

NEW STUDY SHINES LIGHT ON INEQUALITIES AMONG AMERICA'S YOUNGEST CHILDREN

*As nearly half of our youngest children born into low-income families
face the toughest educational challenges*

CHICAGO, November 4, 2013— Research shows a child's academic success is often shaped long before he or she steps into a kindergarten classroom. Though they are growing up in a time of limitless possibilities, America's infants and toddlers will be a generation marked by significant inequalities, with a disturbing proportion of them being born into families lacking the resources to promote their healthy development.

A [new study](#) shows these vulnerable young children are facing "multiple-risk factors"— a condition common among children living in poverty that can fundamentally change brain and overall child development.

Coinciding with the 20th anniversary of its Education Program, which focuses on early care and education, the [Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#), in partnership with [Child Trends](#), is releasing a comprehensive statistical study that provides a new perspective on how health, economic and academic disparities among our country's youngest children—12 million infants and toddlers—can have immediate threats and lasting effects on a child's well-being.

"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 study identifies the most vulnerable populations, pinpointing the demographics and communities where actions are most urgently needed. Findings include:

- 48 percent of America's infants and toddlers live in low-income families; 25 percent live in families below the poverty line.
 - 13 percent of infants and toddlers live in extreme poverty (that is, the family's income is less than half the poverty level).
 - 66 percent of black and Latino infants and toddlers live in low income families.
- Black infants are twice as likely to die in infancy as white infants.
- One in four black and Latino infants and toddlers live in households that do not have access to a sufficient amount of healthy food.

"The foundation for healthy development and lifelong learning is established in the earliest years of life," said Dr. Joan Lombardi, former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development at the US Department of Health and Human Services. "The time is long overdue for increased public investments to assure early opportunities for all young children."

In an effort to spur increased support for infants and toddlers, 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.

"We are committed to funding initiatives that help communities and families by addressing healthy development, parent support, and access to quality early childhood programs," said David Hiller, president and CEO of the McCormick Foundation. "However, we need everyone working together to move the needle on this issue. We are challenging other local and national foundations to join us in this effort and make a difference."

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 McCormick Foundation in challenging 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 initiative will act as catalyst to spark dialogue, bring 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](#), 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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