

Children's Defense Fund

Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Poverty Fact Sheet

End Child Poverty



March 2009

The Children's Defense Fund's 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. Although a majority of poor children live in working families playing by the rules, they cannot earn enough to escape poverty.

We have no time to waste. It is time to step up and take action. Every step counts.

FACTS ABOUT CHILD POVERTY IN AMERICA

- **More than 13 million children—1 in 6 children—in America live in poverty.** Of these children, almost half—5.8 million—live in extreme poverty, with family income below half the poverty line.
- **A child is born poor every 33 seconds.** That's 2,583 each day.
- **Child poverty in America has risen since the year 2000.** About 1.7 million more children live in poverty today than in 2000—an increase of 15 percent.
- **In number, 4.5 million Latino, 4.3 million White and 3.9 million Black children are poor.** However, Black children are more *likely* to be poor than White or Latino children.
 - 1 in 3 Black children is poor;
 - More than 1 in 4 Latino children are poor; and
 - 1 in 10 White children is poor.
- **The 2009 Federal Poverty Level is \$22,050 for a family of four.** This is rarely enough to meet all basic necessities such as housing, food, child care, education and health care.

STEP UP AND TAKE ACTION TO DISMANTLE THE PIPELINE!

Families and Communities

- **Tutor and mentor students and adults.** Help them achieve educational goals that will give them a better chance of earning livable wages.
- **Partner with local businesses.** Help low-income students get internships, apprenticeships and volunteer opportunities to develop skills, increase employability, and raise their earning potential.
- **Volunteer at a free tax-preparation site.** Help low-income families understand potential tax refunds and benefits and avoid costly tax preparation fees.
- **Work with local bank representatives to provide financial workshops.** Help lower income families to make more informed financial decisions. Ask your community groups, organizations or congregations to co-sponsor them.

Policy Makers

- **Create jobs.** Pay livable wages.
- **Increase employment opportunities.** Expand job training programs targeted at low-income youths and adults and make college affordable for every student.
- **Increase the minimum wage.** Increase wages to a livable amount and index it to inflation.
- **Expand the Child Tax Credit and Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.** Supplement the income of working families with children.
- **Expand initiatives.** Increase savings, build assets, and increase financial education among low-income families.
- **Expand housing (Section 8) vouchers.** Address the housing needs of low income families.
- **Ensure that nutrition programs are adequately funded.** Programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp program) must be adequately funded, provide sufficient benefits, and reach more struggling families.

Step by step, we can and will make a difference. Today. Tomorrow. Together.

For more information on the *Cradle to Prison Pipeline*, please visit www.childrensdefense.org or contact us at 800-CDF-1200 (800-233-1200).