



SERVING THE UNDERSERVED

COUNTIES ADDRESSING POVERTY

Under the leadership of its President Roy Charles Brooks, the National Association of Counties (NACo) will raise awareness of the critical role counties play in breaking the cycle of poverty. NACo will also provide tools to strengthen efforts to address this issue as we help to build healthy, vibrant and safe counties across the United States.

While counties put people first, poverty can push them to the end of the line. This is particularly true for our nation's children, who are impacted by poverty more than any other age group. In fact, Adverse Childhood Experiences, like those stemming from poverty, can impact infants for the rest of their lives.

As the ultimate safety net, county investments and leadership in early childhood development will lower future costs in county health, child welfare, safety and justice, and other systems. Counties also forge partnerships with the public, private and non-profit sectors at the federal, state and local levels to remove barriers, build opportunities and address the many faces of poverty in America.

COUNTIES SERVE AS THE ULTIMATE SAFETY NET FOR OUR MOST VULNERABLE FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

- In 2015, **13.5 percent** of all Americans fell **under the federal poverty line**, with the poverty rate for children under 18 exceeding all other age groups. In fact, **19.7 percent of children were living in poverty**.
- Counties are investing **\$58 billion** annually in federal, state and local funds **in human services**.
- Research shows that **for every \$1 invested** in early childhood education, **\$7 is returned** to society through reduced teen pregnancies, higher graduation rates, improved school performance and reduced incarceration rates.
- From early childhood development to workforce development, from homelessness to health, **counties are providing services that break cycles of poverty** and help people thrive.

COUNTIES ARE WORKING TO CREATE PATHWAYS OUT OF POVERTY

- Focusing on skill and opportunity gaps; jobs vs. wealth creation.
- Addressing consequences of poverty and the need for “two-generation” approaches.
- Providing services to break the cycle of poverty, from early childhood development and nutrition assistance programs, to programs which help families become more stable and secure.

COUNTIES CANNOT ADDRESS THE CRISIS OF POVERTY WITHOUT FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL SUPPORT AND CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

- Working across sectors requires dedicated resources and sustainable funding.
- Consistent and continued support for federal programs like the Social Services Block Grant, Community Services Block Grant and Community Development Block Grant helps counties serve those most in need and aid individuals and families in breaking the cycle of poverty.

ENSURING ALL CHILDREN THRIVE

Childhood experiences, both positive and negative, have a tremendous impact on the future health, well-being and success of young people. Research on Adverse Childhood Experiences illustrates that early trauma can lead to a life of poverty, violence, health issues and lack of the developmental skills necessary for success in school and in life.

Children and their families need to live in safe, stable and nurturing communities with access to healthcare, quality childcare and family support. By providing the services and support that families need, all children can break the cycle of poverty and reach their full potential.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF SUCCESSFUL EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Working together with our federal, state and local public, non-profit and private sector partners, counties play a key role in providing the support that children need to be prepared for school and life. Over the course of the next year, NACo will build awareness and provide tools to help counties create thriving communities which support all families. Along with our partners at the Center for the Study of Social Policy and the National League of Cities, we will focus in four key areas to impact significantly the investment in children and break the cycle of poverty:

BUILDING BLOCK #1: Community Leadership, Commitment and Public Will to Make Early Childhood a Priority

BUILDING BLOCK #2: Quality Services that Work for All Young Children and Families

BUILDING BLOCK #3: Neighborhoods Where Families Can Thrive

BUILDING BLOCK #4: Policies that Support and are Responsive to Families

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER: The Infrastructure of an Early Learning Community

- Effective leadership
- Use of data to drive change
- Sustainable financial backing
- Supports for service providers

Early Learning Communities: Building Blocks for Success. (2016). Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy and National League of Cities. Retrieved from <https://www.cssp.org/media-center/blog/text/Building-Blocks-for-Success.pdf>

To learn more about NACo's focus on poverty and county efforts to support those most in need, go to www.naco.org/poverty



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