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UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, September 25, 2018, at 12:01 a.m. ET

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New Annie E. Casey Foundation report recommends policies to help young parents and their children succeed

3.4 million U.S. children live with parents aged 18 to 24

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (September 25, 2018) – The Annie E. Casey Foundation released a report today highlighting the effect of becoming a parent as a teen or young adult. *Opening Doors for Young Parents* offers recommendations for policymakers to invest in ensuring these young families find pathways to success.

Young parents are those who have children in their teens and early 20s. This report relies on data from an analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey, which found that there are about 3 million parents ages 18 to 24 in the United States. The survey also found that in the state of Rhode Island there are 6,000 parents ages 18 to 24.

Today, 3.4 million children in this country — 22 percent of all children under 5 in low-income families — live with parents ages 18 to 24. Sixty-nine percent of the children of these young parents, most of them babies, toddlers and preschoolers, live in low-income families. In Rhode Island, 79 percent of children of young parents live in low-income families.

“Parenthood at a young age places two generations at risk for poor outcomes – both the parent, and the child,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “*Opening Doors for Young Parents* shines a spotlight on how we can empower young parents to fulfill their education and earning potential and develop the skills they need to provide a strong start for their children, as well as contribute to their communities.”

Critical Developmental Periods: “Two Open Windows”

Young parents and their children are in two critically important developmental periods — a phenomenon researchers call “two open windows.” The young child is developing rapidly from infancy to age 3: learning about relationships, acquiring language and creating a million new neural connections per second. At the same time, young mothers and fathers are developing skills vital to success in both work and parenting, during the second most important phase of human development.

The simultaneous occurrence of these two growth periods means young parents and their children have distinct challenges and needs. A lack of financial resources

and time to bond with a new baby, along with the stress of the transition to parenting, regardless of age, are obstacles young parents face, and these difficulties can keep young parents from graduating from high school, continuing education and gaining employment. On the other hand, supportive services, such as mentoring and opportunities to build relationships with peers who are parenting, can promote success in both caring and providing for children.

Policy Recommendations

The Casey Foundation provides four policy recommendations to ensure these young families find pathways to success:

1. Create more opportunities for young parents to pursue education and employment.
2. Invest in programs that help young parents achieve financial stability during their children's early years and keep more of what they earn.
3. Surround young parents with supportive services that reduce stress and child development and healthy parenting.
4. Keep families together and promote success for young parents involved in systems.

"If we don't support young people when they become parents, we are cheating two generations out of having a positive future," warned Casey Foundation President and CEO Patrick McCarthy. "We can help young adult parents develop the skills they need to raise their children, contribute to their communities, and drive our national economy forward."

Release Information

Opening Doors for Young Parents will be available September 25 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at <https://www.aecf.org/opening-doors-for-young-parents>. Reporters may request an embargoed copy beginning September 18.

About Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.

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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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