

# Race for Results in Nevada: Policy Brief

October 2017

The Annie E. Casey Foundation recently released their second installment of the *Race for Results: 2017 Policy Report*. This report focused on key demographic information regarding children of immigrant families, where in Nevada alone, there are an estimated 242,000 children. Additionally, the report made policy recommendations aimed at ways federal, state, and local decision makers could improve the outcomes of these children. These recommendations focused on three key issue areas: keeping families together & in their communities; meeting developmental milestones; and increasing economic opportunity. In alignment with the Children's Advocacy Alliance priority areas of Children's Health, Safety and School Readiness, this policy brief highlights selected policy recommendations proposed in the report, including related policies in Nevada and recommendations for future legislative considerations in the Silver State.

## Summary of Select *Race for Results* State-Level POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure that parental rights are not inappropriately disrupted or terminated. Should children enter the child welfare system, standard best practices should be applied that require involving parents in decision making and prioritizing placements with relatives.
- Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to families and foster partnerships with immigrant-serving organizations to share resources and foster care providers from similar cultural backgrounds.
- Establish schools as safe places for all children out of reach of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents without special permission or a warrant.
- Address the early care and education needs of children in immigrant families, as well as their cultural and linguistic needs in those early years and throughout the K-12 school system.
- Create a school-funding system that better funds schools with large numbers of English language learners.
- Provide health care coverage to lawfully residing immigrant children. Expand access to all children regardless of their immigration status.
- Connect immigrant families with public programs – such as tax credits, food assistance, housing, child care or children's health insurance – by working with trusted immigrant-serving communities to enroll eligible families.
- Pass legislation allowing for paid leave and work with employers to develop flexible scheduling policies that would aid all families.

## Where NEVADA Stands in the *Race for Results*:

**Child Welfare** - Safety Intervention and Permanency System (SIPS) is utilized throughout the State by child welfare agencies to prioritize family preservation and reunification by providing intensive in-home safety services to families with open CPS cases where there is no imminent threat to the safety of the child(ren). However, the success of this model is dependent upon the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate services within the community, including housing, child care, substance abuse treatment, mental health services and basic needs financial supports.

In the 2017 Legislative Session, several bills were presented to address these needs, including: funding increases for child care subsidies (Budget 3267-passed) and establishing child care tax credit programs (SB455-failed); regionalizing mental health services (AB366-passed); extending child-only TANF for fictive kin providers (SB257-provision failed); and conducting a study of child welfare funding in Nevada (SB257-provision failed), among others.

**Education** - In recent years, Nevada has made huge strides in addressing the needs of English language learner students. Specifically, the Department of Education created their English Language Learners (ELL)/Immigrant Program which is

purposely designed to enhance school districts' capacity to provide high quality education to ELL and immigrant students by providing technical assistance and professional development opportunities to schools, coordinating ELL initiatives, policies and best practices.

The 2015 Legislative Session resulted in one of the largest tax increases in Nevada history, providing increased categorical funding for education programs, including the establishment of ZOOM schools focused on providing additional supports to Nevada's ELL students. In the 2017 Legislative Session, Nevada passed Senate Bill 178 which updated its weighted school funding structure. This bill added additional weights to students identified as ELL. Although, additional funding is needed to provide this increased weight to all of Nevada's ELL students. Efforts were also made to expand access to high quality early learning programs for young children by increasing funding for public preschool programs (AB186), although this measure did not pass due to a lack of funding.

Additionally, Nevada's two largest school districts, Clark County School District (CCSD) and Washoe County School District (WCSD), have both declared themselves as safe havens/sanctuaries for all children.

**Healthcare** – Since the passage of the ACA and Medicaid Expansion, Nevada has had the largest percent increase in insured children in the entire country. Efforts at the federal level to eliminate the ACA and reduce funding for Medicaid resulted in several bills in 2017 to protect various provisions of the ACA (AB249-passed; AB408-passed/vetoed; SB233-passed), as well as establish an alternate purchase option for Medicaid (AB374-passed/vetoed). More specifically, the legislature passed Senate Bill 325 which removed the 5 –year waiting period for lawfully residing immigrant children to receive health care coverage through Medicaid and CHIP. Continuation of this program is contingent upon federal authority, as well as funding.

## CAA Policy Recommendations

1. Conduct a study of child welfare funding in Nevada (including necessary community support programs such as mental health, housing, substance abuse treatment and child care) to identify and align appropriate funding sources, as well as gaps in service provision to support family preservation and reunification.
2. Expand access to Child-Only TANF for fictive kin providers (non-relative, unlicensed providers who have an established relationship with the child) to decrease the need for traditional foster care placements & allowing children to remain in a safe, known environment.
3. Replace Nevada's child welfare data system, UNITY, to ensure accurate data collection in a user-friendly format.
4. Increase & stabilize funding for child care subsidies for low-income working families, including support of high quality programming & participation in the Silver State Quality Rating Improvement System.
5. Revise and fully fund Nevada's Education Funding Formula, including weighted funding for ELL.
6. Develop a child care tax credit that will allow employers to support employee access to high quality early learning programs for their dependents.
7. Require certain employers to provide paid sick leave to full-time employees and establish a program to promote flexible scheduling policies.
8. Establish public-private partnerships to enable community-based, immigrant serving community organizations to assist with outreach and enrollment in public assistance programs.



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