



2021 Children's Sabbath

"Where Does It Hurt?": Listening to Heal Our Children

Multifaith Children's Sabbath Service

Feel free to adapt the following Multifaith Children's Sabbath Service to reflect the religious traditions participating and incorporate alternate music, readings, and other resources suggested by the planning team and participating leaders.

General guidelines for planning multifaith Children's Sabbath services are [here](#).

It is always important to include youth voices on the planning committee for a Children's Sabbath service, but never more so than this year with the theme "Where Does It Hurt?": Listening to Heal Our Children. Look for ways to incorporate the gifts, voices, perspectives, and contributions of children and youth throughout, whether in responsive readings, reflections, spoken word, liturgical dance, music, art, or other creative responses.

Be sure to plan education and action in addition to the service. [Resources are available here](#). The aim of the Children's Sabbath weekend is to inspire new action to improve the lives of children—so be sure that participants know the ways that they individually or collectively can make a difference. Also consider how you can gather people's names and contact information for those who are interested in finding ways to follow up together in action and connection. This could be through an optional form inserted into the program/bulletin to fill out and leave behind, a sign-up sheet (this may be more comfortable for people to do after the service than before), or another means.

Preparation:

At a suitable spot where people will be gathering, hang large pieces of mural paper with the heading **"Where does it hurt?" We welcome your words and phrases telling how you see children and young people hurting in these difficult times.** Place a variety of markers or crayons nearby. Invite a few young people and others from the planning committee to write their responses on the sheet ahead of time to orient those arriving to what it is about.

During the Act of Commitment (below), participants will be invited to write a word or phrase on a large adhesive bandage or a sticker printed with the outline of a bandage, describing how they will act to help heal the hurts and prevent further harm. When they depart the service, they will be invited to add those bandages/stickers to the mural paper. If creating your own "bandages," use the template at the end of this resource and print it out on "name tag" adhesive sheets made for printers.

Music

Opening Procession of Religious Leaders and Children

Adhan: Islamic Call to Prayer

Print in bulletin:

Adhan means “listen.” It is the word for the Islamic call to prayer. As we begin our multifaith National Observance of Children’s Sabbath celebration, whatever your faith tradition you are invited to listen to this Islamic call to prayer. As you do, you may also reflect on your own religious tradition: What words call you to prayer or worship? How is prayer and worship an opportunity to listen? Who and what are we listening to or for?

Arabic transliteration of the adhan is as follows:

Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!

Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah. Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah.

Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah. Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah.

Hayya ‘ala-s-Salah. Hayya ‘ala-s-Salah.

Hayya ‘ala-l-Falah. Hayya ‘ala-l-Falah.

Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!

La ilaha illa Allah.

The English translation of the adhan is:

God is Great! God is Great! God is Great! God is Great!

I bear witness that there is no god except the One God.

I bear witness that there is no god except the One God.

I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God.

I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God.

Hurry to the prayer. Hurry to the prayer.

Hurry to salvation. Hurry to salvation.

God is Great! God is Great!

There is no god except the One God.

Welcome

(Offer words that welcome participants, remind them of the purpose of gathering, and assure that all are welcome and respected.)

Gathering Words

(The gathering words could be read by one person or several people, who lead the first and last lines, and the words after the unison lines in bold.)

Listen! You are welcome here for this celebration of Children’s Sabbath!

We come together from many traditions for a shared purpose:

to listen to the voices of children and youth, telling us “where it hurts.”

We come together from many places with a united commitment:

to hear how we can help heal the hurts and prevent harm.

We come together bringing diverse experiences and a common hope:

to work together to bring wholeness and healing
to the hurting places in our children's hearts,
the wounded places in our community,
the broken places in our nation.

We come together with a variety of gifts, insights, and perspectives;

Each one of us welcome,
Each one of us valued,
Each one of us needed.

Listen! We are glad you are here, as together we ask, "Where Does It Hurt?" and listen to begin the healing for our children.

Prayer from Baha'i Tradition

O Thou kind Lord! Unite all. Let the religions agree and make the nations one, so that they may see each other as one family and the whole earth as one home. May they all live together in perfect harmony. ('Abdu'l-Baha)

Music

"Where Does It Hurt?": Listening to the Children

This is the heart of the 2021 multifaith Children's Sabbath. There are several options for this segment of the service:

Option 1: Invite young people in your community to prepare brief reflections on "where it hurts," for them and other young people in the community. *Depending on comfort and confidentiality, young people could read their own statements, or the statements could be collected and distributed to be read aloud by others, with a note in the bulletin that clarifies the statements are anonymous and read by others. Possible prompts or lead-ins might look like this:*

Leader (adult): We are here to ask our children and young people to tell us where it hurts, and to listen with open hearts, ready hands, and deep commitment to work for healing. Tell us, where does it hurt?

[Young Voice 1: The pandemic hurts...]

[Young Voice 2: Poverty hurts...]

[Young Voice 3: Depression hurts...]

[Young Voice 4: Racism hurts...]

[Young Voice 5: Over-policing hurts...]

[Young Voice 5: Incarceration hurts...]

[Young Voice 5: Feeling unseen, unheard, unvalued, disregarded, and disrespected hurts...]

Leader: We're listening. We heard you. We're here to start walking with you so together we can heal the hurts and prevent more harm. We're grateful for the good, hard gift of sharing where it hurts, and trusting that we'll hear.

Option 2: Play video and/or audio recordings of young people describing “where it hurts.”

Possibilities for video/audio recordings include:

- Five fantastic young people who make up the Children’s Defense Fund’s first cohort of Youth Voices Storytelling Fellows are currently producing videos about their lived experiences with economic insecurity, in an effort to help reframe narratives about what economic insecurity looks and feels like. These videos may be available on our website as early as October, please check back.
- [A 5-minute video made by LAYUP \(Los Angeles Youth Uprising\) is available here.](#)
- Invite young people in your community to work together to create a brief video for use in this segment, addressing their perspective on “where it hurts” for children and youth today and how they hope the community—including faith communities—will partner with them to help, heal, and prevent harm so all children may thrive.

Option 3: Invite young people to read sections of Where America’s Children Hurt

(below) to provide an overview of where America’s children are hurting. The following statistics are from [The State of America’s Children® 2021](#), and more context for each excerpt is available in the full report. If you select this option, you may also want to include an insert with more detailed information about each of these statements (found at the end of this resource).

Young Voice 1: Child poverty hurts. Children remain the poorest age group in America, with children of color and young children suffering the highest poverty rates. Nearly 1 in 7 children—10.5 million—were poor in 2019. The youngest children are the poorest and almost half lived in extreme poverty below half the poverty line.

Young Voice 2: Not having a home hurts. The lack of affordable housing and federal rental assistance leaves millions of children homeless or at risk of homelessness. More than 1.5 million students experienced homelessness during the school year.

Young Voice 3: Child hunger hurts. Millions of children live in food-insecure households, lacking reliable access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious food. More than 1 in 7 children—10.7 million—were food insecure, meaning they lived in households where not everyone had enough to eat. Black and Hispanic children were twice as likely to live in food-insecure households as white children.

Young Voice 4: Not having health coverage hurts. Children have lost the health coverage they need to survive and thrive at an alarming rate. About 4.4 million children under 19 are uninsured. The rates of uninsured children are especially high among Hispanic children, undocumented children, children living in the South, and children in families with lower incomes.

Young Voice 5: Unequal education hurts. America’s schools continue to slip backwards into patterns of deep racial and socioeconomic segregation, perpetuating achievement gaps.

Young Voice 6: Going into foster care because of poverty hurts families, and leaving foster care without a forever family hurts. Each year, more than 20,000 youth reach adulthood without a permanent family.

Young Voice 7: Incarceration hurts. A disproportionate number of children of color are incarcerated in the juvenile justice and/or adult criminal justice systems, placing them at risk of physical and psychological harm. Black youth represented less than 15 percent of the total youth population but 52 percent of youth prosecuted in adult criminal court in 2018. Black youth are nine times more likely than white youth to receive an adult prison sentence, American Indian/Alaska Native youth are almost two times more likely, and Hispanic youth are 40 percent more likely.

Young Voice 8: Gun violence hurts: Gun violence was the leading cause of death for children and teens. One child or teen is killed with guns every 2 hours and 36 minutes.

Young Voice 9: Family separation and anti-immigrant policies hurt and are dangerous to children's health, development, and well-being. An estimated 6.9 million children lived with undocumented parents. Chronic uncertainty and distress about the threat of enforcement activity destroy children's sense of safety and their mental health.

Option 4: Hear from youth with experience in the foster care system

Explore [Away from Home: Youth Experiences of Institutional Placements in Foster Care](#), a new report published by CDF's partners that features youth speaking in their own voices about their experiences in group foster care. The report includes a set of [Guided Reading and Discussion Questions](#) that could be used for reflection in a group setting.

Option 5: Something else!

You and your planning team may come up with a different creative option. What is most important is centering the voices of children and youth in this service so that we are truly listening to them so they can tell us "where it hurts."

A Prayer Beyond Walls

By Ray Buckley, a Native American of Lakota/Tlingit/Scottish descent, who is a United Methodist author, illustrator, storyteller and poet living in the Alaska Conference.

This prayer could be led by one or several people. It may be introduced explaining that it was originally written for a gathering of Native Americans who gathered outside an immigration detention center where children were being held. It reminds us of the interconnections between all the places, generations, and ways in which children suffer harm and injustice and adults are determined to witness and work for their healing and release.

O God,
When our great-great grandparents were living,
Their children were taken away.
When our great-grandparents were breathing,
Their children were taken from their homes.
When our grandparents had their being,
The children were taken.
When our parents walked,
Some of them did not know who they were,
For they were among those who had been taken.

**We, whose bones were across borders,
wept, and You were a witness.**

They told us, "We will take your children,
We will take your future. We will take your blood.
We will kill the brown in them. We will make them
Look like us, but not be equal to us."
This is the price we paid for crying for justice.

**O God, you were a witness.
To their tears, and our cries.**

Millions were lost, stolen from their homes.
We did not know until we saw the empty blankets.
We were powerless, for we had no voice.
There was the sound of crying, but no ears to hear.

**O God, you were a witness.
When the children were taken, they took the children of God.**

And now, after this also,
They have taken the children of others.
Ninos in Dios. The children of God.
God's babies. The ones who toddle toward God.

We don't know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.
But we remember our old songs, and our faith.
We come to stand before You. We are witnesses for our brothers and sisters.
We come to stand: Our men, women, and our children.
And our eyes are upon You.

O God, you are a witness. These are your people.

We cannot touch these children to whom we are related by ancient bones.
We cannot comfort their mothers, or strengthen their fathers.

Take this singing, O God, in a circle around us.
Take these prayers like smoke in the wind.
Take it through walls where children are kept.
Take it through barbed wire and metal fence.
Take it across borders to those who cry for justice.
Take it to ears that refuse to hear, but can be opened.

Let this prayer and singing be as a blanket this moment.

Make these prayers and singing like a whirlwind, O God.
Make our tears as courage, and our standing as a testimony.
We who have survived are witnesses that there is no border,
To justice when God is wounded.
You will not leave your children nameless,
Or your infants in captivity.

**We are witnesses, O God, to the powerful,
that You alone are power.
We are witnesses, O God,
that you are a witness.**

Amen.

Music

A Prayer from Jewish Tradition: Mi Shebeirach

A group of young people or an intergenerational group from a local synagogue/s could sing this for the gathering. Or, they could teach it to those assembled, and invite them to join in. Either way, be sure to print the words in the bulletin/program.

A rabbi, cantor, or young person may explain that the mi shebeirach is included in services every Shabbat. Often, congregation members are invited to name aloud or in their hearts those for whom they pray, who are in need of healing. Depending on which seems appropriate for your particular gathering, invite participants at the multifaith Children's Sabbath service to name aloud or in their hearts children and youth in need of healing—it could be first names of individuals or it could be groups, such as “children struggling with depression.”

*Mi shebeirach avoteinu
M'kor hab'racha l'imoteinu*

May the source of strength who blessed the ones before us,
help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing, and let us say, Amen.

*Mi shebeirach imoteinu
M'kor habrachah l'avoteinu*

Bless those in need of healing with r'fuah sh'leimah,
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit, and let us say, Amen.
(Debbie Friedman)

A Prayer from Buddhist Tradition

May all beings everywhere plagued with sufferings of body and mind quickly be freed from their illnesses. May those frightened cease to be afraid, and may those bound be free. May the powerless find power and may people think of befriending one another. May those who find themselves in trackless, fearful wildernesses – the children, the aged, the unprotected – be guarded by beneficent celestials, and may they swiftly attain Buddhahood.

OR: The Buddhist Metta (Lovingkindness) Prayer

*(The leader may explain that there are many variations of this prayer, which starts with blessing oneself and expanding outward to bless all. Teach participants that the pattern each time is may I/ they **be happy, be well, be peaceful, be free.** If appropriate, invite participants who wish to join in.)*

- My heart fills with lovingkindness. May I be happy. May I be well. May I be peaceful. May I be free.
- May others near me be happy. May they be well. May they be peaceful. May they be free.
- May all in my community be happy. May they be well. May they be peaceful. May they be free.
- May all in my country be happy. May they be well. May they be peaceful. May they be free.



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- May all beings on Earth be happy. May they be well. May they be peaceful. May they be free.
- May my parents be happy. May they be well. May they be peaceful. May they be free.
- May all my friends be happy. May they be well. May they be peaceful. May they be free.
- May all my enemies be happy. May they be well. May they be peaceful. May they be free.
- If I have hurt anyone, knowingly or unknowingly in thought, word or deed, I ask for their forgiveness.
- If anyone has hurt me, knowingly or unknowingly in thought, word or deed, I extend my forgiveness.
- May all beings everywhere, whether near or far, whether known to me or unknown, be happy. May they be well. May they be peaceful. May they be free.

Music or Liturgical Dance might be included here

Charge to the Gathered Community

(This is a place where it would be powerful to have young voices offering their charge and call to action—how they hope those who are present, inspired by the call to justice in all of the religious traditions, will respond to what they have heard about “where it hurts” for children and youth today in partnership and action with young people. This is a point in the service where those who have indeed been listening with caring hearts and open minds will want to know what they can do, will want to translate that caring into committed action.)

Act of Commitment:

While one or several people are leading the introduction, have others passing around baskets with large bandages (purchased or printed as stickers) and pens/pencils in baskets, inviting each participant to take one.

Leader/s:

There are many ways to act.

We act when we listen, really listen.

We act when we share our experiences, truly share.

We act when we come alongside to help, guided by the one who asks us to help.

We act when we speak out—on our own and with others.

There is action that tends to immediate wounds.

There is action that supports long-term healing.

There is action the prevents harm.

Action starts at the individual level—

It grows deep roots at the community level—

It creates systemic change at the national level

So that all our children may thrive.

All are needed; all are important. What will you do?

We invite you now to reflect and then

write a word or phrase on the bandage you received,

Sharing one thing you will do in the days and year ahead



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To act in response to what we've heard
About how our children are hurting,
So that all children may thrive.

Music will play for several minutes to provide time
For that reflection and commitment.

If you are here with a child too young to write themselves,
Ask them how they can be helpful to other children,
And you can write the words for them.

A young person or several could provide instrumental music here while participants reflect and write. When the music is over, continue:

As you leave here today, we invite you to stick your response the mural where we entered. *[If your planning team wants to provide a way for participants to stay connected and work collectively, you can add guidance for that now, such as "You will also see a clipboard by the mural where you can write your name and email address if you would like to join with others in finding new opportunities to act for children in our community in the year ahead."]*

A Prayer from Hindu Tradition

May there be welfare to all beings;
May there be fullness and good and auspicious life to everyone;
May there be peace everywhere. . .
May all be full of happiness and abundance;
May everyone in the world enjoy complete health, free from diseases;
May all see and experience good things in their lives,
May not even a single person experience sorrow and misery.
Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

Closing Music: Hold On (African American Spiritual, James McCoy), adapted

Hold on just a little while longer,
Hold on just a little while longer,
Hold on just a little while longer,
Everything's gonna be alright.

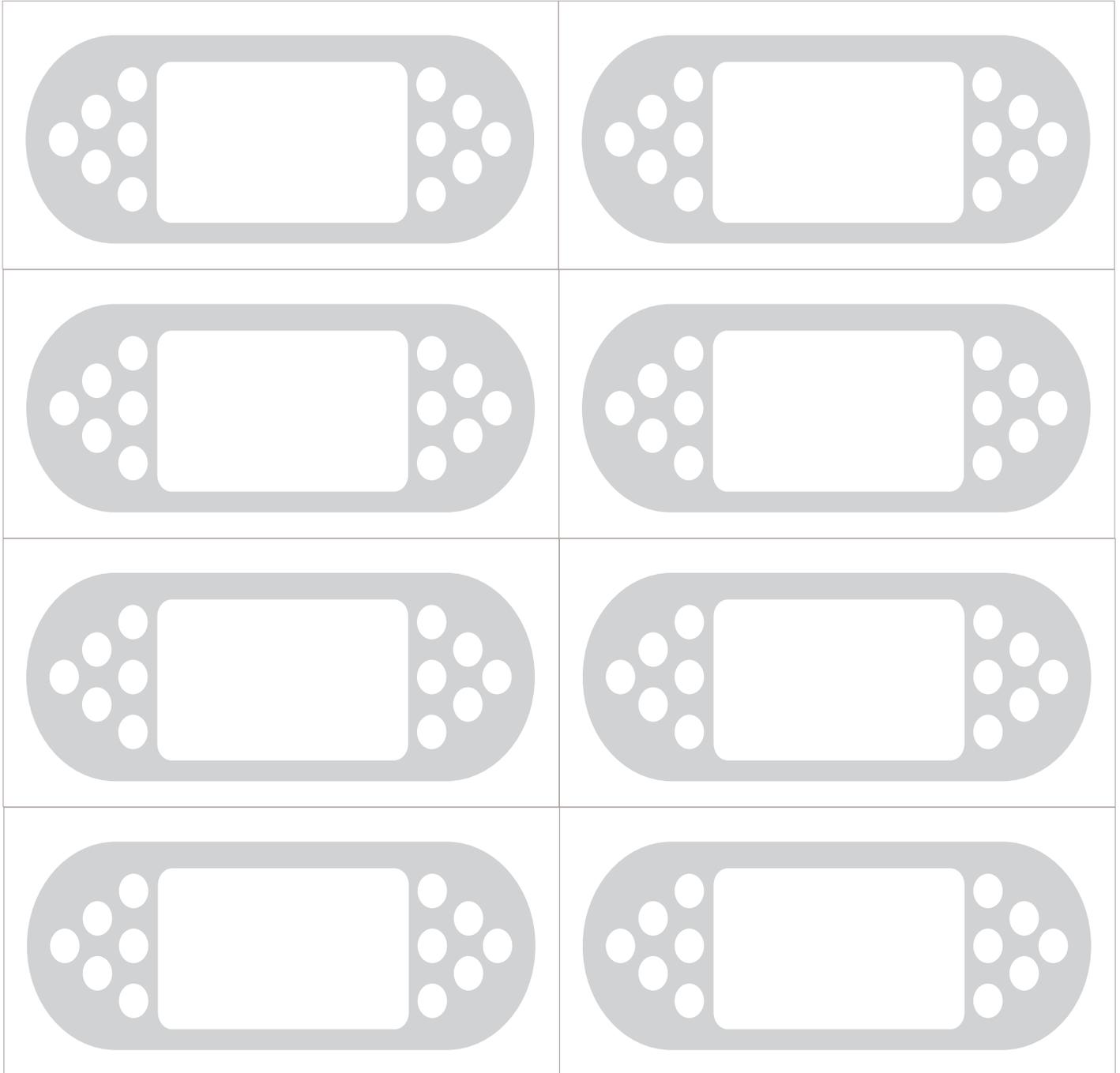
Pray on just a little while longer...
Reach out just a little while longer...
Speak out just a little while longer...
March on just a little while longer...

Sikh Langar after the Multifaith Children's Sabbath Service

If feasible, the Sikh community could be invited to coordinate a Langar (free, communal meal traditionally held after Sikh worship in a gurdwara) for the multifaith Children's Sabbath participants after the service. If so, print information in the bulletin/program so participants know all are welcome and understand how it is a meaningful part of Sikh tradition. In advance, determine how the cost will be shared by participating organizations/sponsors.



Resources for the 2021 Multifaith Service:



Where Does It Hurt?

An Overview of the State of America's Children® 2021

The full report from which this is excerpted, with additional context, can be found at <https://www.childrensdefense.org/state-of-americas-children/>.

CHILD POPULATION: America's children are more diverse than ever.

- There were 73 million children in the U.S. in 2019—22 percent of our nation's population.
- In 2019, children of color made up 49.8 percent of all children and the majority of children under 5.

CHILD POVERTY: Children remain the poorest age group in America, with children of color and young children suffering the highest poverty rates.

- Nearly 1 in 7 children—10.5 million—were poor in 2019. Nearly 71 percent of poor children were children of color. More than 1 in 4 Black children and more than 1 in 5 Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native children were poor compared with 1 in 12 white children.
- The youngest children are the poorest. Nearly 1 in 6 children under 6 were poor and almost half lived in extreme poverty below half the poverty line.

INCOME AND WEALTH INEQUALITY: Income and wealth inequality are growing and harming children in low-income, Black and Brown families.

- The share of all wealth held by the top one percent of Americans grew from 30 to 37 percent and the share held by the bottom 90 percent fell from 33 to 23 percent between 1989 and 2019.
- Today, a member of the top 10 percent of income earners makes about 39 times as much as the average earner in the bottom 90 percent.
- In 2019, the median family income of white households with children (\$95,700) was more than double that of Black (\$43,900), and nearly double that of Hispanic households with children (\$52,300).

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS: The lack of affordable housing and federal rental assistance leaves millions of children homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- More than 1 in 3 children live in households burdened by housing costs, meaning more than 30 percent of their family income goes toward housing.
- More than 1.5 million children enrolled in public schools experienced homelessness during the 2017-2018 school year.
- 74 percent of unhoused students during the 2017-2018 school year were living temporarily with family or friends.

CHILD HUNGER AND NUTRITION: Millions of children live in food-insecure households, lacking reliable access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious food.

- More than 1 in 7 children—10.7 million—were food insecure, meaning they lived in households where not everyone had enough to eat. Black and Hispanic children were twice as likely to live in food-insecure households as white children.
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helped feed 17 million children in Fiscal Year 2018—nearly a quarter of all children in America.



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- Half of all families that received SNAP in 2019 were not able to get enough healthy food, however, because SNAP benefits were too low. Among households with children, monthly SNAP benefits averaged just \$118 a person—or less than \$4 a day.

CHILD HEALTH: Our children have lost the health coverage they need to survive and thrive at an alarming rate.

- An estimated 4.4 million children under age 19 were uninsured—an increase of 320,000 more children without health insurance since 2018.
- Disparities in health insurance coverage persist. The rates of uninsured children are especially high among Hispanic children, undocumented children, children living in the South, and children in families with lower incomes.
- Medicaid and CHIP are the foundation of the nation's health insurance system for children. In 2019, nearly 36 million children under 19 received comprehensive, pediatric-appropriate and affordable health coverage through Medicaid and CHIP.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: The high cost of child care and lack of early childhood investments leaves many children without quality care during critical years of brain development.

- Center-based child care for an infant cost more than public college tuition in 28 states and the District of Columbia in 2019. More than 80 percent of two-child families were paying more for child care than for rent.
- During the 2018-2019 school year, only 34 percent of 4-year-olds and 6 percent of 3-year-olds were enrolled in a state-funded preschool program.

EDUCATION: America's schools continue to slip backwards into patterns of deep racial and socioeconomic segregation, perpetuating achievement gaps.

- During the 2017-2018 school year, 19 percent of Black, 21 percent of Hispanic, and more than 26 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native public school students did not graduate on time compared with only 11 percent of white students.
- More than 77 percent of Hispanic and more than 79 percent of Black fourth and eighth grade public school students were not proficient in reading or math in 2019, compared with less than 60 percent of white students.
- In 2017, 60 percent of Black children attended high-poverty schools with a high share of students of color while fewer than 9 percent of white children did.

CHILD WELFARE: For the first time since 2012, the number of children in the child welfare system fell, but too many children wind up in foster care because of poverty.

- Black and American Indian/Alaska Native families are disproportionately impacted by the child welfare system. Nationally, Black and AI/AN children are represented in foster care at a rate 1.66 and 2.84 times their portion of the overall population, respectively.
- After steadily declining since 2008, the number of children aging out of the foster care system jumped by more than 14 percent in 2019, with 20,445 youth reaching adulthood without a permanent family.

YOUTH JUSTICE: A disproportionate number of children of color are incarcerated in the juvenile justice and/or adult criminal justice systems, placing them at risk of physical and psychological harm.

- Despite a 67 percent reduction in child arrests between 2009 and 2019, 530,581 children were arrested in the U.S. and a child or teen was arrested every 59 seconds.
- Black children were 2.4 times more likely to be arrested and American Indian children were 1.5 times more likely to be arrested than white children.
- Black youth represented less than 15 percent of the total youth population but 52 percent of youth prosecuted in adult criminal court in 2018. Black youth are nine times more likely than white youth to receive an adult prison sentence, American Indian/Alaska Native youth are almost two times more likely, and Hispanic youth are 40 percent more likely.

GUN VIOLENCE: Child and teen gun deaths hit a 19-year high in 2017 and have remained elevated since.

- Gun violence was the leading cause of death for children and teens ages 1-19 in 2018, surpassing motor vehicle accidents for the first time.
- In 2019, 3,371 children and teens were killed with guns—one every 2 hours and 36 minutes.
- Black children and teens had the highest gun death rate, followed by American Indian/Alaska Native children and teens. Black children and teens were 4 times more likely to die from gun violence than their white peers.
- The United States has more guns than people—and nearly 1 in 5 are sold without background checks.

IMMIGRANT CHILDREN: Family separation and anti-immigrant policies are dangerous to children's health, development, and well-being.

- Nearly 1 in 4, approximately 18 million, U.S. children lived with at least one immigrant parent in 2018.
- More than 1 in 4 immigrant children did not have health coverage in 2019, 25.5 percent compared to 5.1 percent of native-born citizen children.
- An estimated 6.9 million children lived with undocumented parents. Chronic uncertainty and distress about the threat of enforcement activity destroy children's sense of safety and their mental health.