's Fund. An amendment to the city charter created San Francisco's Children's Fund in 1991, dedicating .03% of local property tax revenue to children's services. Renamed San Francisco's Children and Youth Fund in 2014, voters have supported this measure with overwhelming support, increasing to .04% of property taxes, expanding the age of youth served to 24 years and

RESOURCE ALERT

Funding the Next Generation has released a guide for local officials and advocates, *Creating Local Dedicated Funding Streams Families*, available at: www.fundingthenextgeneration.org.³³

SPOTLIGHT ON THE SAN FRANCISCO CHILDREN AND YOUTH FUND

- The Children's Fund received overwhelming support from voters (74%) when it was renewed in 2000 and again in 2014.
- The Children and Youth Fund funds programs that serve youth up to age 24 and are dedicated to specific services like early care and education, workforce development, nutrition, school-based and out-of-school time programming.
- The Fund mandates a five-year planning process, including a community needs assessment, program evaluation, community input and an oversight body.³²

extending the amendment for 25 years. In 2016, the Fund is expected to generate about \$70 million.

Florida has a unique provision that gives counties the authority to create Children's Services Councils. These Councils have the ability to increase taxes, pending the county electorate approval, to invest in children's services. Other municipalities with dedicated Children's Funds include **Oakland, CA's** Fund for Children and Youth, **Portland, OR's** Children's Levy, and **Seattle, WA's** Families and Education Levy. **Marin County, CA** and **Solano County, CA** both have Children's Funds on their November 2016 ballots.

City and county governments can also establish dedicated funding mechanisms to support specific services for low-income families. Special funds that have been approved by voters to target specific services include **San Antonio, TX's** sales tax to fund preschool ("Pre-K 4 San Antonio"), property tax for evidence-based mental health programs in **Allen, Auglaize, and Hardin counties in Ohio**, and **King County, WA's** property tax to fund prevention and early intervention ("Best Starts for Kids").

Ballot initiatives may also be a successful strategy to pass general obligation bonds to increase access to affordable housing for low-income families. **Santa Clara County, CA** has placed a \$950 million bond on the November 2016 ballot that will include \$700 million for rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing for extremely low-income households. The Mayor and City Council of **Los Angeles, CA** are backing a \$1.2 billion bond on the November 2016 ballot to develop homeless and affordable housing. Similarly, **Alameda County, CA's** November 2016 ballot will include a bond that would focus \$425 million on the development of affordable rental housing.

"Most voters understand that housing in California has become unattainable. Voters are really eager to do something about it... Ballot initiatives are creating a space for bold investment in affordable housing."

Pedro Galvao, Regional Planning and Policy Manager, Non-profit Housing Association of Northern California

STRATEGY 5

IDENTIFY SPECIFIC LOCAL NEEDS AND DEVELOP STRONG PARTNERSHIPS TO COORDINATE AND TARGET RESOURCES

Recommendation: Identify Specific Local Needs and Develop a Plan to Reduce Poverty

Each city and county in California has unique needs and assets, and statewide strategies may not account for demographic, cultural, and economic differences. Local assessments and targeted strategies can account for unique community needs. A concrete community-wide plan, spearheaded by dedicated municipal leadership, can move child poverty initiatives to the top of the agenda.

A number of cities across the country have developed regional plans to address poverty, including [New York City, NY](#), [Philadelphia, PA](#), and [Richmond, VA](#). Mayors in each of these municipalities established dedicated governmental agencies to drive action on poverty. Offices include New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity, Philadelphia's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity, and Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building. Each locality has established targeted goals and integrates measurement and evaluation into their citywide strategies. Clear and transparent measurement is central to each of these strategies.

For example, the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) in New York City works collaboratively with other city agencies to alleviate poverty and conduct rigorous evaluations of social policy interventions to determine what works. CEO's commitment to evaluation has resulted in more than 40 evaluations, including randomized controlled trials.³⁶ CEO also developed a local definition of poverty that better captures the regional cost of living and includes assistance benefits and relevant estimated expenses, such as commuting costs and out-of-pocket spending for medical care.³⁷

"Having a collaborative table where different sectors are invited, like All In [Alameda County], is an essential first start in the journey toward ending hunger. If our community is unable to even come together to talk with one other, we will not be able to create the change that is urgently needed."

Alexandra Boskovich, Community Partnerships Coordinator, Alameda County Community Food Bank

Poor families living in rural communities face distinct challenges, including fewer job prospects, limited education opportunities, physical isolation and limited access to key services that help families get ahead. While research confirms that safety net programs are effective in alleviating rural child poverty, targeted efforts to address the unique circumstances in rural areas are important.³⁸

Local leaders in several rural communities have committed to reducing child poverty and obtained federal and private resources to support their efforts through

the Rural IMPACT (Rural Integration Models for Parents and Children to Thrive) Demonstration and the Promise Zone Initiative. The [Kentucky Highlands region, KY](#), the nation's first rural Promise Zone, developed a 10-year strategic plan based on community input that highlights goals in education, economic development, health,

broadband internet, affordable housing and transportation.³⁹ One of the key entities in this collaboration, Partners for Education at Berea College, is piloting a Rural IMPACT project to reduce child poverty through a two-generation approach that serves children and their parents together.

Recommendation: Employ Collaborative Strategies to Coordinate and Implement Anti-Poverty Initiatives

Local stakeholders can implement collaborative approaches to effectively move the needle on child poverty. Some cities and counties have found success using a collective impact model, a collaborative approach to address complex social issues. The model begins with a common goal, develops shared measurement, engages in mutually reinforcing activities, fosters continuous communication and requires a strong "backbone" coordinating entity.⁴⁰ Local leaders should consider collective impact approaches when developing and implementing anti-poverty efforts.

The San Diego Youth Development Office in [San Diego, CA](#), which is not affiliated with local government, was founded through a grassroots movement in response to increased youth violence and inadequate positive youth development services in certain communities. Based on similar models in other regions (such as Safe Passages in Oakland and The Advancement Project in Los Angeles), the purpose of the San Diego Youth Development Office is to serve as a neutral convener to ensure that the various perspectives and approaches in the county are coordinated to support San Diego's youth. It acknowledges that no single entity can fully support San Diego's youth, and that coordination and collaboration must be institutionalized and resident-driven to be sustainable. Utilizing a collective impact framework, the organization focuses on four strategic priorities to improve the lives of San Diego children: alignment of various sectors serving youth; youth, parent and community engagement; data driven practice; and strengthening systems across the cradle-to-college continuum.⁴¹

The Magnolia Place Community Initiative, launched in 2008 in [Los Angeles, CA](#), also provides a promising model of collective impact. The initiative unites city, county and community-based efforts to create safe and supportive environments for all 35,000 children living within a 500-block area near downtown Los Angeles. It aims to improve outcomes for children and families by strengthening individual, family and neighborhood protective factors.⁴² Network partners commit to a shared vision and work to continuously improve, align and coordinate their individual efforts with the goal of collectively transforming the community in four areas: educational success, good health, economic stability, and safe and nurturing parenting.⁴³

"Child poverty is family poverty. Family poverty is community poverty. Children are a unique aspect, but you can't look at child poverty in a vacuum. Any huge problem like this takes all hands on deck, a collective impact approach. There is not a single system that shouldn't be involved... Everyone has a role to play. It's a systemic issue that is going to take a systemic approach."

Ian Gordon, Executive Director, San Diego Youth Development Office

STRATEGY 6

INVEST IN EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

“This is a long game ... Ultimately, we need to break the cycle and alleviate generational poverty. It all starts with early investments in children.”

**Avo Makdessian, Vice President and Director,
Center for Early Learning, Silicon Valley
Community Foundation**

Recommendation: Make Long-Term Investments to Break the Cycle of Poverty

Local governments should continue to make long-term investments in programs that break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. This includes implementing and supporting policies to ensure that low-income children have access to comprehensive health care, quality early learning, high-performing schools and youth development opportunities. Numerous innovative child health, education and youth development models have been implemented across the nation and a significant body of research evaluates their effectiveness. This report highlights only a few examples.

Harlem Children’s Zone is a cradle-to-college intensive support program for low-income families and serves as a national leader in place-based approaches to child and community development. The program began by targeting one block in the 1990s and has expanded to serve 97 blocks in **New York City, NY**. Their pipeline approach begins with expecting parents and extends through a child’s journey to college and integrates family, social services, health programs, and community-building programs. Tracking approximately 600 goals each year, in 2015 the organization served more than 13,000 youth ages 0 to 23 and boasted a 93% college acceptance rate across programs.⁴⁵

Ascend at the Aspen Institute and the Annie E. Casey Foundation recommend a two-generation approach to alleviating poverty that focuses on addressing needs of both vulnerable children and their parents at the same time. Recognizing that parent and child well-being are tightly linked, the two-generation approach focuses on strengthening the whole family through early childhood education, economic assets, postsecondary and employment pathways, social capital, and health and well-being.⁴⁷ The **Tulsa, OK** Community Action Project (CAP

HARLEM CHILDREN’S ZONE CORE PRINCIPLES

- Serve an entire neighborhood comprehensively and at scale to create a tipping point and definitively shift the culture of the community.
- Create a pipeline of coordinated, best-practice programs to give our children and families seamless support from birth through college and maximize their outcomes.
- Build community among residents, institutions, and stakeholders in order to create a healthy, positive environment where our children can thrive.
- Evaluate program outcomes and create a feedback loop to provide managers with real-time data and strengthen services.
- Cultivate an organizational culture of success rooted in passion, accountability, leadership, and teamwork.⁴⁴

Tulsa) models the two-generation approach to reducing poverty. By offering services that are targeted to both children and their parents or caregivers, CAP Tulsa improves the lives of entire families to help break the cycle of poverty.

Home visiting programs are another example of intensive support programs that improve child and family outcomes and break the cycle of poverty. A strong body of research shows that evidence-based home visiting models have positive effects on child health, academic performance, and parental self-sufficiency.⁴⁸ The Bridges Maternal Child Health Network (Bridges Network) in **Orange County, CA** is a network of service providers that provides families with education, screening, and home visitation services. The Bridges Network includes Moms Orange County, 10 Orange County hospitals, County of Orange Public Health Nursing, Children’s Bureau of Southern California, and Orange County Child Abuse Prevention Center. The Bridges Network accepts families at three points of entry: prenatal services, infant and family screening at birth, and toddler services. These services result in relationship and interaction improvements between parents and their children and prevention of developmental, behavioral and emotional delays in at-risk children.⁴⁹

RESOURCE ALERT

Ascend at the Aspen Institute’s Top Ten for 2Gen; provides principles and policy ideas to guide two-generation approaches.⁴⁶

“Sometimes I would come home from school and there would be nothing in the fridge but mustard or ketchup.”

Seventeen-year-old Alexandra of Los Angeles County shares a striking visual of what poverty means for her. When Alexandra was younger she lived in a house with her mom, dad, and three older sisters until a series of crises hit her family at the age of 11. Her dad was deported, the family was evicted after the owner nearly doubled the monthly rent, and her mother lost her job as a preschool teacher as she struggled with depression about the deportation and eviction.

Alexandra and her mother spent months living in a spare room of a family friend, and moved from place to place before ending up in a converted garage in Arleta, CA. The lighting in the garage made it difficult for Alexandra to read and use a computer for homework. These are just a few of the barriers to success that poverty and homelessness inflicts on children and youth. Alexandra, who was selected as a 2016 Children’s Defense Fund Beat the Odds@ honoree, managed to overcome obstacles to excel at school.



CONCLUSION

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice... Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.”

- **Nelson Mandela**

The high rates of child poverty in communities throughout California are not inevitable. California can end child poverty for the one in four children who live in poverty through combined efforts at the local, state and federal levels. This report highlights six core strategies that local governments can utilize to reduce child poverty with a focus on adapting policies and programs according to specific local needs and community assets.

Approaches to reduce child poverty are ultimately investments in the future of California’s communities. Child poverty costs the nation an estimated \$500 billion a year in lost productivity and earnings and increased health and crime costs.⁵⁰ Children’s Defense Fund estimates that California’s share of the cost of child poverty is approximately \$66 billion per year – and much of these costs are borne by local communities. Protecting children against the lifelong consequences of poverty would improve their life outcomes, break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and build a more prepared workforce to build a stronger economy.



APPENDIX A

CALIFORNIA CHILD POVERTY BY COUNTY, 2011-2013

| COUNTY | CALIFORNIA POVERTY MEASURE (CPM) RATE FOR CHILDREN |
|--|--|
| Statewide | 24.3% |
| Monterey/San Benito | 31.0% |
| Los Angeles | 29.5% |
| Santa Barbara | 29.1% |
| Orange | 27.0% |
| Merced | 25.7% |
| Ventura | 25.5% |
| San Diego | 25.3% |
| Stanislaus | 25.1% |
| Fresno | 24.9% |
| Lake/Mendocino | 24.5% |
| Tulare | 24.2% |
| San Francisco | 23.9% |
| Santa Cruz | 23.9% |
| Riverside | 23.1% |
| San Bernardino | 21.4% |
| Madera | 21.3% |
| Kern | 20.6% |
| Humboldt | 20.4% |
| Yolo | 20.3% |
| San Joaquin | 20.2% |
| Santa Clara | 20.1% |
| San Mateo | 20.1% |
| Napa | 20.0% |
| Solano | 20.0% |
| Alameda | 19.9% |
| Kings | 19.9% |
| Sonoma | 19.7% |
| Del Norte / Lassen / Modoc / Siskiyou / Plumas / Nevada / Sierra | 19.4% |
| Sacramento | 19.2% |
| Contra Costa | 19.2% |
| Sutter/Yuba | 19.0% |
| Marin | 18.9% |
| Butte | 18.4% |

| | |
|---|-------|
| San Luis Obispo | 18.4% |
| Shasta | 17.8% |
| Alpine / Amador / Calaveras / Inyo / Mariposa / Mono / Tuolumne | 17.7% |
| Imperial | 16.0% |
| Colusa / Glenn / Tehama / Trinity | 15.3% |
| Placer | 14.3% |
| El Dorado | 14.2% |

Source: Public Policy Institute of California. “Data Set: California Poverty by County, 2011-2013.” <http://www.ppic.org/main/dataset.asp?i=1399>. Accessed September 25, 2016.

The California Poverty Measure, a joint research effort by Public Policy Institute of California and the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, is a comprehensive approach to gauging poverty that adjusts for geographic differences in housing costs and includes food stamps and other non-cash benefits as resources available to poor families.

For some counties, poverty rates cannot be calculated individually. Those counties are grouped. All estimates are subject to uncertainty due to sampling variability. The uncertainty is greater for less populous counties and county groups (because of smaller survey sample sizes).

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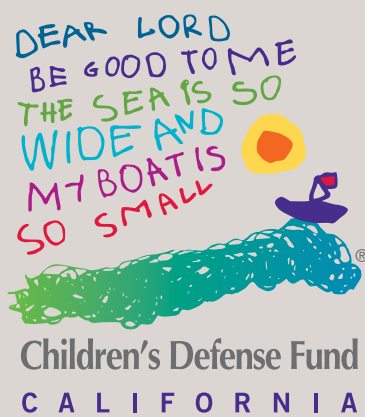
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