

NEW STUDY SHINES LIGHT ON ILLINOIS INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Nearly 100% of infants and toddlers have health coverage but nearly half live in low-income families

CHICAGO, February 11, 2014— Fifty years after President Lyndon Johnson’s declaration of the “War on Poverty,” a new report released by the [Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#), in partnership with [Child Trends](#), looks at the challenged state of Illinois’ youngest children— infants and toddlers ages birth to two. The report shows that many of our youngest children are being born into families lacking the resources to promote their healthy development.

The new study, [The Youngest Illinoisans: A Statistical Look at Infants and Toddlers in Illinois](#), shows many of our youngest children are facing “multiple risk-factors,” including economic stress, exposure to violence, low levels of parental education, unemployment and hunger—conditions common among children living in poverty that can fundamentally change brain and overall child development.

“We know that children from low income families and families facing multiple risk-factors have many hurdles to overcome,” said Sara Slaughter, director of the Education Program at the McCormick Foundation. “In fact, we now know that the achievement gap appears as early as 18 months of age. The data in this report serves as a wake-up call and allows us to make data-informed decisions to improve the trajectories for our youngest children.”

The comprehensive statistical study provides a new perspective on the health, economic and academic disparities among our state’s youngest children—nearly half a million infants and toddlers. Research shows a child’s academic success is often shaped long before he or she steps into a kindergarten classroom, a reality notably reinforced by this report.

The study identifies the demographics and communities where actions are most urgently needed. Findings include:

- Nearly half (45 percent) of Illinois’ infants and toddlers live in low-income families (In 2012, the threshold was \$23,283 for a family of four).
- 12 percent of infants and toddlers live in extreme poverty (that is, the family’s income is less than half the poverty level).
- Economic disadvantage is concentrated in the families of black and Latino infants and toddlers.
 - 62 percent of black infants and toddlers live in low income families.
 - 67 percent of Latino infants and toddlers live in low income families.

- Nearly 31 percent of Illinois Infants and toddlers live in households that do not have access to a sufficient amount of healthy food.

While the study highlights many adversities faced by this age group, it also identifies some bright spots. For example, Illinois infants and toddlers are more likely to have health insurance and receive preventative medical care when compared to the national average. In addition, only a small portion of Illinois women lack access to prenatal care.

“Even though these statistics are promising, there is much more work that needs to be done,” said Slaughter.

In an effort to spur increased support for infants and toddlers in Illinois, the McCormick Foundation is committing \$1 million over the next two years in new grants focused on support of infants and toddlers and their families. The following grants were recently announced:

- [Baby TALK](#) received \$50,000 to support home visits to families to help parents understand and support child development.
- [Illinois Association of Infant Mental Health](#) received \$50,000 to support professionals who work with infants and toddlers and their families who have experienced trauma or other risk factors.

“We are committed to funding initiatives that help Illinois communities and families address healthy development, parental support, and access to quality early childhood programs,” said David Hiller, president and CEO of the McCormick Foundation. “This is an exciting time for the early care and education field because it is now getting deserved attention on the federal and state level. What we need now is more action.”

Last November, the McCormick Foundation challenged other Foundations to join McCormick in focusing on infants and toddlers. To date, the [Irving Harris Foundation](#), [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#), the [David and Lucile Packard Foundation](#), and [The Buffett Early Childhood Fund](#), have joined the effort and challenged other philanthropists and stakeholders to increase their focus on America’s youngest children. Over the past year, these foundations have invested more than \$11 million in infant and toddler support and each pledges to continue those investments and intensify their support.

“Our hope is that this report will act as a catalyst to spark dialogue, bring foundations and agencies together and garner additional support around this issue,” added Hiller. “There’s too much at stake not to act now.”

About the Robert R. McCormick Foundation

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is committed to fostering communities of educated, informed and engaged citizens. Through philanthropic programs, Cantigny Park and museums, the Foundation helps develop citizen leaders and works to make life better in our communities. The Foundation was established as a charitable trust in 1955, upon the death of Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the Chicago Tribune. The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is one of the nation's largest foundations, with more than \$1 billion in assets. For more information, please visit www.McCormickFoundation.org, follow us on Twitter at [@Mccormick_Fdn](https://twitter.com/Mccormick_Fdn), or Like us on Facebook.

About Child Trends

Child Trends, based in Bethesda, Md., is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that provides valuable information and insights on the well-being of children and youth. For more than 30 years, policymakers, funders, educators and service providers in the U.S. and around the world have relied on our data and analyses to improve policies and programs serving children and youth. Our work is supported by foundations; federal, state and local government agencies; and by nonprofit organizations. Find out more at www.childtrends.org.

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