Children's Defense Fund

Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Factsheet
The District of Columbia



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The Children's Defense Fund Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Campaign is a national and community crusade to engage families, youths, communities and policy makers in the development of healthy, safe and educated children. Poverty, racial disparities and a culture of punishment rather than prevention and early intervention are key forces driving the pipeline.

Poverty

Poor children lag behind their peers in many ways beyond income; they are less healthy, trail in emotional and intellectual development, and do not perform as well in school. The challenges that poor children face accumulate and interact, casting long shadows throughout their lives. Every year that we keep children in poverty costs our nation half a trillion dollars in lost productivity, poorer health and increased crime.

In The District of Columbia among all children, 2 in 9 (22.7 percent or 25,597) are poor.
- For White, non-Latino children, 1 in 43 (2.3 percent or 574) is poor.
- For Black children, 3 in 10 (31.3 percent or 23,687) are poor.

In The District of Columbia, a baby is born poor every 6 hours.
- A Black baby is born poor every 11 hours.

Health Care

The United States is the wealthiest nation in the world, yet children's health status in our country is among the worst in the industrialized world.

In 2007, an estimated 9,000 children (7.3 percent) were uninsured in The District of Columbia.
In 2006, 980 babies (11.5 percent) were born at low birthweight in The District of Columbia. This included:
- 7.3 percent of White, non-Latino babies.
- 7.7 percent of Latino babies.
- 14.5 percent of Black, non-Latino babies.

18.4 percent of two-year-olds in The District of Columbia did not receive all recommended immunizations in 2007.

Early Childhood Education

Studies reveal that those enrolled in high quality early childhood education programs are more likely to complete higher levels of education, have higher earnings, be in better health and be in stable relationships, and are less likely to commit a crime or be incarcerated. Yet many children are not enrolled in them.

In 2005-2006, 3,403 children were enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start in The District of Columbia. Of these:
- 5.0 percent were White.
- 18.4 percent were Latino.
- 80.1 percent were Black.

Education

Attainment of a high school diploma is the single most effective preventive strategy against adult poverty. Yet a significant number of students do not graduate on time with a regular diploma.

In 2007, a disproportionate number of Black and Latino fourth graders could not read or do math at grade level. In The District of Columbia:
- 26 percent of White, non-Latino 4th graders cannot read at grade level.
- 85 percent of Latino 4th graders cannot read at grade level.
- 91 percent of Black, non-Latino 4th graders cannot read at grade level.

- 27 percent of White, non-Latino 4th graders cannot do math at grade level.
- 81 percent of Latino 4th graders cannot do math at grade level.
- 92 percent of Black, non-Latino 4th graders cannot do math at grade level.

In The District of Columbia, 7.8 percent of youths ages 16 to 19 were neither enrolled in school nor high school graduates.

Child Welfare

Children left with no permanent family connections or connection with a caring adult have no one to whom they can turn for social, emotional or financial support and face numerous barriers as they struggle to become self-sufficient adults**.**

In 2006, there were 2,378 children in foster care in The District of Columbia.
In 2006, there were 2,759 victims of child maltreatment in The District of Columbia.

Juvenile Justice System and Incarceration

States spend about 2.8 times as much money per prisoner as per public school pupil. Unless we focus our efforts on early intervention and prevention, rather than punishment, we are robbing thousands of youths each year of their futures and our country of vital human resources.

In The District of Columbia, there were 437 juvenile arrests in 2007.

Of the 339 youths in residential placement in The District of Columbia in 2006:
309 (91.2 percent) were Black, non-Latino.
12 (3.5 percent) were Latino.
12 (3.5 percent) were White, non-Latino.

Community Violence

The 8 children and teens killed by gun violence each day in our nation is the equivalent of one Northern Illinois University shooting every 15 hours or one Virginia Tech shooting every four days. Yet, unfortunately, it takes tragic events like these to remind us that gun violence in America has reached an epidemic level.

In 2005, 26 children and teens in The District of Columbia died of firearm injuries.
In 2007, 43.0 percent of The District of Columbia's high school students were involved in a physical fight.
In 2007, 19.8 percent of The District of Columbia's high school students were involved in a physical fight on school property.
In 2007, 11.3 percent of The District of Columbia's high school students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property.
In 2007, 21.3 percent of The District of Columbia's high school students carried a weapon 2 or more times in the preceding month.
In 2007, 7.4 percent of The District of Columbia's high school students carried a weapon on school property 2 or more times in the preceding month.

At crucial points in these children's development, from birth through adulthood, more risks and disadvantages cumulate and converge to make a successful transition to productive adulthood significantly less likely and involvement in the criminal justice system more likely.

We have no time to waste. It is time to step up and take action. Together, we can and will make a difference.

For more information on the *Cradle to Prison Pipeline*, please visit www.childrensdefense.org or contact Natacha Blain, Lead Strategic Advisor, at nblain@childrensdefense.org or (202) 662-3544.