



# Renewing Childhood's Promise

The History and  
Future of Federal  
Early Care and  
Education Policy

**KATHARINE B. STEVENS**

NOVEMBER 2015

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## Executive Summary

Since 1935, the federal government has supported early childhood care and education for poor children to promote their healthy development and give them a fair opportunity to succeed. Informed by recent advances in brain science, our understanding of the lifelong importance of children’s earliest years has never been greater. But federal early childhood policy is in urgent need of reform.

Today’s federal early care and education policies are fragmented, inefficient, and unnecessarily complex. Federal policymaking is driven by coping with what exists rather than by what we are trying to accomplish. At the state and local levels, integrating incoherent federal funding streams with growing city- and state-funded early childhood programs is difficult to impossible.

In the dysfunctional landscape of federal early childhood policy, policymakers have gotten locked into choosing among three bad options: tinkering around the edges of existing programs, trying to cut them, or adding new ones on top of what is already in place. Yet none of these approaches will enable us to achieve the most important aim: giving America’s least-advantaged children a fair chance at a happy, productive life.

To move forward, we must begin by confronting a problematic legacy of federal policy. Its roots lie in the 19th century, when America first committed to improving the well-being of poor children. Since then we have gone from one thing to the next—orphans, home care, child care, Head Start, pre-K—by a circuitous, unintentional path, implementing one solution after another to problems caused by previous solutions to previous problems. Over the course of this long, tangled history we have drifted far from our core purpose—indeed, we barely remember what it is.

This paper aims to provide a starting point by exploring how we ended up where we are today. It traces our evolving approach to early childhood care

and education, sketching a brief, broad history of the three major federal funding streams: the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Head Start. Why are these our three major funding streams? Where did they come from? What does their history tell us about how to move forward? Key findings include:

- Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), enacted as a part of the Social Security Act of 1935, aimed to foster children’s healthy development by enabling widowed and abandoned poor women to remain at home to raise their children. But as the 20th century wore on, public and policy emphasis gradually shifted from child well-being to the financial welfare and self-sufficiency of adults. The 1935 program ultimately evolved into today’s welfare and child care systems: TANF and CCDF, both aimed to promote mothers’ work outside of the home.
- Over this period, the central goal of child care itself was redefined from ensuring children’s healthy development to ensuring that their mothers could go to work. As adult employment was foregrounded, child care increasingly came to be viewed as a work support for parents while its effects on children’s early development and well-being were deemphasized.
- At the same time, federal policy has evolved to reinforce a counterproductive, false distinction between “custodial” and “developmental” care for children. All programs for children from birth through age four have two important functions: supporting parents’ work in a 24/7 economy and fostering children’s healthy growth and learning during the most crucial period of

human development. But current policy fails to recognize that those two aims are complementary, equally important strategies for building human capital in our nation's most disadvantaged communities.

- As early nurture and care have been deemphasized, formal education through the public schools has come to dominate public and policy attention as the leading strategy to improve the well-being of poor children. Initiated by passage of President Lyndon Johnson's Elementary and Secondary School Act and the establishment of Head Start 50 years ago, this is most recently reflected in today's accelerating push for public pre-K.
- Our concept of child well-being has devolved to a narrow focus on children's economic status and cognitive skills. The technocratic aims of increasing family income and children's test scores have largely eclipsed a broader, once-held goal of

advancing the overall welfare and life chances of poor children.

- The most promising path forward is to facilitate the work of leading, innovative states. A new, carefully planned state option could give special flexibility to states that have demonstrated ongoing commitment to providing high-quality early-learning programs for disadvantaged children from birth through age four, while shifting the ultimate control of resources from government officials to parents.

Understanding how we got to where we are now can help us remember what our true aims are and refocus on what we are really trying to do. That, in turn, will give us the foundation for making thoughtful, principled decisions about where to go next: setting children "upon surer paths to health and well-being and happiness," in President Herbert Hoover's words from almost a century ago.

## Introduction

[We aim] to lighten the burdens of children, to set their feet upon surer paths to health and well-being and happiness. . . .

Let no one believe that these are questions which should not stir a nation; that they are below the dignity of statesmen or governments. If we could have but one generation of properly born, trained, educated, and healthy children, a thousand other problems of government would vanish.

—President Herbert Hoover, 1930

*Address to the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection*

Since 1935, the federal government has supported early childhood care and education for poor children to promote young children’s healthy development and give them a fair opportunity to succeed in life. Informed by recent advances in brain science, our understanding of the lifelong importance of children’s earliest years has never been greater. Yet while the nurture and education of children from birth through age four is increasingly recognized as a crucial policy area, federal early childhood policy is in urgent need of reform.

Today’s federal early care and education policies are fragmented, inefficient, and unnecessarily complex. An outsider surveying the federal policy landscape encounters a daunting alphabet soup of disparate, uncoordinated federal funding streams: Head Start, Early Head Start, CCDF, TANF, IDEA, MIECHV, ESEA, RTT-ELC, and EHS-CCP, among others.

Head Start, along with Early Head Start for infants and toddlers, is the largest and most visible federal preschool program. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are also major funding streams, providing child care for poor and low-income working families. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) offers funding for preschool children with diagnosed

learning disabilities. The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) funds 16 different home-visiting programs for children under five. Advocates are currently pushing for a bigger early childhood component to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Over the last several years, the Obama administration has added Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP), and Preschool Development Grants to this unwieldy mix.<sup>1</sup>

Each of these programs has its own administration, rules, standards, monitoring requirements, and accountability frameworks. Further, the quality of children’s experiences often varies greatly depending on which funding stream they are attached to. A series of US General Accountability Office (GAO) reports over the last 20 years reflect this persistent problem: *Early Childhood Programs: Multiple Programs and Overlapping Target Groups* published in 1994, *Early Education and Care: Overlap Indicates Need to Assess Crosscutting Programs* in 2000, and *Early Learning and Child Care: Federal Funds Support Multiple Programs with Similar Goals* in 2014.<sup>2</sup>

At the state and local levels, integrating these multiple federal funding streams with growing city- and state-funded early childhood programs ranges from



difficult to impossible. Entire offices in early childhood programs are staffed with experts dedicated to what the early childhood field calls “blending and braiding”: the complicated, bureaucratic task of combining incoherent federal funding streams into money that is actually useful to children and working families.

Everyone agrees that current policy is inadequate. But the question remains: how can we fix it? Recent efforts have fallen into four categories: tinker, expand, add, and eliminate. The problem is that none of those approaches will get us where we really want to go, which is improving the lives and life chances of poor children.

Reforming federal early childhood policy to help the children who need it most will be harder than growing existing federal funding streams, cutting them, or adding new ones. Twenty more years of GAO reports, funneling more money into the current system, or layering additional programs on top of what is already in place will not enable us to achieve the most important aim: to promote the flourishing of the nation’s youngest, most disadvantaged children.

To move forward, we must begin by confronting a problematic legacy of decisions and policies made long ago. The roots of our federal policies lie in the 19th century, when America first committed to improving the well-being of poor children. Since then we have gone from one thing to the next—orphans, home care, child care, Head Start, pre-K—by a circuitous, unintentional path, implementing one solution after

another to problems caused by previous solutions to previous problems.

Over the course of this long, tangled history we have drifted far from our core purpose—indeed, we barely remember what it is. Our current debates are confined to well-worn ruts in the early childhood policy road, when instead we should be taking a step back, defining our fundamental goals, and pursuing the most promising avenues to achieve them.

This paper aims to provide a starting point by exploring how we ended up where we are today. It does not recount a comprehensive history of federal early childhood policy; that would require several long books. Rather, its purpose is to sketch a brief, broad history of the three major funding streams for federal early childhood education and care: CCDF, TANF, and Head Start. Why are these our three major funding streams? Where did they come from? What are they trying to accomplish? Why are they designed the way they are? What does their history tell us about how to move forward?

Understanding how we got to where we are now can help us remember what our true aims are and refocus on what we are really trying to do. That, in turn, will give us the foundation for making thoughtful, principled decisions about where to go next: to set children “upon surer paths to health and well-being and happiness,” in President Herbert Hoover’s words from almost a century ago.

## Part I: The Evolution of Child Care

America's social and economic landscape changed dramatically from the early 1800s into the first decades of the 20th century, transforming from a small agrarian society to a large, urban, industrial nation.<sup>3</sup> In 1800, the country's population was just 5.3 million and 94 percent rural. By 1930, the population had exploded to 123 million people, more than half of whom lived in cities.<sup>4</sup> From 1900 to 1930, the combined population of the nation's 10 largest cities grew from 9.5 million to 19 million as immigrants flooded in and great numbers of Americans gave up farm life for employment in factories and other urban jobs.<sup>5</sup> This social and economic transformation had far-reaching effects on families and children, prompting a sustained and unprecedented national concern for child well-being that began gathering momentum in the mid-19th century and continued for decades.

As the Industrial Revolution took off and people crowded into cities, the impact on family life was profound. For centuries, American families had lived and worked together on farms, earning a living and raising future generations. A mother's work was largely in the farmhouse with her young children by her side. But while as late as 1870 more than half of Americans workers worked on farms, by 1930 that number had declined to just one in five.<sup>6</sup> A 1937 government publication explained the effect of this dramatically changing economy on American families: "Individual enterprise, which so often meant family enterprise, now plays a minor part in earning our national income. Including the farmers, only about one in five of the gainfully occupied works for himself. As a nation, we no longer work as individuals or families, but as employees."<sup>7</sup>

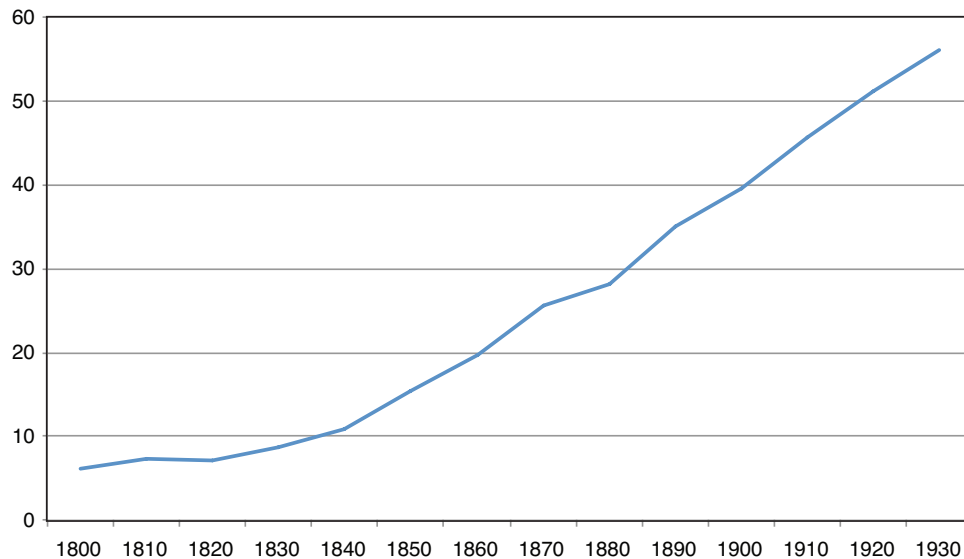
In an agrarian society, families could work their way out of lean times, perhaps with the help of friends and neighbors. In fact, the term "unemployment" was not even added to the dictionary until 1888.<sup>8</sup> But as

the country "shifted from a land economy to a money economy," families were no longer self-sufficient and able to prosper by working the land.<sup>9</sup> "Today we do not make a living," the government booklet observed. "We make money" to buy it.<sup>10</sup> Women's work was increasingly out of the house instead of at home. Widespread urban joblessness and poverty emerged for the first time in US history.

This rapid shift from an agrarian to an urban, industrial society was tough for many adults, but it was especially hard on children. As Herbert Parsons, a Republican congressman from New York, wrote in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* in 1908, "The effect of city life on children is . . . one of the largest items to be considered in the discussion of the influence of city environment on national life and vigor."<sup>11</sup> Twenty years later, President Herbert Hoover reflected on the country's massive social and economic dislocation, underscoring the particular threat to the healthy development of the nation's children:

In the last half century, we have herded 50 million more human beings into towns and cities where the whole setting is new to the race. We have created highly congested areas with a thousand changes resulting in the swift transition from a rural and agrarian people to an urban, industrial nation. Perhaps the widest range of difficulties with which we are dealing in the betterment of children grows out of this crowding into cities.<sup>12</sup>

As years passed, the challenge of raising future generations—as "the Nation of tomorrow," in President Theodore Roosevelt's words—seemed to grow ever tougher.<sup>13</sup> Efforts to cope with this persistent problem remained a national focus for decades.

**Figure 1. Percent of US Population Living in Cities**

Source: US Census Bureau, "Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part I," [www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/overview/1800.html](http://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/overview/1800.html).

### Promoting Child Well-Being

Beginning in the 19th century, an evolving series of solutions were implemented, attempting to ensure children's well-being in a newly configured society. First private and then public, those efforts finally culminated in the passage of Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) in 1935 at the height of the Great Depression. ADC was initiated with the sole aim of promoting poor children's healthy development by enabling them to be raised at home by their mothers. But it eventually drifted far from that original focus, gradually evolving into the modern welfare state and ultimately the federal child-care programs now in place almost a century later.

**The 19th-Century Orphanage Movement.** Throughout the 19th century, the nation's rapidly rising number of poor and abandoned children was largely cared for in privately run orphanages. In preindustrial, rural America, the rare orphaned or abandoned child was taken in by relatives or neighbors or boarded out to a nearby family. But by the early 1800s, as orphans first appeared in newly growing cities, a small handful of orphanages

began cropping up, supported and run as charities by churches and private citizens.

For example, the New York Orphan Asylum Society, one early orphanage in New York City, rented a two-story frame house in Greenwich Village and hired a "pious and respectable man and his wife" as superintendent and matron to carry out a broad mission: "The orphans shall be educated, fed and clothed at the expense of the Society and at the Asylum. They must have religious instruction, moral example, and habits of industry inculcated on their minds."<sup>14</sup> The asylum opened with 12 orphans in 1806 and expanded within a few years to a larger facility housing 200 children.<sup>15</sup>

Due to rapid urbanization and industrialization, the number of orphanages rose dramatically in the following decades: from just 23 in 1830 to more than 600 orphanages housing 74,000 children in 1880, then doubling to 1,200 orphanages housing 110,000 children in 1916.<sup>16</sup> By the height of the Great Depression in the mid-1930s, orphanages were filled to capacity with more than 144,000 children living in "child-care institutions," as they were called at the time.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, only a small number of these children were actually orphans.<sup>18</sup> Most had at least one parent; usually

it was the father who was dead, absent, unemployed, or incapacitated. Women often sent one or more of their children to orphanages when they were unable to provide for them all or in hopes that the orphanage could offer better care and education. As the *New York Times* reported in 1925:

One of the things asylums conspicuously lack is bona fide orphans. According to [orphanage expert] Dr. Reeder, “less than 10 percent of the children in these institutions” are known to be without parents. The percentage of half orphans is only a little higher. The two together are vastly outnumbered by inmates both of whose parents are known to be living.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the 19th century, orphanages for poor children were run by religious institutions and other charitable associations and became an increasingly central focus of their work. In 1911, for example, the Catholic Encyclopedia estimated a total of 300 Catholic orphanages caring for close to 50,000 of “the army of orphans found in the large cities” across the nation. “The death of one or both parents makes the child of the very poor a ward of the community,” the encyclopedia explained. “Natural sympathy . . . and willingness to bear a distributed burden for the common good . . . contribute to the acceptance of the care of orphans as a [community] duty.”<sup>20</sup>

Yet while philanthropic institutions were long viewed as the best way to care for orphaned, abandoned, and indigent children, by the late 19th century significant opposition to that approach began to grow. As the welfare of poor children became a growing focus of public concern, particularly in large cities, orphanages were increasingly supported in part by public funds, although they were still privately run.<sup>21</sup> Questions were raised about the

**Figure 2. An Orphanage Classroom in Ogdensburg, New York, c. 1900**



Source: Harvard University Library Open Collections Program, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/dl/ww/HUAM59572soc>.

**Figure 3. “They Said Father Didn’t Keep His Life Insurance Paid Up!”**



Source: Advertisement for Prudential Insurance Company of America, *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 23, 1926.

inadequate quality of institutions that were using public money to address a problem increasingly seen as crucial to society.

An investigation commissioned by New York State, for instance, issued a 1916 report that described the incompetence and corruption of a number of the charities overseeing orphanages and reported that some institutions were “little less than public scandal and disgrace,” requiring children “to do drudgery, working eight or nine hours a day, with only one hour for schooling.”<sup>22</sup> Suspicion even grew that the privately run orphanages were accepting poor children simply to fill beds when instead every effort should be made to encourage children to stay in their own homes. As the *New York Times* wrote in 1925:

For the benevolent testator such institutions have an apparently irresistible fascination. Between 1890 and 1903 four hundred were established, an average of about two and a half a month. The result is what amounts to a competition for inmates. Where there are empty beds, unused endowments and a staff only partly occupied, children are admitted with insufficient study of the individual case.<sup>23</sup>

Philanthropists and orphanage administrators—who were increasingly social work professionals rather than charity workers—widely defended the value of orphanages, and attempts were made to improve their quality. But progressive reformers continued to criticize the expanding orphanage movement, arguing that orphanage quality was often too low and that warehousing children in large, impersonal institutions was a wrongheaded approach to caring for needy children.

At the same time, the problem that orphanages were established to address was quickly escalating beyond the limited capacity of charity. By 1900, 44 percent of the population was under 20. Twenty-seven million Americans—a full 35 percent of the country’s population—were under age 15, and 12 percent were under age five. Six million of those children lived in cities of more than 25,000 people.<sup>24</sup>

The exploding population of urban youth, many of whom were poor, along with increasingly negative views of orphanage care, drove growing opinion that some other way had to be found to care for the rapidly rising number of destitute children crowding into industrial urban centers. In 1917, John Kingsbury, the

commissioner of public charities in New York City, expressed this emerging sentiment, in an evocative reflection of the great social dislocation the country had undergone over the prior century:

The orphan child with the blue gingham dress, her wistful budding personality repressed and cramped into the hard and fast moulds of serfdom, will soon be, I hope, no longer visible except in the dramas which our playwrights will present of by-gone days. . . . We have ceased to believe that because of the accidents or misfortunes of birth, the parentless child is condemned to a life of dull, drab, unenterprising and ignorant mediocrity.<sup>25</sup>

**Growing Concern for Child Welfare.** The rising opposition to orphanages occurred in the context of a growing public focus on the overall well-being of poor children, especially regarding the negative impact of urbanization and the transition from an agricultural to industrial economy.<sup>26</sup> Child labor in particular became a matter of increasing concern, and information campaigns that highlighted the often horrendous conditions under which young children were employed drew further public attention to child well-being more generally.

Federal laws prohibiting child labor were not passed until the 20th century, and children frequently began working hazardous jobs in mines, mills, factories, and sweatshops well before their 10th birthday.<sup>27</sup> By 1911, more than two million American children under the age of 16 were working, many of them 12 hours or more, 6 days a week. As one expert described:

Our mines and coal breakers, our cotton mills and factories, our glass houses, silk mills, messenger and delivery service, street trades and other hazardous occupations for young children have already enlisted one in every twenty-two children throughout the entire country, and if we include all wage-earning child workers, more than one in every six children of the country, or over two million, must be counted.<sup>28</sup>

While Americans had long been accustomed to children’s traditional role in farming work, the idea of children laboring for meager wages in factories and other

urban jobs was appalling to many. As New York Congressman Herbert Parsons wrote in 1908, “It is admitted by all that the labor of children in cities is very different in its physical effects from the labor of children in the country.”<sup>29</sup>

The National Child Labor Committee was formed in 1904 and soon hired photographer Lewis Hine to document child labor in American industry, which played a key role in building public support for government intervention on behalf of children. Using the rise of mass media, Hine published thousands of photographs over the next decade showing children—some as young as five—working in mills, factories, and other urban settings all over the country, giving Americans an unprecedented window into the grim conditions of early 20th-century child labor.<sup>30</sup>

Hine’s compelling photographs caused a wave of popular support for state legislation prohibiting child labor, ultimately culminating in federal restrictions on child labor in the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. His work also raised public awareness about the broader impact of a transforming society on children’s well-being, as reformers increasingly stressed that what many children had lost—“the spontaneous activity and growth of a protected, unexploited childhood”—was essential to their healthy development and to the future of the nation itself.<sup>31</sup>

In response to this escalating public concern, in 1909 Theodore Roosevelt convened the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children.<sup>32</sup> The first in a series of White House conferences on children—in fact, the first White House Conference held on any topic—the influential gathering brought together 200 child-welfare leaders to discuss the care of poor and neglected children, which Roosevelt described as “a subject . . . of high importance to the well-being of the Nation.” The interests of the country were at stake, he stressed in a letter to Congress, because each child “represents either a potential addition to the productive capacity and the enlightened

**Figure 4. Addie Card, 12 years, Spinner in North Pormal, Vermont, 1910**



Source: Lewis Hine, US Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004001725/PP/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004001725/PP/).

citizenship of the Nation, or, if allowed to suffer from neglect, a potential addition to the destructive forces of the community.”<sup>33</sup>

Over the coming decades, the issue continued to gather momentum. Twenty years later President Herbert Hoover echoed Roosevelt’s emphasis on children’s well-being as crucial to that of the country, proclaiming, “If we could have but one generation of properly born, trained, educated, and healthy children, a thousand other problems of government would vanish.”<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 5. Eldridge Bernard, 11 Years Old, and Buster Smith, 6 Years Old, Route Boys of Newark, New Jersey, 1912**



Source: Lewis Hine, US Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004003812/PP/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004003812/PP/).

**Figure 6. Midnight at the Glassworks, Indiana, 1908**



Source: Lewis Hine, US Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004000103/PP/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004000103/PP/).

**Home Care for Children.** Along with child labor, what was called “home care” for children also became a strong public and advocacy focus by the late 19th century as advocates aimed to restore children’s normal upbringing, which had been increasingly destroyed by the social and economic upheaval of the previous decades. Reformers argued that it was essential to children’s healthy development that they be raised not in an institution but in their own home with a mother who would “devote herself to the nurture and training of her children.”<sup>35</sup> As a last resort, they should be placed with other families through either adoption or foster care. Orphanages were increasingly viewed as oppressive, unnatural places to grow up and antithetical to children’s well-being. Well-known pediatrician Henry Smith Williams explained in 1897:

By no possibility can a large institution be made to supply the atmosphere in which the mind of a child can be healthfully reared. . . . The experience of child-savers in many lands and under all manner of diverse conditions proves that there is one best method of child disposal . . . the essentially rational one of finding a home for the dependent child in a normal, ordinary family.<sup>36</sup>

The first effort to place dislocated children in homes was through orphan trains, which ran for 75 years and are considered the forerunner of today’s foster care system. Launched by Charles Loring Brace in 1854, orphan trains took homeless, neglected, and abandoned children out of crowded eastern cities, placing them with rural, adoptive families across the American West. “In every American community, especially in a western one, there are many spare places at the table of life,”

Brace wrote. “They have enough for themselves and the stranger too.”<sup>37</sup>

An estimated 200,000 children were adopted through the orphan trains until the movement stopped in 1929 with the onset of the Great Depression. Social reformers praised Brace’s “Emigration Plan” for promoting home over institutional care but argued that stronger efforts should be made to keep poor children with their birth families whenever possible or, in cases of parental neglect or abuse, in a foster home close by.

The importance of home care to child development was brought into the national spotlight by the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children convened by President Roosevelt in 1909. The conference concluded with proposals that emphasized the importance of keeping children in their own homes whenever possible, called for foster family care rather than institutionalizing children without suitable parents, and advocated for state oversight of foster homes and adoption agencies to ensure that children’s welfare was adequately protected. It further declared that poverty alone should not be grounds for removing children from families, proposing public aid to poor mothers that would enable them to care for their own children and prevent “the breaking of a home.” “Home life is the highest and finest product of civilization,” Roosevelt wrote to Congress afterward in a widely cited letter reporting on the proceedings. He continued:

Children should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons. Surely poverty alone should not disrupt the home. Parents of good character suffering from temporary misfortune and, above all, deserving mothers fairly well able to work but deprived of the support of the normal breadwinner *should be given such aid as may be necessary to enable them to maintain suitable homes for the rearing of their children.* The widowed or deserted mother, if a good woman willing to work and to do her best, should ordinarily be helped in such fashion as will enable her to bring up her children herself in their natural home.<sup>38</sup>

The home care movement gained great momentum in the first decades of the 20th century. A 1916 New York State report, for example, described “a sentiment,

**Figure 7. Newspaper Advertisement Announcing the Arrival of Orphans up for Adoption, Afton, Iowa, 1906**

**HOMES WANTED**  
—FOR—  
**CHILDREN**  
—A—  
**Company of Orphan Children**

of different ages in charge of an agent will arrive at your town on date herein mentioned. The object of the coming of these children is to find homes in your midst, especially among farmers, where they may enjoy a happy and wholesome family life, where kind care, good example and moral training will fit them for a life of self-support and usefulness. They come under the auspices of the New York Children's Aid Society. They have been tested and found to be well-meaning boys and girls anxious for homes.

The condition is that these children shall be properly clothed, treated as members of the family, given proper school advantages and remain in the family until they are eighteen years of age. At the expiration of the time specified it is hoped that arrangements can be made whereby they may be able to remain in the family indefinitely. The society retains the right to remove a child at any time for just cause and agrees to remove any found unsatisfactory after being notified. Remember the time and place. All are invited. Come out and hear the address. Applications may be made to any one of the following well-known citizens, who have agreed to act as local committee to aid the agent in securing homes.

R. W. ROWELL, H. F. SPURGEON, DR. J. W. LAUDER, E. W. McLENNAN,  
B. T. NIX, G. E. SANDER, G. L. GARNUM, A. T. BIRROWS,

The Distribution Will Take Place  
**At the Opera House, Afton, Iowa, on**  
**Thursday, April 5, 1906,**  
At 11:30 p. m.

Office, 105 E. 23rd Street,  
New York City. **B. W. TICE and H. D. CLARKE, Agents**

Source: Window on the Prairie, “National Orphan Train Museum,” <http://windowontheprairie.com/2010/07/16/national-orphan-train-museum/>.

very generally held, that after all has been said in favor of the good institution that can be said, normal children should not be deprived of a wholesome family life except for reasons that are compelling.”<sup>39</sup> In 1925, the *New York Times* described the “drab, devitalized lives” of orphanage children, reporting, “For many years the impression has been growing that the [institutional] Home . . . is a far less desirable place for children than the [family] home, be it ever so humble.”<sup>40</sup>

In 1926, Henry Dwight Chapin, a well-known pediatrician, argued that “individual care and attention” was essential to healthy child development and that children’s “physical, mental and moral health” was therefore best promoted by raising them in homes with their mothers.<sup>41</sup> This growing view laid the groundwork for



significant government intervention aimed to promote children's well-being by enabling them to grow and develop under their mothers' care in their own homes.

**An Expanding Government Role.** As the urban population continued to explode toward the end of the 19th century, reformers increasingly argued that children's well-being was crucial to the country's future and that government, not private charity, should therefore lead the effort to ensure it. Author and physician Henry Smith Williams wrote in April 1897, "Private benevolence . . . takes the matter in hand, and performs for the helpless children . . . as a labor of love, the work which should be a duty of the State."<sup>42</sup> In 1906, the secretary of the National Child Labor Committee, Samuel McCune Lindsay, spoke at the biennial meeting of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, calling for the federation's help in strengthening state governments' role in protecting young children:

What responsibility does the government, state or nation, assume to-day for the children? Are they not an asset of the nation? Is their physical, industrial, intellectual and moral training not a matter of as much concern to the nation as the protection of cattle, horses and swine?<sup>43</sup>

In 1908, Edward T. Devine, a Columbia University professor of social economy and leading child welfare advocate, maintained that "a protected childhood" was "a worthy end of legislation and social concern."<sup>44</sup> Six years later, the report of the New York State Commission on Relief for Widowed Mothers emphasized that the "disruption of the home" associated with urban poverty "contributes largely and directly to the backwardness and delinquency of children" and concluded, "The normal development of childhood is one of the main functions of government."<sup>45</sup>

The growing momentum toward a greater state role in protecting children's well-being led to the establishment of a federal Children's Bureau in 1912 under President William Howard Taft. President Roosevelt had endorsed the proposal three years prior, emphasizing that the healthy development of children warranted national attention:

We have an Agricultural Department and we are spending \$14 million or \$15 million a year to tell the farmers, by the result of our research, how they ought to treat the soil and how they ought to treat the cattle and the horses, with a view to having good hogs and good cattle and good horses. . . . It does not seem to be a long step or a stretch of logic to say we have the power to spend the money on a Bureau of Research to tell how we may develop good men and women.<sup>46</sup>

The Children's Bureau was launched to "investigate and report . . . upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people," including infant mortality, child labor, and orphanage care. Its first chief, Julia Lathrop, described its purpose as establishing "the standards of care and protection which shall give to every child his fair chance in the world." Through the "union of national research and publicity with state autonomy," one leading advocate maintained, "many of the most trying of the great modern evils will be cured."<sup>47</sup>

In 1912, the federal government had no power to legislate directly in matters of child welfare. But the creation of the Children's Bureau further drew national attention to the fate of children in a rapidly changing society and began to amplify the federal government's role in protecting child well-being.

### From Child Care to Welfare

This escalating concern over the care and protection of children gave rise first to state and then federal action focused specifically on ensuring children's healthy development by enabling their mothers to raise them at home. For several decades, government activity was aimed exclusively at providing children with "those safeguards which will assure to them health in mind and body," thus opening "the door of opportunity" to every child, as President Hoover put it in 1919.

But as the 20th century wore on, a series of changes both in policy and its social context led to a gradual shift in focus from children's early development to the financial welfare and self-sufficiency of adults. A concurrent shift occurred in the very concept of child well-being,

which evolved from an emphasis on children's "health in mind and body" to their economic status. And child care, once seen as crucial to children's healthy development, came increasingly to be viewed as a "work support" for adults: a place to put kids so their mothers could work outside the home.

**Mothers' Pensions.** Sparked by the 1909 White House Conference, a national movement took off, promoting provision of public aid, or "mothers' pensions," to poor mothers who were "deprived of the support of the natural breadwinner," as it was described at the time. Poor women did not lack a job, advocates argued; a mother's most important job was to provide a nurturing, healthy home environment for her children to grow up in, which was impossible while also supporting them through paid work. What mothers without a male breadwinner lacked was an income, which mothers' pensions would provide. Those pensions would allow them to do their most important work: staying at home to care for their children, which, in turn, would enable children to grow into healthy, productive adults.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, what came to be called "home care" during this period had long been the normal way of life. In preindustrial America, children were raised from infancy by ever-present mothers whose work was in the home and on the land. In the new, urban, industrialized society, however, mothers with no male provider had to earn their livings as employees outside the home—leaving children without the early nurture and care essential to their proper development, advocates argued.

As a 1914 report of the New York State Commission on Relief for Widowed Mothers explained, "The mother is forced out of the home at the very hours when her children need her most, and is so worn out by her daily struggle that she is unable, even when she is at home, to give them the proper care and attention." When mothers must leave their young children to earn a paycheck, the report maintained, it "robs the children of that mother love that is so essential to their development" and necessary for their proper growth into "intelligent, industrious, and responsible citizens."<sup>49</sup> For that reason, the report concluded, "All work looking toward the betterment of society, whether public or

private, must endeavor to keep the mother . . . at home as a mother."<sup>50</sup>

In Pennsylvania, a 1916 circular issued by the State Board of Education reported that "there are in our communities a large number of women with dependent children who can not maintain their homes without assistance," arguing that mothers' pensions made sense because "'homemade children,' cared for by their own mothers, have the best chance of becoming healthy, normal citizens."<sup>51</sup> In 1919, designated as "Children's Year" by President Woodrow Wilson, the Second White House Conference on Standards of Child Welfare was held. The conference issued a statement on home care:

The policy of assistance to mothers who are competent to care for their own children is now well established. It is generally recognized that the amount provided should be sufficient to enable the mother to maintain her children suitably in her own home, without resorting to such outside employment as will necessitate leaving her children without proper care and oversight.<sup>52</sup>

State legislation providing aid to poor mothers so they could care for their own children spread rapidly across the country. In 1911, the first statewide mothers' aid law was enacted in Illinois, "granting public aid in their own homes to children deprived of the support of the natural breadwinner."<sup>53</sup> Colorado adopted the Mother's Compensation Act by popular vote in 1912. The following year, 18 additional states enacted mothers' aid laws.

By 1920, 40 states had adopted laws authorizing public aid to dependent children in their own homes, aiming to promote the conservation of poor children's home life with their mothers.<sup>54</sup> While aid to mothers was initially focused on providing "widow's pensions" to women whose husbands had died, it was soon extended to all poor mothers who were not supported by a wage-earning man. Reflecting on the New York State Legislature's 129-to-8 vote in favor of mothers' pensions, the *New York Times* observed, "The opposition, very pronounced when the demand for such a law began to voice itself in the East, almost

**Figure 8. A Poster from a 1914 Exhibit about Child Labor**



Source: Courtesy of National Child Labor Committee Collection, Library of Congress, "Uncensored: The Historical Perspective," [www.icphusa.org/index.asp?page=20&uncensored=9&story=67&pg=138](http://www.icphusa.org/index.asp?page=20&uncensored=9&story=67&pg=138).

utterly collapsed."<sup>55</sup> The eighth annual report of the chief of the Children's Bureau to the secretary of labor reported in 1920:

Most of the States . . . have now recognized the principle that children should not be taken from their mothers because of poverty alone. The rapid growth of the mothers' pension movement is indicative of the belief, generally held, that home life and a mother's care are of paramount importance.<sup>56</sup>

By 1926, mothers' aid laws were on the books in 42 states, Alaska, and Hawaii, and eligibility was restricted to widows in only 5 states.<sup>57</sup> A report issued that year by the federal Children's Bureau noted, "The principle of 'home care of dependent children' met with more ready response than any other child-welfare measure that has ever been proposed."<sup>58</sup> The rapid adoption of state mothers' aid legislation across the country reflected broad public support for ensuring adequate early care for poor children, viewed as crucial to both their well-being and that of the country.

After the Great Depression hit in 1929, public pressure grew for the government to intervene to address the increasingly overwhelming problems confronting the nation. By 1930, the US population had grown to almost 122 million, with more than half the population living in cities. "Unemployment," which was not even in the dictionary just a half-century earlier, skyrocketed from 1.5 million in 1929 to 8 million in 1931. By early 1933, 12.8 million people—almost a quarter of the labor force—were out of work, and many more were only semi-employed.<sup>59</sup>

In this context, President Herbert Hoover convened a third White House Conference on Child Health and Protection in 1930, addressing the huge upheaval the country was undergoing and the government's role in mitigating the negative impact on children. "We approach all problems of childhood with affection," Hoover said in an eloquent address to the conference on the importance of child well-being, "[aiming to] lighten the burdens of children, to set their feet upon surer paths to health and well-being and happiness." Emphasizing child well-being as crucial to the nation's future, he continued:

These questions of child health and protection are a complicated problem requiring much learning and much action. And we need [to] have great concern over this matter. Let no one believe that these are questions which should not stir a nation; that they are below the dignity of statesmen or governments.<sup>60</sup>

Hoover especially stressed the importance of a mother's care to the healthy development of young children, describing "the physical, moral, and spiritual

gifts which motherhood gives and home confers.” He charged the assembled experts with defining the government’s role in protecting the “mental, emotional, spiritual health” of children, asking them to “set forth an understanding of those . . . safeguards and services to childhood which can be provided by the community, the State, or the Nation” to “give our mite of help to strengthen [the mother’s] hand that her boy and girl may have a fair chance.”<sup>61</sup>

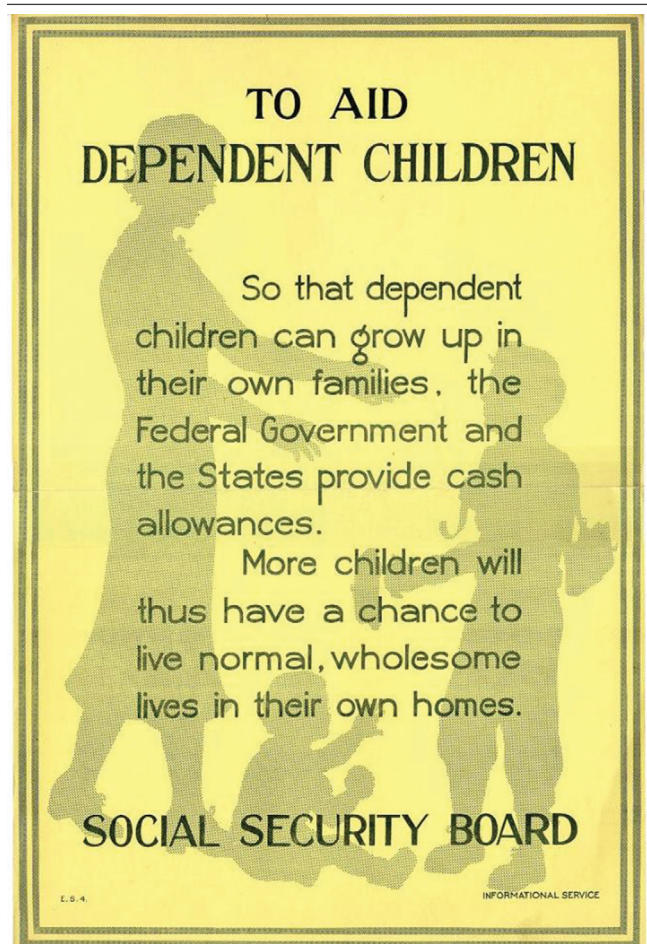
**Aid to Dependent Children: 1935–62.** The combination of heightened national concern about the welfare of poor children and growing support for a government role in ensuring child well-being laid the groundwork for the inclusion of several programs addressing child health and welfare in the Social Security Act (SSA), signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in August 1935 at the height of the Great Depression.<sup>62</sup> The most significant of these was Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), Title IV of the SSA, which helped states give cash assistance to dependent children whose fathers were dead, absent, or unable to work.

For 15 years, ADC was exclusively focused on helping children. Beginning in 1950, however, the program began a gradual shift in focus from children’s welfare to that of their parents. In 1962, the name of the program itself was changed, substituting “Families” for “Children” as the direct object of government aid in a reflection of the ever-increasing emphasis on adults.

*Caring for Children: 1935–50.* In a radio address on October 24, 1935, Roosevelt announced the revolutionary legislation as “the great Social Security Act which establishes for the future the framework for unemployment insurance, for old-age assistance and for aid to dependent children.”<sup>63</sup> As enacted in 1935, ADC aimed to promote child well-being by enabling widowed and abandoned poor women to remain at home to raise their children instead of working outside the home to earn a living. In the words of a 1940 board poster promoting the program, ADC would give children “a chance to live normal, wholesome lives in their own homes.”

States determined ADC eligibility and grant levels, and federal funding provided states with a one-to-two match for state dollars spent on the programs.<sup>64</sup> A

**Figure 9. 1940 SSA Poster Promoting ADC**



Source: Linda Gordon and Felice Batlan, “The Legal History of the Aid to Dependent Children Program,” The Social Welfare History Project, 2011, [www.socialwelfarehistory.com/programs/aid-to-dependent-children-the-legal-history/](http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/programs/aid-to-dependent-children-the-legal-history/).

1937 Social Security Board publication explained the new federal role in ensuring children’s well-being in the context of a radically changing society:

As we have shifted from a land economy to a money economy, the work of the young and the old no longer has the same value in helping a family to make their living. . . . Mothers’ aid and old-age assistance . . . recognize the responsibility of counties and States to give security to people who cannot earn it for themselves.<sup>65</sup>

In 1939, significant amendments to the SSA further strengthened its role in supporting poor children,

**Figure 10. Government Promotion for ADC: “A Mother’s Loving Care Is the Best Security a Child Can Have”**



Source: US Library of Congress, “Aid to Dependent Children under the Social Security Act,” [www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/fsa/item/oem2002010951/PP/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/fsa/item/oem2002010951/PP/).

adding a new provision that paid benefits to deceased workers to protect what was seen at the time as the core family unit of a mother and her children when the family breadwinner died.<sup>66</sup> The 1939 amendments also increased federal support for ADC by raising the federal match to one-to-one for state dollars expended, as Roosevelt announced: “I am particularly gratified that the Federal matching ratio to States for aid to dependent children has been increased from one-third to one-half of the aid granted.”<sup>67</sup>

Thus, while ADC was initially intended to help the children of both widowed and abandoned mothers, after 1939 it was directed exclusively at children whose fathers were alive but, through incapacity or desertion, were not providing financial support for their families. This expanded program remained explicitly focused on the well-being of poor children for the next 10 years and then began a long, marked drift away from that original mission.

*Welfare for Adults: 1950–61.* In 1950, the fifth White House Conference on Children and Youth was held.

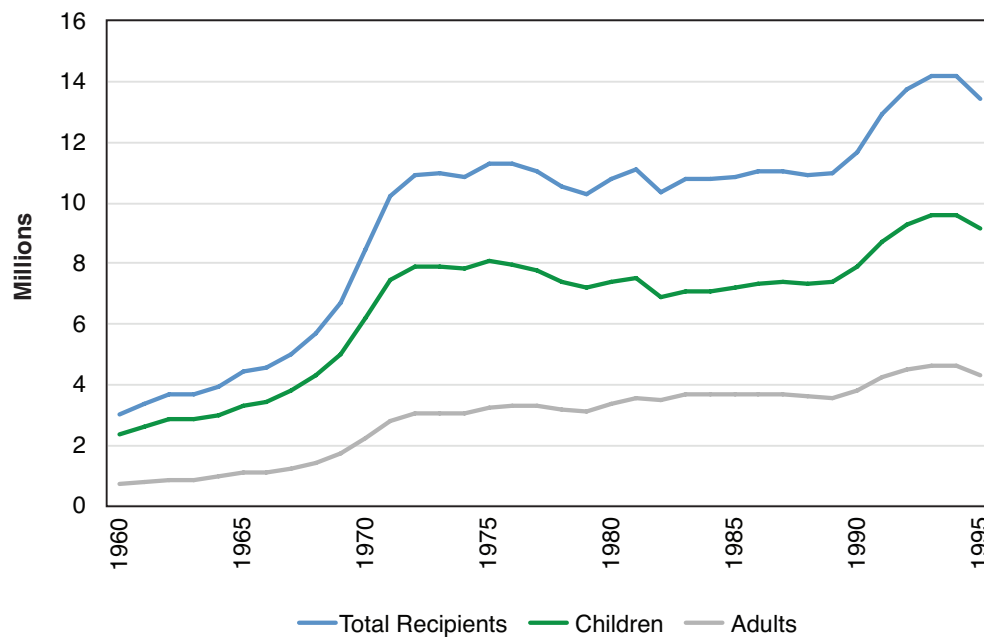
The first to focus on the emotional well-being of children, it explored the question: “How can we develop in children the mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities essential to individual happiness and responsible citizenship?”<sup>68</sup> For the first time, youth were invited to participate, and nearly 400 attended, representing every state.

Ironically, 1950 was also the year that a crucial change was made to ADC, initiating a gradual shift in the program’s focus away from the well-being of children toward the economic welfare of adults. An amendment enacted that year permitted states to add a single adult with whom a child was living as an additional ADC recipient. So beginning in 1950, adults *with* children—not just the children themselves—were eligible for federal cash assistance through ADC. States could now receive matching funds from the federal government for cash aid provided to adults, as well as their children, raising the

total amount paid to many households.

This addition of adults to the ADC rolls was a crucial turning point, permanently altering the program’s underpinning concept. While ADC’s original purpose was protecting young children’s healthy development, 1950 marked the beginning of an ongoing move away from that aim. Over the coming decades, significant social changes along with unintended policy effects and consequent changes in policy intent transformed the 1935 policy into what would ultimately become a work support program for poor adults.

In 1950, 1.7 million children were receiving subsidies through ADC. By 1960, more than 2.3 million children and almost 700,000 single parents—overwhelmingly mothers—were receiving ADC payments. Policymakers became increasingly concerned that by restricting eligibility to single parents the program was discouraging fathers from remaining home with their children.<sup>69</sup> In response, Congress revised the law in 1961 to permit unemployed fathers to live at home without disqualifying their families for ADC, aiming to encourage two-parent households.<sup>70</sup> As a later

**Figure 11. Total Number of AFDC Recipients**

Source: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Family Assistance, "AFDC Caseload Data 1960–1995," [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/resource/afdc-caseload-data-1960-1995](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/resource/afdc-caseload-data-1960-1995).

Social Security Administration publication explained, states were given the option of making ADC available to "intact families," provided the father was unemployed.<sup>71</sup>

A year later, the program was renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Both the program's new name and the 1961 eligibility expansion that prompted it shifted AFDC toward an ever more direct focus on adults. At the same time, the well-being of children moved further to the periphery of policy and public attention.

**Aid to Families with Dependent Children: 1962–96.** After the 1961–62 changes, AFDC began to explode. By 1967, the AFDC rolls counted almost 3.8 million children and 1.3 million adults, and the "welfare mess" began shifting into high gear. AFDC rolls continued to grow dramatically over the coming decades, as shown in figure 11. The number of children on AFDC more than doubled by 1975 and almost tripled by 1994. The number of adults on AFDC grew even faster, almost tripling by 1975 and more than quadrupling by 1994.

*The Welfare Rights Movement.* One important driver of skyrocketing AFDC rolls was the rise of the welfare rights movement in the late 1960s, led by the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), founded in 1967. NWRO advocated for expanding welfare benefits, with the ultimate goal of establishing a federal constitutional right to a minimum adequate income for all adults. At its peak in 1969, NWRO had 20,000 members—mostly poor African American women—and by 1971 it served as an umbrella association of 540 separate, local welfare rights organizations. NWRO worked with community legal aid offices to file hundreds of court cases challenging local AFDC eligibility rules and administration, introducing what one observer called "a new philosophy of social welfare" that "seeks to establish the status of welfare benefits as rights, based on the notion that everyone is entitled to a share of the common wealth."<sup>72</sup>

NWRO failed to establish the right to a minimum income, but it won a series of legal decisions during the late 1960s and early 1970s that further broadened AFDC eligibility and significantly increased welfare

rolls across the country. A contemporary legal scholar explained that the court decisions reflected “a change in attitude towards the nature of public welfare,” which “although still not denominated [as] a fundamental right . . . is no longer viewed as a mere gratuity furnished at the state’s discretion.”<sup>73</sup> The welfare rights movement explicitly highlighted adults’ interests as AFDC recipients, shifting the program still further from its original focus on children’s well-being.

Thus, while ADC was established in 1935 as public aid to promote the healthy development of poor children, widely understood and adopted at the ballot box on those terms, 30 years later it had evolved through lawsuit and regulatory amendment into what was increasingly perceived as a cash welfare system for poor children’s single, unemployed parents.

In one striking expression of this radical shift, the family home itself came to be described as an “assistance unit” by both courts and welfare administrators—a far cry from the “mother love” and “normal, wholesome” home life for children promoted by mothers’ pensions and ADC decades earlier.<sup>74</sup>

*Rising Out-of-Wedlock Births.* As AFDC rolls skyrocketed, worry began to grow that the program was discouraging parents from working, trapping families in poverty and dependency. At the same time, the number of children born to single mothers had risen drastically since ADC was enacted, causing considerable concern and greatly decreasing the program’s viability.

In 1940, only 3.8 percent of all children were born out of wedlock, rising to just 5.6 percent in 1961. But along with soaring AFDC rolls, out-of-wedlock births exploded. By 1970, the number of children born to single mothers had almost doubled, and over the coming decades it continued to grow sharply, as shown in figure 12.

Many believed that the welfare program itself was at least partially driving the huge increase in out-of-wedlock births. But regardless of the cause, the number of children born into the circumstances that ADC had originally attempted to address was becoming enormous. And in the face of this much exacerbated problem, the solution that made sense in 1935—providing financial support to single mothers so they

could stay home to raise their children—seemed impossible to continue.

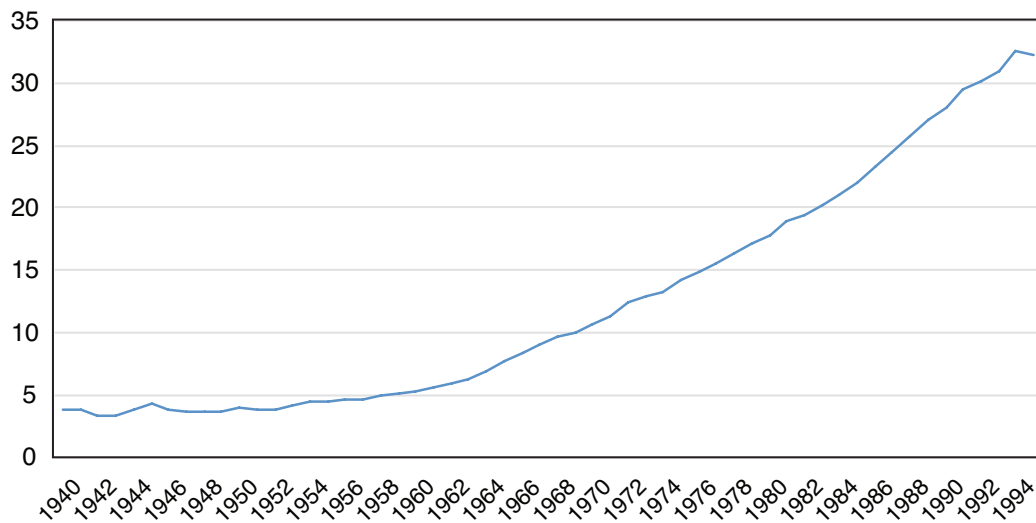
So the program’s focus shifted yet again, now aiming to promote parents’ self-sufficiency through paid employment by implementing a series of increasingly serious legislative attempts to move the ever-growing number of adult welfare recipients into the labor force.

*Promoting Adult Work.* As well as a response to the great rise in out-of-wedlock births, this significant change in AFDC’s emphasis was also a reflection of a sea change in public attitudes toward working mothers. When ADC was established in 1935, very few mothers with young children worked outside the home. The strong public view at the time was that women’s proper work was caring for her children at home. In 1940, only 8.6 percent of all mothers with children under 18 were in the workforce.

A half-century later, however, women working outside the home had become widely accepted, and two-thirds of all mothers were in the labor force. Yet while most mothers—even single mothers—were working, those on AFDC (85 percent of whom were single) largely were not. By 1987, just 6 percent of AFDC mothers were working compared to 54 percent of all single mothers.<sup>75</sup> In the context of dramatically rising female participation in the workforce, getting AFDC mothers into the labor force was increasingly perceived as a crisis warranting significant government action.

The federal government first attempted to help adults on welfare move into the workforce and become economically self-sufficient by establishing the Work Incentive (WIN) Program in 1967, which encouraged states to create employment and training programs for welfare recipients. But by 1971, just four years later, the AFDC rolls had doubled again to 7.4 million children and 2.8 million adults.

That year, the federal government made WIN participation mandatory for AFDC recipients able to work, requiring that recipients “make themselves available to participate in activities designed to help them become employable and find jobs.”<sup>76</sup> All mothers with children under six were exempted, because young children were still expected to be cared for at home. Further, states

**Figure 12. Percent of Total Births to Unmarried Women: 1940–95**

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics.

made little effort to implement the program, and WIN had almost no impact on AFDC.<sup>77</sup>

Seventeen years later, Congress passed the Family Support Act (FSA) of 1988, making a second attempt to move adults from welfare to self-sufficiency. FSA replaced WIN with the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program, requiring welfare recipients to participate in work, education, or training provided through the program and aiming to prevent long-term welfare dependence. All mothers with children over age three were now required to participate in the JOBS program, and states were allowed to require participation for mothers with children as young as one year. The 1988 act also included a new mandate that all states provide benefits to households with unemployed fathers living in the home, aiming to encourage the preservation of intact families.

FSA introduced a crucial shift in how the very concept of child well-being was defined and understood. The goal underpinning ADC was the promotion of children's well-being through motherly nurture and care; the government's role was predicated on the belief that a mother's care was of the utmost important to children's early development. As policymakers began stressing adult work and earnings, however, child

well-being was increasingly viewed in economic terms rather than through the broader lens of "mental, emotional, spiritual health" that Hoover had emphasized decades before.

Reflecting this radical shift, one welfare policy analyst wrote in 1988, "It is now generally agreed that both parents should be responsible for the well-being of their children and that *family well-being may be enhanced if needy mothers work rather than stay at home with their children*, provided that adequate child care is available."<sup>78</sup> As a mother's financial contribution to her child's well-being was foregrounded, "adequate child care" replaced the home care that ADC had been designed to provide. The government's role then shifted to helping a mother pay someone else to care for her child so she could go to work.

*Out-of-Home Care for Children.* Out-of-home child care thus assumed a significant new role in this reconfigured policy arena. In the 1935 vision of ADC, a mother's work *was* child care. But as expressed in FSA in 1988, the emerging imperative for mothers was achieving economic self-sufficiency through a job outside the home. As this new imperative detached mothers' work from the care of their children, the question of who



instead would care for those children became increasingly central.

Attempting to address this newly emerging gap, Congress established four child-care programs to support mothers' work outside the home: two for parents receiving AFDC and two to help already-working parents who were not receiving AFDC stay self-sufficient. The AFDC Child Care Guarantee required states to guarantee child care for all parents who were working or in education and training programs but still receiving AFDC. The Transitional Child Care program required states to provide 12 months of transitional child care to all AFDC parents who became employed and moved off the AFDC rolls. The At-Risk Child Care Program was aimed at providing child care for families clearly "at risk" of becoming eligible for AFDC so the parents could work.<sup>79</sup> Finally, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) was created to improve child-care accessibility and affordability for low-income working families in general.

FSA thus promoted the self-sufficiency of women with young children for the first time in ADC/AFDC's history, linking that goal to an explicit recognition that disadvantaged children would be cared for by someone other than their mothers. At the same time, the new federal child-care programs introduced a long-standing divide between custodial care, aimed to provide places to put children while their mothers were at work, and what is now described as developmental care, aimed to promote children's healthy development. Indeed, the word "development" in CCDBG's title reflected a vague acknowledgment that something would have to replace the role in children's upbringing that mothers had long been assumed to play. It also underscored the tension between the custodial and developmental purposes of child care that persists today.

In the end, despite high hopes for FSA, it failed to achieve its hoped-for impact on AFDC. Total welfare rolls again jumped sharply: from under 11 million in 1989 to 14 million in 1994. Only 36,000 of the 4.6 million adults on AFDC—less than 1 percent—were in work or job-search programs.

Yet while FSA had little effect on the welfare system itself, it strongly reinforced the proposition that able-bodied adults should support themselves

rather than depending on the government, laying the groundwork for more radical reform less than a decade later. And the central goal of child care itself was redefined—from ensuring children's healthy development to ensuring that their mothers could work outside the home.

**"Ending Welfare As We Know It."** From 1935 to the mid-1990s, the public perception of ADC/AFDC had radically evolved from a program that ensured the well-being of poor children by enabling their mothers to care for them at home to a cash-welfare system for poor, unemployed, overwhelmingly single women who had kids. By 1995, 10 percent of all American mothers—including 7 percent of white mothers, 20 percent of Hispanic mothers, and 25 percent of African American mothers—were on AFDC. Almost half had never been married.<sup>80</sup> And even people who had long defended the program began to recognize that AFDC was becoming unviable and counterproductive. As Christopher Jencks of Harvard University wrote in 1992, "Until liberals transform AFDC, so that it reinforces rather than subverts American ideals about work and marriage, our efforts to build a humane welfare state will never succeed."<sup>81</sup>

As AFDC rolls rose sharply yet again in the early 1990s, the federal government introduced an innovative approach to tackling the clear need for welfare reform. Beginning in 1992, the federal government encouraged and facilitated state experimentation to improve AFDC, setting up an expedited process to provide states with waivers from federal rules that allowed them to test and evaluate a broad range of locally designed demonstration projects. In a 1993 speech to the National Governors Association, President Bill Clinton urged states to innovate: "There are many promising initiatives right now at the State and local level, and we will work with you to encourage that kind of experimentation."<sup>82</sup> Between 1993 and 1996 the federal government approved waivers in 43 states, supporting projects that ranged from small demonstrations to dramatic statewide reform.<sup>83</sup>

Building on this state innovation, along with powerful social and political momentum against the AFDC status quo, President Bill Clinton in 1996 fulfilled

his campaign promise to “end welfare as we know it.” Signing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), Clinton launched what has been described as “the most fundamental change in American social policy since the SSA of 1935.”<sup>84</sup> Widely known as “welfare to work,” the PRWORA replaced AFDC with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant to states, eliminated guarantees of assistance to individuals, imposed new work requirements and benefit time limits for recipients, and sought to discourage out-of-wedlock childbearing.<sup>85</sup>

The PRWORA’s central goal was to reduce welfare dependency, increase self-sufficiency, and improve the economic condition of America’s poorest families through promoting adult work. As Brookings Institute scholar Ron Haskins has written, “Work became the cannonball of the Republican welfare reform agenda, blasting straight ahead through all obstacles. As other issues—time limits, block grants illegitimacy, child care—developed, work remained the central issue of the debate.”<sup>86</sup>

Consistent with this aim, the PRWORA emphasized the purpose of child care as a work support for adults. The legislation consolidated the four existing child-care programs—the AFDC Child Care Guarantee, Transitional Child Care, At-Risk Child Care, and CCDBG—to create a Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). CCDF was then provided to states as block grants to allow maximum flexibility in administering state child-care programs to support working adults.

States were also permitted to use TANF funds to subsidize child care for parents on welfare, either by using funds directly or by transferring up to 30 percent to CCDF. Additional funding was appropriated for child care to help welfare recipients enter the workforce: between 1996 and 2001, the federal Child Care Development Fund increased nearly 500 percent, from \$935 million to \$4.6 billion.

While welfare reform’s primary aim was increasing adult work and earnings, improving children’s lives remained an important goal of the 1996 legislation.

Yet, in several ways, the PRWORA further weakened the focus on children’s well-being, which had gradually been occurring over several decades. First, child well-being was seen as a secondary effect rather than the legislation’s direct objective, as Haskins explains:

Promoting child well-being was a major goal of all participants in the 1995–96 welfare reform debate. Republicans argued that increased work by mothers on welfare would lead to positive impacts on children because mothers would be setting an example of personal responsibility, would impose schedules and order on chaotic households, and would increase family income.<sup>87</sup>

Second, the PRWORA narrowed the definition of child well-being, largely emphasizing children’s economic over developmental welfare. Finally, as adult employment and earnings were foregrounded, the care of children was framed as a work support, reducing focus on its direct, day-to-day impact on young children’s growth and development.

Almost two decades later, CCDF and TANF remain the two major federal child-care subsidy programs, still with the primary goal of supporting adult participation in the labor market. Child well-being is promoted as a positive consequence of parental employment. But the purpose of today’s federally funded care for poor children has shifted far from the explicit goal of ensuring children’s healthy development that drove the original ADC legislation 80 years ago.

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As adult work has been moved to the fore, child care is now viewed primarily as a work support for parents, and its effects on children’s early development have been deemphasized. At the same time, as discussed in the following section, formal education through the public schools has instead come to dominate public and policy focus as the leading strategy to promote the well-being of poor children.

## Part II: The Ascent of School: 1965–2015

For most of America's history, the home was the most important institution for children's education, as families passed knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to the next. But beginning in the mid-19th century, progressive reformers vigorously advocated for a nationwide system of free, government-run public schools that all children would be mandated to attend.<sup>88</sup>

By 1918, all states had passed compulsory attendance laws, increasingly enforced over the next decade in conjunction with the rise of child labor laws. So while in 1900 just over 10 percent of children from ages 14 to 17 were even enrolled in high school, by 1940 the high school graduation rate reached 50 percent as, in the words of one midcentury historian, "schooling replaced work as the 'career' of youth."<sup>89</sup>

Until the 1960s, the purpose of public schools was very different than it is today. For decades, schools aimed primarily to assimilate immigrants and produce disciplined, capable workers and citizens. Schools sorted students into different curricular tracks—vocational or academic—based on widely used IQ and aptitude tests, intending to prepare children to assume their predetermined place in society.

A 1951 US Office of Education publication, for example, noted that "most boys and girls are headed for jobs that require little training," and encouraged schools to lower students' expectations of their career choices rather than "inspir[ing] glamorous hopes that may not be justified."<sup>90</sup> As education historian Diane Ravitch explains, "Big-city schools had become routinized bureaucratic systems . . . testing children for their ability and sorting them into predetermined niches."<sup>91</sup>

By 1960, the high school graduation rate had reached 70 percent, and attending school was the norm for most young Americans. Yet schools were not working well for all children. Urban poverty was rapidly

growing, and the conditions of urban schools, especially those attended by African American children, were often appalling. Schools had long aimed to sort children by ability, not help disadvantaged children rise to higher levels of knowledge and skill.

In this context, President Lyndon B. Johnson promoted an unprecedented role for America's public schools: to address poverty and increase opportunity for those whom society had left behind. Whereas 30 years earlier ADC had aimed to advance children's well-being by ensuring their healthy development at home, Johnson stressed public schooling, not home life, as the best way to break the cycle of poverty and improve poor children's lives.

As a cornerstone of his 1965 War on Poverty legislation, he proposed a "national goal of Full Educational Opportunity," calling for greater federal investment in public schools and emphasizing the public school system's crucial role in building a better society.<sup>92</sup> "We are now embarked on another venture to put the American dream to work in meeting the new demands of a new day," he said. "Once again we must start where men who would improve their society have always known they must begin—with an educational system restudied, reinforced, and revitalized."<sup>93</sup>

Johnson's assertion that the "educational system" is the key to improving society has become so embedded in our thinking that today his words seem unremarkable. Over the past half-century, spending on K–12 public schools has become the federal government's main strategy for leveling the playing field for disadvantaged children and investing in the success of future generations.

Indeed, we have largely come to see academic achievement as both the foundation and measure of children's well-being. But this view is less inevitable than it seems today. Rather, it is a relatively new, distinct idea

that has become strengthened—even enshrined—in the last half-century of ever-growing spending on public schools and is now deeply incorporated into policy focused on children.

ADC was rooted in the very different view, held just several decades prior, that “all work looking toward the betterment of society, whether public or private, must endeavor to keep the mother . . . at home as a mother.”<sup>94</sup> But beginning with Johnson’s War on Poverty, much of federal early childhood policy has been driven by an emphasis on school rather than home. That focus underlies both Head Start, the 50-year-old federal preschool program, and newer pre-K initiatives that have emerged over the last several years.

At the same time, as formal education has come to dominate federal policy aimed at advancing opportunity for poor children, an intensifying emphasis on school achievement has largely eclipsed the broader view of children’s healthy development and well-being that was widely emphasized a century ago.

### Head Start

A centerpiece of Johnson’s War on Poverty legislation was a national preschool program for poor children, aiming to keep them from falling behind before they even entered kindergarten. When explaining the preschool proposal to Congress, Johnson underscored his view of the importance of school achievement for future success:

Education must begin with the very young. The child from the urban or rural slum frequently misses his chance even before he begins school. Tests show that he is usually a year behind in academic attainment by the time he reaches third grade—and up to three years behind if he reaches the eighth grade. By then the handicap has grown too great for many children. Their horizons have narrowed; their prospects for lifetimes of failure have hardened.<sup>95</sup>

Although much smaller than Johnson’s K–12 initiatives, the new federal preschool, called Head Start, was described at the time as the “most exuberant and

popular” of his antipoverty programs.<sup>96</sup> It began as an eight-week demonstration project, announced by Johnson at a White House Rose Garden ceremony on May 18, 1965. That summer, hundreds of “pre-school centers” opened across the country to give a half-million “culturally deprived and poverty-stricken children a better chance” when they entered school that fall. In addition, the program included medical and dental care for children and “counseling on improving the home atmosphere” for their parents. As the *New York Times* reported: “The Head Start projects will give many deprived children their first look into a story book, their first chance to play with alphabet blocks and their first glimpse into the middle-class environment around which educational systems and teaching aids are built.”<sup>97</sup>

At the end of the first summer, the pilot project was deemed a great success, and Johnson argued for its continuation as a full-year program. The 560,000 children who had attended the summer project had previously been “on the road to despair,” he said, “to that wasteland of ignorance in which the children of the poor grow up and become the parents of the poor.” Now, however, they were “ready to take their places beside their more fortunate classmates in regular school.”<sup>98</sup>

Some wondered if hopes for the program were too high in light of “the deprivations of slums” where the students lived.<sup>99</sup> But Johnson prevailed, and the following year Congress authorized Head Start as a part-day, nine-month federal program, administered by the Office of Economic Opportunity, providing educational, health, nutritional, and social services to promote children’s school readiness.

The program continued to grow, and in 1969 the Nixon administration transferred it to the newly created Office of Child Development in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, renamed the Department of Health and Human Services in 1980. In 1994, a new, much smaller program, Early Head Start (EHS), was added to support low-income pregnant women and improve the early care of at-risk babies and toddlers from birth through age two—in fact echoing ADC’s emphasis on mothers and children’s early care from decades earlier.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, concerns were increasingly raised that Head Start was overly emphasizing children's social and emotional growth at the expense of teaching the academic skills that would raise their achievement in K–12 schools. In response, Congress passed the Head Start Improvement Act in 1998 and the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act in 2007, both aimed to increase Head Start's emphasis on improving children's academic performance. The program still provides comprehensive services to poor children and their families but its primary mission has been explicitly refocused to "promote the school readiness of young children from low-income families"—indeed the very goal Johnson set when it was founded.<sup>100</sup>

A half-century after its inception, Head Start is now the largest and most visible federal early childhood program, enrolling almost 900,000 preschoolers annually in 18,000 part- and full-time preschool centers in low-income neighborhoods across the country. EHS has remained much smaller, serving about 160,000 infants, toddlers, and pregnant women annually.<sup>101</sup>

In direct contrast to CCDF and TANF, the two other major federal funding streams for early childhood already discussed, Head Start has always aimed to promote child development, not support working parents. In fact, when the program was designed in 1965, the mothers of children it served were largely on welfare and were not expected to be working. Still today, more than half of Head Start centers still operate just three-hour programs; the rest operate six hours a day or less.

Head Start has long dominated the early childhood landscape as the federal government's centerpiece program. And while federal child-care funding has undergone the long, circuitous evolution described earlier, Head Start has changed little and remains closely similar to the program Johnson founded a half-century ago.

### **K–12 Public Schools**

Improving public schools for poor children was the major aim of Johnson's 1965 education legislation. He

asked Congress to greatly increase investment in the nation's school system, emphasizing the link between poverty and inadequate schooling:

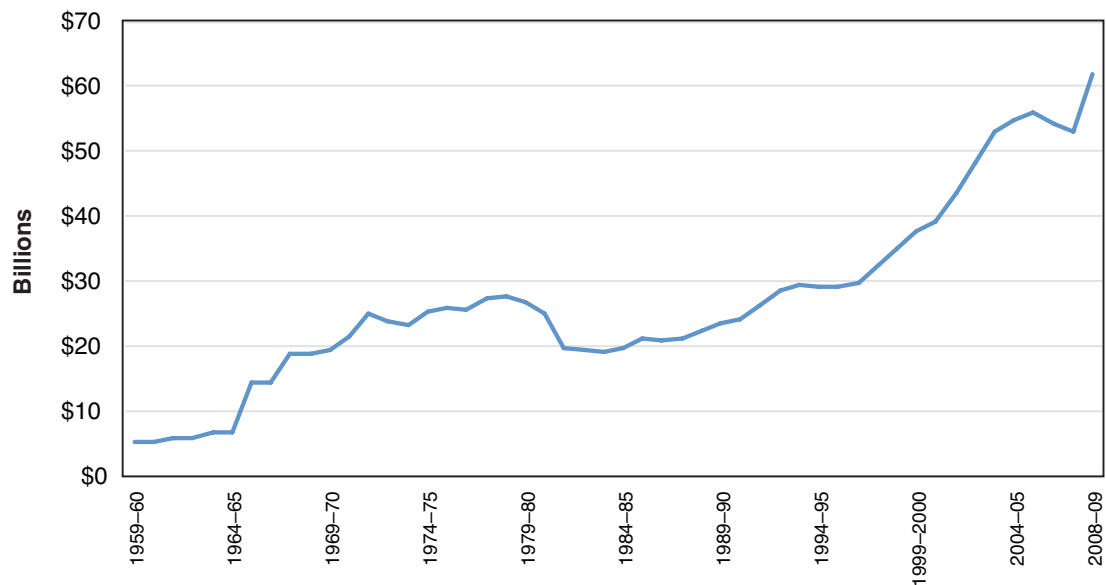
Today, lack of formal education is likely to mean low wages, frequent unemployment and a home in an urban or rural slum. Poverty has many roots but the tap root is ignorance. . . . Just as ignorance breeds poverty, poverty all too often breeds ignorance in the next generation.<sup>102</sup>

Congress consented, passing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965 to "strengthen and improve educational quality and educational opportunities in the Nation's elementary and secondary schools." Title I of the act specifically directed extra funds to public schools to help disadvantaged children, initiating decades of rising federal education spending toward that end.<sup>103</sup>

The federal role in public schooling was significantly bolstered when the US Department of Education was established in 1979, and following Johnson's 1965 vision, federal funding for K–12 has grown dramatically since, as shown in figure 13. Yet despite decades of funding increases, public schools have largely fallen short of realizing Johnson's dream of advancing opportunity for poor and minority children. And beginning with the 1983 report "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform" released by the Reagan administration, ever-growing school funding has increasingly shifted to "school reform"—fixing schools so they finally have their hoped-for impact on poor children's lives.<sup>104</sup>

In the first major federal effort to reform the schools, President George W. Bush in 2001 reauthorized the 1965 ESEA as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), aiming to improve measurable student achievement by setting high standards and holding stakeholders accountable for results. NCLB failed to significantly improve schools but reenergized focus on public schools as the leading vehicle for improving the life chances of disadvantaged children and firmly established school reform as the central strategy.

Eight years later, in 2009, President Barack Obama initiated the most recent federal effort to improve public

**Figure 13. A Half-Century of K–12 Federal Education Spending: 1959–2009**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, “Revenues for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by Source of Funds: Selected Years, 1919–20 through 2011–12,” [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14\\_235.10.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_235.10.asp?current=yes); and National Center for Education Statistics, “Revenues for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by Source of Funds: 1919–20 to 1992–93,” <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d95/dtab154.asp>.

schools, creating the Race to the Top (RTT) competitive grant program to incentivize reform at state and local levels. Like previous federal attempts, RTT’s ultimately had little to no impact on school performance, but the program further bolstered school reform as the key strategy for ensuring equal opportunity for the poor. At the same time, it reinforced focus on the relatively narrow goal of increasing student achievement—largely on math and reading tests—as the core aim of school reform, the primary measure of child well-being, and the ultimate purpose of federal funding.

### Promoting Pre-K

Thus, virtually all hopes for helping disadvantaged children have been pinned on schools for the last half-century, even as schools’ inadequacy has become an increasingly urgent concern. Recently, the newest school-improvement tactic has emerged: extending the reach of public schooling downward by adding a grade

for four-year-olds to the 13 grades already in place. While advocates often promote pre-K as crucial for advancing early childhood development, a closer look suggests that the pre-K push is, at least partially, the latest attempt to fix the K–12 school enterprise as an end in itself.

In one example of this, a coalition of leading national K–12 stakeholders issued a 2011 report that emphasized pre-K’s value as a reform strategy to boost failing public schools, arguing for “reframing ESEA” to expand pre-K in part because “high quality early childhood education is a powerful tool for improving our education system.”<sup>105</sup> Since then, several Democrats have proposed amendments to add pre-K funding to the ESEA, which is currently undergoing reauthorization.

Along these lines, the US Department of Education’s role in promoting public pre-K has become increasingly pronounced. In 2011, the Department of Education launched the Office of Early Learning to “institutionalize, elevate and coordinate federal support for high-quality early learning,” as described

by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.<sup>106</sup> Echoing the widely held view that public schools are the key to advancing opportunity for the poor, the Department of Education website now promotes school for ever-younger children, stating that the “foundation of a thriving middle class is access to a strong education for every child beginning in the first few years of life.”<sup>107</sup>

Federal pre-K activity is still in very early stages, and Department of Education spending to date has focused on driving state efforts to expand pre-K, especially in public schools.<sup>108</sup> In 2014, the Department of Education launched the Preschool Development Grants, a competitive grants program that awarded \$250 million to selected states to increase public pre-K, aiming to establish state models for “expanding preschool to all four-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families.”<sup>109</sup>

New proposals for direct federal funding of public pre-K have also been put forward. President Obama’s 2015 education budget proposal, while not approved, called for “a historic new investment in preschool education” through a \$75 billion “Preschool For All” initiative.<sup>110</sup> The White House billed the proposal as “one of the boldest efforts to expand educational opportunity in the last 50 years,” clearly framing the plan in the spirit of Johnson’s War on Poverty legislation.<sup>111</sup> The Strong Start for America’s Children Act, first introduced in 2013 and reintroduced in May 2015, proposes \$75 billion over 10 years to fund the Preschool For All plan, which would provide a year of school to

four-year-olds as the key to “better educational outcomes, stronger job earnings, and lower levels of crime and delinquency.”<sup>112</sup>

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Head Start and recent pre-K initiatives thus share origins in Johnson’s 1965 War on Poverty. Both are rooted in the contemporary emphasis on the nation’s schools as the primary means of advancing poor children. Both are focused on providing preschool. But they are entirely disconnected from one another, operating out of two different federal departments, under two different systems of rules, standards, and monitoring requirements.

The Department of Health and Human Services runs Head Start and directly funds Head Start grantees across the country. The recent pre-K initiatives, on the other hand, have grown out of the Department of Education and are focused on promoting states’ efforts to establish preschool for all four-year-olds, primarily through public schools. And Head Start and the Department of Education’s pre-K initiatives are as disconnected from CCDF and TANF—the other two major federal funding streams focused on young children—as they are from each other. Coordinating the various, often conflicting requirements of these disparate funding streams at the state and local level has become increasingly difficult and resource-intensive, greatly impeding effective local delivery of the high-quality early care and education programs that vulnerable young children and working families need.

## Part III: Conclusion

The legacy of the past 80 years of federal policy-making in early childhood care and education is a hodgepodge of fragmented funding streams, disconnected from each other and from a clear, coherent purpose. CCDF and TANF, arising from the disastrous shambles of a 1935 effort to promote healthy child development, are now primarily aimed at enabling parents to work. Head Start focuses on child development but does not support working parents and is highly burdened by a half-century of accumulated rules and regulations. New pre-K initiatives are largely concentrated on getting four-year-olds into school, neglecting both the needs of working parents and the crucial earlier years of children's development. Dozens of additional programs have popped up here and there, each with its own target group and specific objectives.

Our thinking about what to do for children is directed at coping with what now exists, not guided by what we are trying to accomplish. We have lost sight of the crucial aim: promoting the well-being of poor children so they can grow into healthy, happy, productive adults.

The history sketched in this paper leaves us with three problems in particular. The first is that current debates are driven by established bureaucratic institutions, not core goals. Entrenched interests advocate for specific funding streams rather than for children. In the dysfunctional landscape of federal early childhood policy, policymakers have gotten locked into choosing among three bad options: tinkering around the edges of existing programs, trying to cut them, or adding new ones on top of what is already in place.

The second problem is that federal policy has evolved to reinforce a counterproductive, false distinction between “custodial” and “developmental” care for children. Today, all programs for very young children—no matter what they are called—have two

purposes: supporting parents' work in a 24/7 economy and promoting children's healthy growth and learning during the most crucial period of human development, from birth through age four. Those two aims are complementary, equally important strategies for building human capital in our nation's most disadvantaged communities. Federal programs must advance both.

The third problem is more subtle but no less detrimental: an overly narrow focus on children's economic status and cognitive skills has replaced the broader vision Hoover put forward 80 years ago—to promote the “health and well-being and happiness” of poor children. Increasing family income and student test scores, while both important, are a means to an end, not ends in themselves. Children need much more than money and academic skills to grow up well; social, emotional, spiritual, and cultural dimensions of children's lives are also crucial.

Human flourishing is the goal we should be aiming for: giving all children, no matter the circumstances of their birth, the chance to pursue a good life. It means helping children grow into adults who are able to “build meaningful dignified lives of their own making,” in Arthur Brooks' words: finishing high school, working to earn a living, creating a stable family before having children, and contributing to the wider community as law-abiding citizens.<sup>113</sup> That goal is much harder to accomplish than the technical objectives of keeping children out of poverty and raising their test scores. But it is ultimately the goal really worth pursuing.

### The Path Forward: Let States Lead

The context for federal early childhood policy has changed enormously since the major federal programs were first put into place. A century ago when Theodore



Roosevelt convened the first White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children and a half-century ago when Johnson launched the War on Poverty, the federal government played an essential leadership role in the nation's efforts to protect and advance the well-being of poor children.

Today, however, that leadership is emerging from states. Policymakers across the country, both Democrat and Republican, are heeding the growing research underscoring the importance of early childhood and are prioritizing investment in the earliest years of learning and development. Nine Republican governors highlighted early learning in their 2015 State of the State addresses.

It makes sense that governors are paying attention to early childhood. States, not the federal government, bear the brunt of down-the-line social and economic costs incurred when children's earliest foundations are not well laid. As Republican Mayor Greg Ballard of Indianapolis says, "It's easy to put the pieces together: You spend a penny now or you spend a dollar later." So while federal early childhood programs remain mired in competing bureaucracies, warring interest groups, and partisan conflicts, states are stepping up to lead the way. Increasingly, the most successful state efforts to address the needs of poor children and their families are carried out despite, not because of, the federal government.

The best way to advance good early childhood policy is to facilitate, rather than constrain, the commitment and innovation increasingly evident in state after state. Indeed, some recent federal action has contributed significantly to building state capacity toward that end:

- The 2007 reauthorization of Head Start required that every state governor establish a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education (SAC) to improve the quality, availability, and coordination of the state's programs and services for children from birth through age four. SACs are now in place in every state, providing valuable infrastructure for ongoing state activity.<sup>114</sup>

- In 2011, the Obama administration launched the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge competition, jointly administered by the US Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The program funded the efforts of 20 winning states to design and implement an integrated system to improve the quality of early learning and development services and to close the achievement gap for children with high needs. Several of those states are now national leaders in early childhood policy and practice.<sup>115</sup>

- In 2014, the Obama administration launched the Preschool Development Grants competition, also jointly administered by the US Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The program helps states build their infrastructure to provide high-quality preschool programs for low- and moderate-income families; expand high-quality programs in high-need communities; and create sustainable programs by coordinating existing early learning funds. Grants were awarded to states that are demonstrating a strong commitment to building and enhancing their early learning systems, and the 18 winning states are intended to serve as national models.<sup>116</sup>

- In 2014, Congress reauthorized the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program for the first time in 18 years. The bipartisan reauthorization—passed in the Senate with an overwhelming majority of 88 to 1—strongly promotes state leadership in providing young children with high-quality learning opportunities while simultaneously supporting their working parents.<sup>117</sup>

Building on the important groundwork laid by these federal initiatives, the most promising path forward is to support and advance the work of leading, innovative states. The following is one approach worth considering.

## A New State Option

A new, carefully planned state option could give special flexibility to states that have demonstrated ongoing commitment to providing high-quality early-learning programs targeted specifically to poor and low-income children from birth through age four. Under this approach, states would be given the opportunity to propose five-year pilot projects, aimed to increase access to high-quality programs that serve the needs of disadvantaged children and families. Plans would be developed and approved by the state's early childhood advisory council and submitted jointly by the governor and state legislature to the secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services. The secretary would be authorized to approve state plans that meet clear, specific criteria.

Approved states would be allowed to combine their state dollars with CCDF, TANF, and Head Start funds into a single pool, all subject to high standards of quality defined in the state's plan. Means-tested vouchers would be provided directly to poor and low-income parents, who would use them at the program of their choice, selecting from among state-approved providers. Providers that meet standards set out in the approved state plan would be eligible for voucher payments—including public, private, nonprofit, for-profit, center-based, home-based, Head Start, and religious providers—stressing quality for children and families over federal funding stream and tax status.

State projects would be required to include:

- High standards for ensuring that programs attend to social, emotional, physical, and cognitive domains of early development that enable children to succeed from kindergarten onward;
- A state-recognized monitoring and rating system that meaningfully distinguishes between various levels of provider quality, focused on key child outcomes;
- A minimum standard of quality that providers must meet to be eligible to receive state voucher payments;

## Minnesota's Early Learning Scholarship Program

Minnesota's Early Learning Scholarship program provides one model of this approach. The program provides vouchers to poor and low-income families that may use them to pay for early care and education at a broad range of state-approved providers.

With support from the business and philanthropic sectors, the state of Minnesota operates Parent Aware, a rating system that rates the early-education quality of providers from one to four stars. Parent Aware helps parents choose the best place for their child by providing accessible, user-friendly information on the location, characteristics, and quality rating of providers.

Providers must participate in Parent Aware to qualify for the state's approved-provider network, with an initial minimum rating of one star. Over time, providers will be required to meet a three- or four-star level to participate and are thus incentivized both to enter into the state's quality-rating system and to raise quality to better attract parents.

- Voucher amounts sufficient for families to access high-quality programs;
- Provision of technical-assistance resources to help providers who want to improve the quality of their programs;
- Rigorous, ongoing evaluation of program outcomes; and
- Clear benchmarks for success at the conclusion of the five-year pilot period.

Previous proposals for greater state flexibility have met with sensible objections, as early childhood advocates have raised questions about the capacity of state governments to correctly administer early care and education programs. When states cannot be relied on to maintain adequate quality, federally enforced standards help keep program quality high. But while that was a

crucial concern in decades past, times have changed a great deal.

Today, the public and policymakers alike have a much greater understanding of the importance of early childhood development. A growing number of states, both red and blue, have invested significant political, financial, and administrative resources in their early childhood programs, demonstrating an unprecedented commitment to the well-being of disadvantaged young children. This proposal builds on the impressive work of those states, giving them the flexibility to combine growing state funds with multiple federal funding streams and thus amplifying their ability to do the right thing for poor children and families.

The proposal outlined here is also different from previous ones in two important ways. First, it stipulates that participating states hold all federal funds—CCDF and TANF, as well as Head Start—to the same clear, high standards, defined and enforced by the state. It supports states that are willing to set a high bar—improving the quality of those states' early childhood services across the board; bringing parity to currently fragmented, greatly uneven programs; and dissolving the false distinction between custodial and developmental settings, acknowledging that children learn

wherever they are, from whomever they are with, no matter what programs are called.

Second, this proposal shifts ultimate control of resources to parents, not state governments. It requires that states set high standards, monitor and rate quality, and provide comprehensive, transparent information to parents. But states—and programs—will be accountable to parents as the final decision makers for their children.

The approach proposed here advances, rather than impedes, purposeful state leadership. It promotes innovation and experimentation, reduces wasteful red tape, and breaks down the counterproductive silos entrenched in federal funding streams. It enables those states that are strongly committed to quality to better serve the needs of poor children and their working parents, freeing them from the resource-intensive, bureaucratic task of “blending and braiding” incoherent federal funding streams into useful money. It puts parents and families at the center, empowering them to choose what is best for family stability and their child's healthy development. Finally, it elevates the capacity of forward-looking states to focus on what really matters: giving America's least-advantaged children a fair chance at a happy, productive life.

## Notes

1. In total, the federal government funds 45 programs that provide or support early-learning and child-care services. Of these, Head Start, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are by far the three major federal funding streams, together expending close to \$15 billion for services to young children in 2014. See Kay E. Brown, *Early Learning and Child Care: Federal Funds Support Multiple Programs with Similar Goals*, US Government Accountability Office, February 5, 2014, [www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-325T](http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-325T).
2. US General Accounting Office, *Early Childhood Programs: Multiple Programs and Overlapping Target Groups*, October 1994, [www.gao.gov/assets/90/89793.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/90/89793.pdf); US Government Accountability Office, *Early Education and Care: Overlap Indicates Need to Assess Crosscutting Programs*, April 2000, [www.gao.gov/products/HEHS-00-78](http://www.gao.gov/products/HEHS-00-78); and US Government Accountability Office, *Early Learning and Child Care: Federal Funds Support Multiple Programs with Similar Goals*, February 2014, [www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-325T](http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-325T).
3. Frank Hobbs and Nicole Stoops, *Demographic Trends in the 20th Century: Census 2000 Special Reports*, US Census Bureau, November 2002, Table 5, [www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf).
4. US Census Bureau, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part I*, September 1975, [www.census.gov/history/pdf/histstats-colonial-1970.pdf](http://www.census.gov/history/pdf/histstats-colonial-1970.pdf).
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7. Ibid.
8. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. “unemployment,” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/unemployment>.
9. Social Security Board, “Why Social Security?”
10. Ibid.
11. Hon. Herbert Parsons, “Establishment of a National Children’s Bureau,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 34, no. 1 (July 1909): 49.
12. Herbert Hoover, “Address to the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection,” American Presidency Project, November 19, 1930, [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=22442](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=22442).
13. US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Children’s Bureau, *The Story of the White House Conferences on Children and Youth*, 1967, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED078896.pdf>.
14. Marvin Olasky, *American Orphanages: How We Used to Care for Children*, Philanthropy, Culture, and Society, May 1996, [www.heartland.org/sites/all/modules/custom/heartland\\_migration/files/pdfs/1599.pdf](http://www.heartland.org/sites/all/modules/custom/heartland_migration/files/pdfs/1599.pdf).
15. Ibid., 1.
16. Of these, 37,094 were in New York State. In New York City alone, 39 institutions housed 25,397 children: 691 in Jewish, 5,794 in Protestant, and 15,912 in Catholic institutions. New York State Adjutant-General’s Office, “Report of the Adjutant-General’s Department to Governor Charles S. Whitman, September 1, 1918,” 1918, 91.
17. Marshall B. Jones, “Decline of the American Orphanage, 1941–1980,” *Social Service Review* 67, no. 3 (September 1993): 459–80.
18. Ibid.
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21. June Hopkins, "Widows and Waifs: New York City and the American Way to Welfare, 1913–1916," Social Welfare History Project, 2011, [www.socialwelfarehistory.com/programs/orphanage-widows-pension/](http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/programs/orphanage-widows-pension/).
22. New York State Adjutant-General's Office, "Report of the Adjutant-General's Department to Governor Charles S. Whitman," 115.
23. "The Obsolete Orphanage," *New York Times*, May 27, 1925.
24. Hobbs and Stoops, *Demographic Trends in the 20th Century*, Table 5.
25. John Kingsbury, Commissioner of Public Charities, City of New York, "Municipal Welfare Work as Exemplified in New York's Treatment of Dependent Children," National Conference on Social Welfare, Official Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, 1917, 378.
26. In one well-publicized case in 1874, 10-year-old Mary Ellen McCormack was rescued from a violently abusive foster home by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the only organization then in existence able to help her. The case prompted the establishment of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and dozens of Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children subsequently sprang up across the country: 37 were in operation by 1880, 162 by 1901, and 250 by 1910.
27. A federal law restricting child labor, the Keating-Owen Act, was signed into law in 1916 by Woodrow Wilson. However, the US Supreme Court overturned it two years later in *Hammer v. Dagenhart*, ruling that it violated the commerce clause by regulating interstate commerce. It would not be until 1938 that the Fair Labor Standards Act was finally passed, eliminating child labor permanently across the country.
28. Samuel McCune Lindsay, "The Eighth Biennial Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs: Child Labor—A National Disgrace," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 28 (September 1906): 103–5.
29. Parsons, "Establishment of a National Children's Bureau," 51.
30. When asked about his work on the subject, Hine explained that he "wanted to show things that had to be corrected." See Lewis Hine, "Lewis Hine Photographs," <http://lewishinephotographs.com>; and History Place, "Child Labor in America 1908–1912: Photographs of Lewis W. Hine," [www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor](http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor).
31. Edward T. Devine, "The New View of the Child," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 32, Supplement 22, Child Labor and Social Progress, Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the National Child Labor Committee (July 1908): 4–10.
32. The 1909 Conference was the first of seven White House Conferences on Children and Youth that took place from 1909 to 1970, held by Theodore Roosevelt (1909), Woodrow Wilson (1919), Herbert Hoover (1930), Franklin D. Roosevelt (1940), Harry Truman (1950), Dwight D. Eisenhower (1960), and Richard Nixon (1970).
33. Theodore Roosevelt, "Special Message to the Two Houses of Congress," February 15, 1909, [www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/txtspeeches/324.txt](http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/txtspeeches/324.txt).
34. Hoover, "Address to the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection."
35. New York State Commission on Relief for Widowed Mothers, "Report," March 27, 1914.
36. Henry Smith Williams, "What Shall Be Done with Dependent Children?" *The North American Review* 164, no. 485 (April 1897).
37. Notices were posted in local newspapers and around towns along the train's route, informing residents when and where the children could be viewed for adoption. A typical notice in Missouri read: "WANTED Homes for Children. A company of homeless children from the East will arrive at Troy, MO., on Friday, Feb. 24th, 1910. . . . Distribution will take place at the Opera House Friday, Feb 25 at 1:30pm."
38. Roosevelt, "Special Message to the Two Houses of Congress." Italics added.
39. New York State Adjutant-General's Office, "Report of the Adjutant-General's Department to Governor Charles S. Whitman," 93.

40. "The Obsolete Orphanage."
41. Henry Dwight Chapin, "Family vs. Institution," *The Survey*, January 15, 1926, 485–88.
42. Henry Smith Williams, *The North American Review* 164, no. 485 (April 1897): 412.
43. Lindsay, "The Eighth Biennial Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs," 103–5.
44. Devine, "The New View of the Child," 4–10.
45. New York State Commission on Relief for Widowed Mothers, *Report*, 3 and 8.
46. US Department of Health and Human Services, "Centennial Series: The Creation of the Children's Bureau," *Children's Bureau Express* 13, no. 3 (July 2012), <https://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issucid=134&articleid=3463>.
47. Samuel McCune Lindsay, "Child Labor: A National Disgrace," *American Academy of Political and Social Science* 28, no. 1 (July 1906): 303.
48. Growing concern with protecting the mother's role as homemaker in America's newly industrializing landscape extended beyond debate over public aid to poor women. For example, the Ford Motor Company introduced the "five dollar day" in 1914, aiming to reduce worker turnover and encourage responsible family life through promoting male breadwinning and motherhood. The company doubled men's wages to five dollars a day if they were "living with and taking good care of their families," as monitored by unannounced visits to employee's homes by Ford's new "sociological department." See Ryan MacPherson, "Marital Parenthood and American Prosperity," *The Family in America* 26, no. 1. As Henry Ford explained, "The man does the work in the shop, but his wife does the work in the home. The shop must pay them both. . . . Otherwise we have the hideous prospect of little children and their mothers being forced out to work." See Henry Ford, "My Life and Work," [www.1920-30.com/automobiles/henryford/wages.html](http://www.1920-30.com/automobiles/henryford/wages.html).
49. New York State Commission on Relief for Widowed Mothers, *Report*.
50. *Ibid.*
51. "Circular Issued by the State Supervisor of the Mothers' Assistance Fund of Pennsylvania," April 1916, 3.
52. US Children's Bureau, "Minimum Standards for Child Welfare Adopted by the Washington and Regional Conferences on Child Welfare," US Children's Bureau, Publication No. 62, 1920, 11.
53. Emma O. Lundberg, *Public Aid to Mothers with Dependent Children: Extent and Fundamental Principles*, US Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, Publication No. 162, 1926.
54. These laws were variously termed "mothers' pensions," "mothers' allowances," "mothers' assistance fund," "widows' compensation," "aid for dependent children," "aid to mothers of dependent children," and "an act to promote home life for dependent children."
55. "Widow's Pensions," *New York Times*, March 27, 1915.
56. Children's Bureau to the Secretary of Labor, "Eighth Annual Report of the Chief," 1920, 14.
57. The five states with no mothers' aid law in 1926 were Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Mexico, and South Carolina. The five states that restricted mothers' aid to widows were Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, Texas, and Utah.
58. Lundberg, *Public Aid to Mothers with Dependent Children*, 1.
59. United States History, "Unemployment Statistics during the Great Depression," [www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1528.html](http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1528.html); and Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1995), 152.
60. Hoover, "Address to the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection."
61. In another reflection of growing public support for government involvement in child welfare, in 1931 readers of the popular women's magazine *Good Housekeeping* chose Grace Abbott, the chief of the US Children's Bureau, as "the fifth most distinguished American woman." In the magazine's interview with her, Abbott maintained that "the only permanent and final way to elevate the condition of the child is to elevate the family," and emphasized her conviction that the state has a crucial role "in insuring [a] reasonable minimum for American children." Alice Booth, "Grace Abbott: Who Knows—and Cares—More about Our 43,000,000 Children Than Anyone Else in the United States," *Good Housekeeping*, May 1931, [www.ssa.uchicago.edu/grace-abbott-one-americas-12-greatest-women](http://www.ssa.uchicago.edu/grace-abbott-one-americas-12-greatest-women).

62. What we know as “Social Security” today was only one of several programs of the 1935 Social Security Act. In addition to old-age insurance, the original SSA included multiple programs aimed at “helping people who are unable to help themselves,” authorizing federal assistance to states “to broaden and extend regular allowances for needy mothers, the needy blind, and the needy aged . . . [and] for State services for child welfare, for crippled children, and for physically handicapped people.” Social Security Board, “Why Social Security?”

63. The other three programs focused on children addressed maternal and child health services, medical care for crippled children, and child welfare services. “President Roosevelt’s Radio Address,” *New York Times*, October 25, 1935.

64. In other words, each state set its overall aid level, and the federal government contributed a third of the total dollars spent. If a state spent \$100,000, for example, the federal government would contribute an additional \$50,000 for a total expenditure of \$150,000.

65. Social Security Board, “Why Social Security?”

66. John Corson, “Reasons for the 1939 Amendments to the Social Security Act,” internal memorandum, January 10, 1940, [www.ssa.gov/history/reports/1939no3.html](http://www.ssa.gov/history/reports/1939no3.html)

67. Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Presidential Statement on Signing Some Amendments to the Social Security Act,” August 11, 1939, [www.ssa.gov/history/fdrstmts.html#1939b](http://www.ssa.gov/history/fdrstmts.html#1939b); and *Social Security Bulletin* 2, no. 9 (September 1939), [www.ssa.gov/history/reports/1939no1.html](http://www.ssa.gov/history/reports/1939no1.html).

68. Conference findings related to the harmful effects of segregation were later cited by the Supreme Court in its 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision finding that public school segregation was unconstitutional.

69. Marshall B. Jones, “Decline of the American Orphanage, 1941–1980,” *Social Service Review* 67, no. 3 (September 1993): 459–80.

70. This provision, known as AFDC-Unemployed Parent (AFDC-UP), was optional for states until 1990.

71. Jo Anne B. Ross, “1935–1985: Fifty Years of Service to Children and Their Families,” *Social Security Bulletin* 48, no. 10 (October 1985), [www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v48n10/v48n10p5.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v48n10/v48n10p5.pdf).

72. J. Skelly Wright, “The Courts Have Failed the Poor,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 9, 1969.

73. John K. Enright, “The Eligibility of the Unborn Child under AFDC,” *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 3, no. 1 (1974), <http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1611&context=ulj>.

74. This terminology persists today. See, for example, Ross, “1935–1985: Fifty Years of Service to Children and Their Families.”

75. Further, half of this total number of single mothers were on AFDC. So employment rates among non-AFDC single mothers were actually around 95 percent. Robert Moffitt, “Incentive Effects of the US Welfare System: A Review,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 30, no. 1 (March 1992).

76. Ross, “1935–1985: Fifty Years of Service to Children and Their Families.”

77. Ron Haskins, *Work over Welfare: The Inside Story of the 1996 Welfare Reform Law* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).

78. The University of Wisconsin–Madison Institute for Research on Poverty, “The Family Support Act of 1988,” *Focus* 11, no. 4 (1988–89), [www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc114e.pdf](http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc114e.pdf). Italics added.

79. The “at-risk” reference in the program’s title itself reflected the significant shift over the half-century since ADC was established, highlighting not children’s risk of compromised development but rather poor mothers’ risk of going on welfare.

80. US Census Bureau, “Mothers Who Receive AFDC Payments,” [www.census.gov/population/socdemo/statbriefs/sb2-95.html](http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/statbriefs/sb2-95.html).

81. As cited in Haskins, *Work over Welfare*.

82. Jennifer A. Neisner, “State Welfare Initiatives,” Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 1994.

83. US Department of Health and Human Services, “State Welfare Waivers: An Overview,” <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/isp/waiver2/waivers.htm>.

84. Haskins, *Work over Welfare*, 2.

85. A block grant is a lump sum of money targeted for a specific purpose that is given to states to administer directly, usually with a great deal of latitude in program details, such as who is eligible for benefits and how much they get.

86. Haskins, *Work over Welfare*, 10 . During the 1990s welfare reform legislation, Haskins worked for Republican leadership in the US House of Representatives Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee, first as welfare counsel to the Republican staff, then as the subcommittee's staff director. .

87. Haskins, *Work over Welfare*, 337.

88. Indeed, one historian observed that “as the forces of traditional religion waned, the ideology of American public schools acquired the appeal of a religion.” Michael S. Katz, *A History of Compulsory Education Laws*, Phi Delta Kappa, Fastback Series, no. 75, Bicentennial Series, <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED119389>.

89. C. H. Edson, cited in Michael S. Katz, *A History of Compulsory Education Laws* (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundations, 1976).

90. US Office of Education, *How High Schools Organize Activity Programs* (Washington, DC: US Office of Education, 1951). Cited in Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 333.

91. Ravitch, *Left Back*, 391.

92. Johnson announced the War on Poverty in 1964 as a set of initiatives aimed to “strike away the barriers to full participation in our society” and “show the way to new opportunities for millions of our fellow citizens.” Lyndon B. Johnson, “Proposal for a Nationwide War on the Sources of Poverty,” March 16, 1964, <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1964johnson-warpoverty.html>.

93. Lyndon B. Johnson, “Toward Full Educational Opportunity,” January 12, 1965, [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=27448](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=27448).

94. New York State Commission on Relief for Widowed Mothers, *Report*.

95. Johnson, “Toward Full Educational Opportunity.”

96. “Head Start Falls Behind,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1965.

97. “‘Head Start’ Plan for Pupils Begun,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1965.

98. “Head Start Plan to Be Permanent,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1965.

99. A September 1965 editorial in *New York Times* argued, for example, that the “ultimate goal of the experiment remains to be attained—to shape these children’s schooling into so effective an instrument that the deficiencies of their home environment can be overcome.” “Only a Start for Head Start,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1965.

100. Head Start, “About Us,” <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/about>.

101. See US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Head Start, “Head Start Services,” June 22, 2015, [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/about/head-start](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/about/head-start).

102. Johnson, “Toward Full Educational Opportunity.”

103. The full title of the act is Financial Assistance to Local Educational Agencies for the Education of Children of Low-Income Families.

104. Total public spending (including federal, state, and local) on K–12 schools increased more than 500 percent from 1959–60 to 2011–12: rising from \$118 million in 1959–60 to \$620 million in 2011–12 in constant 2013–14 dollars. National Center for Education Statistics, “Table 235.10. Revenues for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by Source of Funds: Selected Years, 1919–20 through 2011–12,” [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14\\_235.10.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_235.10.asp?current=yes).

105. Those stakeholders include the two national teachers unions—the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association—along with five national organizations of local and state K–12 school administrators: the American Association of School Administrators, Council of Chief State School Officers, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of State Boards of Education, and National School Boards Association. Prepared by Chrisanne Gayl, “Framing the Future: Addressing Pre-K in ESEA,” The Pre-K Coalition, May 2011, [www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Pre-kindergarten/Thinking-P-12-The-school-board-role-in-pre-k-education/Framing-the-Future-Addressing-Pre-K-in-ESEA.pdf](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Pre-kindergarten/Thinking-P-12-The-school-board-role-in-pre-k-education/Framing-the-Future-Addressing-Pre-K-in-ESEA.pdf).

106. US Department of Education, “US Department of Education Proposes Dedicated Office for Early Learning,” November 4, 2011, [www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-proposes-dedicated-office-early-learning](http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-proposes-dedicated-office-early-learning).

107. Dorothy Amatucci, “Helping States Improve and Enhance Early Education for All,” Home Room, <http://blog>.



ed.gov/2014/12/helping-states-improve-and-enhance-early-education-for-all/.

108. In 2014, the Department of Education launched the Preschool Development Grants, a competitive grants program that awarded \$250 million to selected states to increase public pre-K. State-funded pre-K has been on the rise for several years, enrolling 29 percent of the nation's four-year-olds in 2014. "The State of Preschool 2014," National Institute for Early Education Research, 2015, [http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2014\\_full.pdf](http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2014_full.pdf).

109. See US Department of Education, Office of Early Learning, "Preschool Development Grants," [www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html).

110. US Department of Education, "Obama Administration 2015 Budget Prioritizes Key Education Investments to Provide Opportunities for All Americans," March 4, 2014, [www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/obama-administration-2015-budget-prioritizes-key-education-investments-provide-opportunities-all-americans](http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/obama-administration-2015-budget-prioritizes-key-education-investments-provide-opportunities-all-americans).

111. Ibid.

112. Committee on Education and the Workforce Democrats, "The Strong Start for America's Children Act of 2015, Fact Sheet," <http://democrats.edworkforce.house.gov/sites/democrats.edworkforce.house.gov/files/Strong%20Start%20for%20America%27s%20Children%20Act%20-%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>.

113. Arthur C. Brooks, *The Conservative Heart: How to Build a Fairer, Happier, and More Prosperous America* (New York: Broadside Books, 2015), 19.

114. See US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Early Childhood Development, "State Advisory Councils," [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/early-learning/state-advisory-councils](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/early-learning/state-advisory-councils).

115. See US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Early Childhood Development, "Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge," [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/early-learning/race-to-the-top](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/early-learning/race-to-the-top).

116. See US Department of Education, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Early Learning, "Preschool Development Grants," [www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html).

117. See US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Child Care, "CCDF Reauthorization," [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/ccdf-reauthorization](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/ccdf-reauthorization).

## **About the Author**

Katharine B. Stevens is the research fellow in early childhood education at the American Enterprise Institute, where she focuses on the research, policy, and politics around early childhood; the role of early learning and development in expanding opportunity for low-income Americans; and the implementation challenges of rapidly growing early childhood education initiatives, especially issues of program and teacher quality.