Children's Defense Fund

Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Factsheet
Florida

March 2009

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 Florida among all children, 1 in 6 (17.1 percent or 678,038) is poor.
- For Asian/Pacific Islander children, 1 in 9 (11.4 percent or 10,750) is poor.
- For White, non-Latino children, 1 in 8 (12.2 percent or 328,512) is poor.
- For Latino children, 1 in 5 (21.1 percent or 204,963) are poor.
- For American Indian/Alaska Native children, 1 in 4 (26.6 percent or 2,996) is poor.
- For Black children, 3 in 10 (31.1 percent or 255,884) are poor.

In Florida, a baby is born poor every 12 minutes.
- A White, non-Latino baby is born poor every 24 minutes.
- A Latino baby is born poor every 36 minutes.
- A Black baby is born poor every 1 hour.
- An Asian/Pacific Islander baby is born poor every 14 hours.
- An American Indian/Alaska Native baby is born poor every 3 days.

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 816,000 children (19.1 percent) were uninsured in Florida.
In 2006, 20,614 babies (8.7 percent) were born at low birthweight in Florida. This included:
- 13.4 percent of Black, non-Latino babies.
- 7.0 percent of Latino babies.
- 7.6 percent of White, non-Latino babies.

19.7 percent of two-year-olds in Florida 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 these programs.

In the 2006-2007 school year, 8.9 percent of 3-year-olds and 71.1 percent of 4-year-olds were enrolled in state-funded preschool programs in Florida.

In 2005-2006, 35,457 children were enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start in Florida. Of these:
- 31.7 percent were Latino.
- 33.5 percent were White.
- 49.8 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 Florida:

56 percent of White, non-Latino 4th graders cannot read at grade level.
72 percent of Latino 4th graders cannot read at grade level.
84 percent of Black, non-Latino 4th graders cannot read at grade level.

46 percent of White, non-Latino 4th graders cannot do math at grade level.
67 percent of Latino 4th graders cannot do math at grade level.
85 percent of Black, non-Latino 4th graders cannot do math at grade level.

Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely than their peers to drop out of school altogether. In Florida:

For every 100 Asian/Pacific Islander students enrolled in the public schools, there were 2.9 suspensions.
For every 100 American Indian/Alaska Native students enrolled in the public schools, there were 7.2 suspensions.
For every 100 Latino students enrolled in the public schools, there were 7.7 suspensions.
For every 100 White students enrolled in the public schools, there were 7.9 suspensions.
For every 100 Black students enrolled in the public schools, there were 19.3 suspensions.

In Florida, 8.5 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 29,229 children in foster care in Florida.
In 2006, there were 134,567 victims of child maltreatment in Florida.

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 Florida, there were 121,173 juvenile arrests in 2007.

Of the 7,302 youths in residential placement in Florida in 2006:

567 (7.8 percent) were Latino.
2,856 (39.1 percent) were White, non-Latino.
3,807 (52.1 percent) were Black, non-Latino.

Florida spends 3.1 times as much per prisoner as per public school student.

Community Violence

The eight 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, 148 children and teens in Florida died of firearm injuries.
In 2007, 32.3 percent of Florida's high school students were involved in a physical fight.
In 2007, 12.5 percent of Florida's high school students were involved in a physical fight on school property.
In 2007, 8.6 percent of Florida's high school students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property.
In 2007, 18.0 percent of Florida's high school students carried a weapon 2 or more times in the preceding month.
In 2007, 5.6 percent of Florida'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.