

# Data Into Action

## Strategies for Improving Overall Child Well-Being

Michigan has seen some positive movement in recent years in policy decisions and investments, yet **outcomes for children have been mostly stagnant**, pointing to the need to do much more. Data should be used by policymakers to understand where efforts should be focused in order to support all kids and families across the state. Applying a **racial equity lens** to proposed policies and using **two-generation strategies** are two approaches that should be adopted to improve the overall well-being of kids, families and communities.

## Economic Security

### Key Findings

Nearly **1 in 5** kids in Michigan live below the federal **poverty line**, which is not an adequate measure of the share of families whose basic needs are going unmet.

An estimated **23%** of children live in working families with low incomes who are struggling to make ends meet, in part, because of low-wage jobs, unaffordable child care and housing, and a lack of access to affordable postsecondary training and education programs to help gain the skills necessary to obtain a job that pays well.

### Recommendations

Modernize the state's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to allow young workers and childless adults, often noncustodial parents, to receive the credit. The EITC helps workers with low wages keep more of what they earn to make ends meet. Research shows that children in families receiving the EITC benefit through improved educational and health outcomes.

Ensure access to affordable, high-quality child care by expanding income eligibility levels for subsidies and increasing provider reimbursement rates. Child care helps provide early learning experiences for children, allows parents to work and benefits employers.

Support youth and young adults to access postsecondary training, credentialing and education programs through flexible programming and increased financial aid. Providing multiple paths to access postsecondary programs, like early middle college programs, can help students achieve necessary career skills. It is also important to make college affordable for all students.

## Health & Safety

### Key Findings

Significant health disparities exist by race and ethnicity for women and children in Michigan.

African American babies are **more than two times as likely to die** before their first birthdays, there is an increasing rate of Latinx **infant mortalities** and women of color face more **barriers** to accessing adequate prenatal care.

With a low of **3%** uninsured, **Michigan does well in providing health coverage** to children, but more can be done.

### Recommendations

Expand home visitation programs and strengthen the system by creating a centralized intake process that will ensure families are able to participate in the program that will meet their needs best. Home visiting programs are evidence-based and research shows that they improve outcomes in health, economic security and school readiness.

Restore funding for family planning and pregnancy prevention programs to previous levels. Unintended pregnancy can lead to delayed prenatal care and preterm births, which impact the health of moms and babies, including maternal and infant mortality.

Under the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA), states have the ability to provide health coverage to lawfully residing immigrant children before the five-year wait period ends. Michigan should extend coverage to these children to promote better health.

# Family & Community

## Key Findings

More than **1 in 5** kids in Michigan have experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), stressful or traumatic events impacting long-term well-being.

Michigan is one of four states to still automatically prosecute 17-year-old children as adults in the criminal justice system **regardless of the crime**. This law prevents youth from accessing age-appropriate treatment in the juvenile justice system and increases trauma for young people while also leading to higher crime rates and more violent offenses.

Additionally, **the rate of child abuse and neglect has continued to rise**—by 30% from 2012 to 2017—with disproportionate impacts on children of color. There are also recent increases in the rate of children placed in out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect.

Approximately **58%** of young people exit foster care because they are emancipated or age out of the system without any permanence, meaning without a recognized adult parenting relationship in place.

## Recommendations

Raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction from 17 to 18 years old and fully fund its implementation.

Promote comprehensive strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect, including investments in job training and child care, along with positive parenting education, such as home visitation programs.

Address disparities in the child welfare system through appropriate data collection and cultural competency training for workers.

Ensure adequate support for programs that assist foster youth exiting the system with education, housing and work. In Michigan, only 3% of youth transitioning out of foster care receive employment assistance, and just 1% receive education support.

# Education

## Key Findings

M-STEP, the state's standardized assessment on English Language Arts, math, science and social studies, has been in place for four years.

**56%** of third-graders test below proficiency in reading.

Over **67%** of eighth-graders are not proficient in math.

Plus, **more than half** of Michigan's 3- and 4-year-olds **are not enrolled in preschool**, which is critical to building a strong foundation for learning. Students from families with lower incomes face additional barriers to reaching their potential.

## Recommendations

Provide sufficient funding for early interventions to improve third-grade reading using a birth-to-8 framework, including maternal and child health programs, *Early On*, and affordable, high-quality child care and education.

Ensure that all children from families with low and moderate incomes can receive a high-quality preschool education.

Address the state's Read by Grade Three law, which will allow for the retention of students reading below grade level in the upcoming school year by ensuring adequate funding and support for parents, schools and communities.

Adequately fund public schools, targeting resources in high-need areas and fully funding the At-Risk program.

# Data Collection

## Key Findings

Data collection by race and ethnicity is **inconsistent with federal standards** in several state systems, especially in the justice system. Juvenile justice data collection statewide is also inadequate and requires investment to create a streamlined system that is supported at the state and local levels.

## Recommendations

To make informed policy decisions and increase transparency, robust data must be collected and publicly disseminated, including data by race and ethnicity.