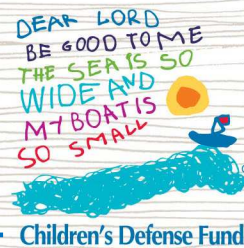


Children's Defense Fund Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Fact Sheet



October 2009

The Children's Defense Fund's *Cradle to Prison Pipeline* Campaign is a national and community crusade to engage families, youth, 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.

KEY NATIONAL FACTS

A Black boy born in 2001 has a 1 in 3 chance of going to prison in his lifetime; a Latino boy a 1 in 6 chance; and a White boy a 1 in 17 chance. A Black girl born in 2001 has a 1 in 17 chance of going to prison in her lifetime; a Latino girl a 1 in 45 chance; and a White girl a 1 in 111 chance.

Pervasive Poverty – Poverty is the largest driving force behind the Pipeline crisis, exacerbated by race. Black children are more than three times as likely as White children to be born into poverty and to be poor, and are almost four times as likely to live in extreme poverty. One in 3 Latino babies and 2 in 5 Black babies are born into poverty. More than 3 in 10 Latino children and 1 in 3 Black children are poor. Between 2000 and 2008, the number of poor Latino children increased by 1.5 million (to 5.0 million) and the number of poor Black children increased by 297,000 (to 3.9 million).

Inadequate Access to Health Coverage – One out of five Latino children and one out of nine Black children are uninsured, compared to one out of 14 White children. A child is born uninsured every 39 seconds. More than 2,200 children are born uninsured every day. And about 800,000 pregnant women are uninsured, while each year, approximately 28,000 infants die in America before they reach their first birthday.

Gaps in Early Childhood Development – Studies have shown that children who do not get the early intervention, permanence and stability they need are more likely to act out and fail in school because they lack the skills necessary to succeed. Researchers of early childhood emphasize the importance of early childhood nurturing and stimulation to help the brain grow, especially between birth and age seven, and even beyond and thus help children to thrive and to be on a positive path toward successful adulthood. The importance of stimulation in the first years of life is dramatically underlined in the U.S. Department of Education's study of 22,000 kindergartners in the kindergarten class of 1998-99, which found that Black and Hispanic children were substantially behind when they entered kindergarten.

Disparate Educational Opportunities – Children in the most economically depressed communities are at high risk of low achievement and attainment and are often stuck in under-funded, overcrowded schools. Poor urban schools have the highest numbers of teachers who are inexperienced or do not have degrees in the subjects they teach. Eighty-six percent of Black, 83 percent of Latino and 58 percent of White fourth graders cannot read at grade level; and 89 percent of Black, 85 percent of Latino and 59 percent of White 8th graders cannot do math at grade level. Black students are more likely than any other students to be in special education programs for children with mental retardation or emotional disturbance. Black and American Indian children are almost twice as likely as White children to be retained in a grade. The public school suspension rate among Black and American Indian students is almost three times that for Whites. Black, Latino, and American Indian children are more than twice as likely as White children to drop out of school. According to the US Department of Education, only 59 percent of Black and 61 percent of Latino students graduated from high school on time with a regular diploma in 2006. When Black children do graduate from high school, they have a greater chance of being unemployed and a lower chance of going to college full-time than White high school graduates. Only 50,000 Black males earn a bachelor's degree each year, but an estimated 1 in 3 Black men ages 20-29 is under correctional supervision or control. Approximately 846,000 Black males were incarcerated in state or federal prisons or local jails at mid-year 2008.

Intolerable Abuse and Neglect – A child is abused or neglected every 35 seconds. Four in ten of the children who are abused or neglected get no help at all after their initial investigation. More than 800,000 children are in foster care each year, about 508,000 on a single day. Black children represent 32 percent of children in foster care but only 15 percent of all children.

Unmet Mental and Emotional Problems – A Congressional study found 15,000 children in juvenile detention facilities, some as young as 7 years old, solely because community mental health services were unavailable. Studies have reported that as many as three-fourths of incarcerated youth have mental health disorders and about 1 in 5 has a severe disorder. Youths who age out of foster care are less likely to graduate from high school or college and experience more serious mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, than youths generally. They are less likely to receive adequate health and mental health care, and are more likely to experience homelessness, and to be involved in the criminal justice system.

Rampant Substance Abuse – Drugs, tobacco and alcohol lead our children down the wrong path. Disconnected youth, lacking a decent education or high school degree, job training skills, and social support systems or mentors, often resort to self-destructive acts. Unfortunately, alcohol and other substance abuse treatment for youth and for parents and other adults is in too short supply. Only about 10 percent of youth with a substance use disorder receive treatment.

Overburdened, Ineffective Juvenile Justice System – One-size-fits-all zero tolerance school discipline policies are transforming schools into a major point of entry into the juvenile justice system as children are increasingly arrested on school grounds for subjectively and loosely defined behaviors. Black youth are about four times as likely as their White peers to be incarcerated. Black youth are almost five times as likely to be incarcerated as White youth for drug offenses. Of the 1.7 million children with an incarcerated parent in 2007, Black children were seven times as likely and Latino children were more than twice as likely to have an incarcerated parent as White children. Most juvenile correctional facility programs focus on punishment rather than treatment and rehabilitation, often creating environments that further harden youth. This makes it more difficult for them to productively reintegrate into their families and communities.

We must speak out against policies that contribute to criminalizing children at younger and younger ages, and fight for policies that help children thrive and put them on track to a productive adulthood.

We need to:

- End poverty by creating jobs that offer livable wages, increasing the minimum wage, expanding job training programs, making college affordable for every student, and expanding income supports such as the Child Tax Credit.
- Ensure all children and pregnant woman have access to affordable comprehensive health and mental health coverage and services.
- Make early childhood development programs accessible to every child by ensuring such programs are affordable, available and of high quality.
- Help each child reach his/her full potential and succeed in work and life, by ensuring our schools have adequate resources to provide high quality education to every child.
- Expand prevention and specialized treatment services for children and their parents, connect children to caring permanent families, improve the quality of the child welfare workforce and increase accountability for results for children.
- Reduce detention and incarceration by increasing investment in prevention and early intervention strategies, such as access to quality early childhood development and education services and to the health and mental health care children need for healthy development.

For those children who do get caught in the deeper end of the Pipeline, we must accelerate reforms of juvenile justice policy at the federal, state and local level to ensure that troubled youth get the integrated services needed to put them on a sustained path to successful adulthood.

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