

Toolkit for Supporting Young Families Through Human Services

December 2020

Millions of children across America live with young parents ages 18-24. While maneuvering the joint responsibilities of early adulthood and parenthood, these young parents face an array of obstacles including disruptions in education and employment, lack of access to quality child care, inadequate or unstable housing, lack of access to comprehensive health care and mental health services, and a lack of parenting support. Moreover, young families are often not recognized as a distinct “population group” in human services organizations—including through data and evaluation segmented to identify specific experiences and outcomes for young parents and their children—and as a result, the supports young families receive may not be best suited to meet their needs. Despite these challenges, brain science shows that young parents are uniquely motivated by their children, can be exceptionally resilient, and have the capability to navigate systems often designed without their experiences in mind.

This toolkit provides links to a multitude of resources to help health and human services leaders evaluate and intentionally design programs to meet the unique needs of young families.

To help navigate the toolkit, each resource listed is alphabetical with focus area icons. The focus area icons represent the following topics:

-  ECONOMIC WELL-BEING
-  EDUCATION
-  FOSTER YOUTH
-  MENTAL HEALTH
-  PANDEMIC RESPONSE
-  POLICY
-  PROGRAM DESIGN
-  YOUTH VOICE



[Addressing the Needs of Young Parents in Foster Care During COVID-19 »](#)



In this Annie E. Casey blog, a 19-year-old mother—who has been in foster care since thirteen—teams up with a senior associate from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to highlight how child welfare practitioners can support young parents more effectively during the current public health crisis.

[Balancing Work with School and Training while Raising Young Children »](#)



In this report, the Urban Institute uses the 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education to examine the prevalence of young parents who are currently working while also in education or training, the characteristics of these children and families, and the implications for child care when young parents are balancing work with the education and training necessary to get ahead.

[Designing Better Programs for Young Parents & Families Insights from The Southeastern Cohort on Young Parents & Families »](#)



This brief by Third Sector and APHSA discusses the Southeastern Cohort on Young Parents and Families, which aims to improve economic stability and well-being outcomes for young parent families through technical assistance to a cohort of state and human services agencies in Kentucky, South Carolina and Georgia. From phase one of the cohort, the lessons reflected in this brief center on understanding and engaging young parents, continuous improvement through data and feedback, and services alignment.

[Engaging Young Parents and Fathers in Parenting Programs »](#)



In this brief, the Child and Family Research Partnership (CFPR) discusses research that shows while young and older families demonstrate different risks at program entry, father participation is associated with lower levels of risk regardless of parent age. This research includes a study of over 2,000 families participating in home visiting programs, including assessments of the families' level of risk at program entry, participation, and program benefits.

[Funding Programs for Young Parents & Families »](#)



This brief by APHSA discusses how across health and human services there is an opportunity to understand where young families are currently served and create comprehensive programming to meet the needs of both parents and children. This brief includes a summary of potential federal resources that can be used to support programs targeting young families. These sources that can serve as a starting point for braiding and blending of funding to create comprehensive programming for young families.

[Growing Together: Young Parents Share Successes, Struggles and Recommendations for Change »](#)



The United Parent Leadership Action Network's report includes insights and recommendations based on interviews with more than 100 young parents, largely young mothers of color. In this report, the parents themselves provide insightful and meaningful recommendations regarding policy and practice, including: expanding affordable housing and childcare programs; developing more support and resources; and advocating for flexible work policies.

[Improving Economic Stability for Young Parents – Spotlight on Kentucky & Massachusetts »](#)



WEBINAR

In this APHSA and Third Sector hosted webinar viewers hear from representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), the Kentucky Department of Family Support (DFS) on how they are working to better meet the needs of young parent families through TANF-funded programs. The Kentucky Works Program shares their use “feedback loops” and human centered design. MA DTA shares their Young Parents Program model.

[Improving Transition Strategies for Young Parents Aging Out of Foster Care – Spotlight on Georgia »](#)



WEBINAR

In this APHSA and Third Sector hosted webinar, representatives from Georgia’s Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to share their efforts to engage young parents aging out of foster care to better understand how to design programs to support their needs. Learn what “meaningful” and “authentic” parent engagement looks like and the process used to engage young parents via focus groups. DFCS shares key insights gained from the initiative, and how these findings are shaping current and future efforts to support young parents transitioning from foster care.

[Insights for Community Action Agencies \(CAAs\): Designing Better Programs to Support Young Parent Families »](#)



WEBINAR

In this webinar hosted by APHSA, Third Sector and the National Community Action Partnership (NCAP), join representatives from the NCAP, Third Sector and the Waccamaw Economic Opportunity Council (WEOC) from South Carolina to discuss the importance of elevating young parent families as a priority population and the importance of leveraging a 2Gen approach within Community Action Agencies.

[Insights for Designing Outcomes-Oriented Programs for Young Parent Families »](#)



BLOG

This APHSA and Third Sector blog summarizes insights from numerous studies evaluating evidence-based, young parent support programs across the United States, including research related to the design, delivery, and impact of programs. The blog provides valuable information on practices that can better enable young parents and their families to overcome challenges and leverage their potential and assets to achieve family stability and economic well-being.

[Listening to Young Parents: The Multi-generational Making of Mental Health »](#)



WEBINAR

This CLASP hosted webinar focuses on parental mental health for young parents. The impact of parent’s mental health on children’s development is well-documented but rarely focuses on young parents’ experiences. This webinar brings together two presentations that draw on qualitative reports from young parents to offer practice, program, and policy solutions to addressing their mental health needs.

[Opening Doors for Young Parents »](#)



REPORT

This report, by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, highlights for policymakers and child advocates the barriers that young families face and the opportunities for young families to thrive. The report examines national and state-level trends, including areas of opportunity and concern, and potential solutions that can help these families achieve their goals.

[Parenting in a Pandemic: Spotlight on Young Families »](#)



BLOG

In this APHSA blog, read about the how the challenges young parents face have been amplified by COVID-19. During the current health crisis millions of children across America live with parents aged 18-24. It is crucial to address immediate needs for young families in light of the current health crisis, but it is also a great opportunity to begin the hard work of long-term planning to position young families for continued success.

[Young Parents and Workforce Development in a Post-Pandemic World »](#)



BRIEF

The National Skills Coalition brief on post-pandemic workforce development for young parents discusses how policymakers and workforce advocates can adapt to a pandemic-affected world, ensuring that skill-building policies are intentionally inclusive of this population to ensure a level playing field for all workers, regardless of their age or parental status. The brief highlights three key levers for policymakers to apply when developing interventions to support young parents.

[Young Parents Speak Out: Barriers, Biases, and Broken Systems »](#)



REPORT

This report by National Crittenton and Katcher Consulting is built on interviews, listening sessions and surveys with young-adult parents and staff at youth serving organization. The report proposes approaches to young-parent advocacy including systems where young parents can build skills, share experiences, and inform and shape policy ideas on a national and local level.

[Young Parents Making Their Way: Combining Education and Work while Parenting »](#)



REPORT

In this report, The Urban Institute analyzes data on young parents from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997. The report examines the patterns of work and education young parents engage in from the birth of their first child until they are age 30. The report summarizes possible approaches programs can take to engage and support young parents.

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