

TURNING CURVES, ACHIEVING RESULTS

A Report of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's

Children and Family Fellowship

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Children and Family Fellowship Program has two functions: to develop leadership dedicated to serving vulnerable populations, and to create a cohort of like-minded people who cross-fertilize and build an ever-widening array of successful programs. We call that cohort *The Network*.

In its incubation period, the Network provided a vehicle for continued leadership development among the individual members. Ten years later, we are beginning to see the impact of the group as a whole. In short, we are 75 Fellows in leadership positions across 25 states. Collectively, we are responsible for almost \$6.5 billion, impacting over 10 million children and their families all across the country. We appear in virtually every sector of the field in pivotal positions. Each of us employs a rigorous approach to outcomes for vulnerable children and families. We give our undivided attention to measurable success over time. And we all take each other's phone calls. Every time.

There are vignettes of five Fellows included here; they are pieces of our larger story. A single anecdote represents the influence of a larger set of Fellows, each of whom can share an equally rich account of their work. We offer these stories as a window into our cumulative impact.

Our country is overwhelmed with trends that are moving in the wrong direction: foreclosure rates are up, federal funding for critical programs is down, racial disparities persist in every state across every public program, the digital divide is widening, and children go to bed hungry while we discard excess food. Meanwhile, two years after the worst natural disaster in the history of our country, families in New Orleans are still living in FEMA trailers.

Given that context, we offer verifiable reason to hope. The Network provides evidence that, despite these impossible odds, we can execute programs that have extraordinary impact at unprecedented scale. Together, we can beat back the forces that divide our country and leave too many children and families with opportunity out of reach.

With this evidence in hand, we hope that an increasing number of leaders in the field will begin to ask each other the most important question facing us now: if we can name both the problem and potential solutions, then *why are we waiting?*

Molly McGrath
Annie E. Casey Foundation Fellow
Network Chair, 2005–2007

GETTING RESULTS THAT MATTER

The Annie E. Casey Foundation and its Children and Family Fellowship are committed to developing leaders capable of creating better futures for disadvantaged children and families. The Fellowship is an intensive 18-month leadership development program that gives accomplished human services and community development professionals an opportunity to build their skills, vision, and professional networks. After completing the program, Fellows return to the field with a wealth of knowledge and inspiration, ready and able to make a major difference in the lives of children and families. They maintain connections with the Foundation and their colleagues through the Network, which provides professional and technical support to alumni Fellows as they work to achieve positive results for the most vulnerable communities.

Achieving measurable results for children and families is a major component of the Casey Foundation's strategic vision, and therefore a central focus of the Children and Family Fellowship. Data are a critical tool for change. Reliable data can serve as an argument in support of change, as well as proof that reform efforts are achieving desired results. During the Fellowship, Fellows learn important skills in this area, receiving extensive training in results-based accountability (RBA), a system of measuring the impact of collaborative efforts to increase the well-being of children, families, and communities. The RBA framework helps leaders and organizations not only plan reforms, but also choose realistic, reachable goals, implement effective strategies, and identify clear benchmarks by which to measure success. The clear data generated by measuring indicators can help these leaders and groups leverage support within communities and local government for their efforts. The fundamentals of the RBA system include:

- Identifying a **Result**, which is a desired outcome or goal stated plainly and clearly, such as “Children Ready for School.”
- Choosing an **Indicator**, a measure that represents progress on the result. For example, third-grade reading scores can help determine whether children were ready for school when they entered kindergarten.
- Outlining a **Strategy**, a collection of actions that has a well-reasoned chance of achieving the desired result.

Organizations that make significant progress on their desired result are “turning the curve,” improving quality of life and outcomes for children and their families. With support from the Fellowship Network, Fellows take their knowledge of RBA back to the field, using this expertise to help social-service organizations, nonprofits, businesses, faith organizations, and community groups achieve meaningful, measurable improvements in the lives of children and families.

This report uses the lens of RBA to examine how Fellows are helping the human services sector turn a variety of curves. The results presented here clearly show that Children and Family Fellows are helping agencies, nonprofits, and other organizations achieve dramatic, measurable results that have a direct impact on the quality of life for vulnerable children and families.

FOCUSING ON RESULTS

Now encompassing seven classes of Fellows, the Fellowship Network is 75 strong, with an ever-increasing impact on the field in 25 states. Fellowship alumni are active in a variety of leadership positions that have a direct impact on the well-being of children and families. Nearly one-quarter of the Fellows direct nonprofits or foundations that serve children and families, and more than 15 percent run big-city or state social services agencies. Others head public policy institutes, manage departments of health, or serve as consultants to nonprofits and agencies that work with children and families. Here are some of the exciting results Fellows are achieving¹:

- Fellows are closing the achievement gap in primary education, with 15 percent working on that result in California, Connecticut, Washington DC, Illinois, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Texas.
- Fellows are increasing the rates of safety, permanency, and well-being among children in foster care, with 20 percent working on that result in California, Washington DC, Georgia, Missouri, North Dakota, New Jersey, New York, Virginia, and Vermont.
- Fellows are improving outcomes for youth embroiled in juvenile justice systems, with 9 percent of Fellows working on that result in California, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Texas.

Other Fellows are achieving measurable results in other important areas, such as helping more children gain access to quality health care; reducing the number of young people involved with drugs; and making acceptable, affordable housing available to more low-income families.

MEASURING IMPACT

Casey Fellows hold positions that allow them to have a major impact on the lives of children and families. According to a recent survey of Fellowship alumni, Fellows leading public agencies are managing budgets as large as \$2 billion, with the support of hundreds of staff members. A few examples of Fellows running big-city or state social services agencies include:

- **Jane Tewksbury (1993)**. As Commissioner of Youth Services for the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, Tewksbury manages a budget of \$158 million and is responsible for 2,200 youth committed to the Department.
- **Anne Williams-Isom (2007)**. As Deputy Commissioner for Community and Government, Administration for Children's Services, New York, NY, Williams-Isom manages a staff of 50, a budget of \$2.1 billion, and is responsible for 17,000 children in foster care, 28,000 in prevention, and 50,000 in child care and Head Start.
- **Ken Patterson (1995)**. Director of the Stanislaus County Community Services Agency, Patterson oversees 930 staff, with a budget of \$244 million, and serves 120,000 agency customers.

¹Data are derived from a 2007 survey of current and former Fellows. Data are self-reported and have not been independently verified. Response rate was 53 percent.

Numerous Fellows are reaching children and families through leadership in the nonprofit sector. All affect a large number of children and families no matter the size of their staff or budget. Several examples of Fellows in critical positions include:

- **Sandra Barnhill (1997)**. Barnhill is executive director, CEO, and founder of Aid to Children of Imprisoned Mothers, Inc. With a staff of eight and a budget of \$500,000, she provides academic support and social development programs for 30,000 children with incarcerated parents in the state of Georgia.
- **Theresa Mayberry (2001)**. Mayberry is president and CEO of Grace Hill Settlement House. Grace Hill provides neighborhood organization and health services throughout the city of St. Louis, reaching over 25,000 low-income residents and children. She oversees a staff of 175 and a budget that exceeds \$14.2 million.
- **Daniel Cardinali (2007)**. Cardinali is president of Communities in Schools, Inc., a national nonprofit that helps kids stay in school by connecting them with community resources. With a budget of \$19 million, he oversees 200 state and local affiliates in 28 states, which serve 1.2 million at-risk students in kindergarten through high school.

Other Fellows are leaders within foundations and public/private partnerships, or lend their expertise to a wide variety of nonprofits and agencies through consulting businesses. Whatever their career path, all Fellows are working to improve the quality of life for low-income children and families throughout the United States.

To provide a better sense of how Fellows are affecting the lives of children and families, we have compiled snapshots of five Fellows' work. They are:

- **Craig Levine (2000)**, Senior Counsel and Policy Director, The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
- **Molly McGrath (2001)**, then Deputy Director, The Chicago Department of Human Services
- **Brenda Donald (1995)**, then Director, Washington, DC's Child and Family Services Agency
- **Dennis Campa (1997)**, Director of Community Initiatives, City of San Antonio
- **Yolie Flores Aguilar (1993)**, Chief Executive Officer, Los Angeles Children's Planning Council

These Fellows' stories are representative of the efforts of all Casey Fellowship alumni. Like their peers, they are helping organizations and government agencies turn curves in their communities, and achieving superior results for the at-risk children and families they serve.

TURNING CURVES, ACHIEVING RESULTS:

Five Fellows' Stories

RESULT: JUVENILE DETENTION POPULATION REDUCED IN NEW JERSEY

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“AN EFFECTIVE INTERMEDIARY IS INSIDE ENOUGH TO BE TRUSTED, KNOWLEDGEABLE ENOUGH TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY, AND INDEPENDENT ENOUGH TO POSE HARD QUESTIONS.”

According to the Center for Policy Alternatives, an average of 27,000 young people languish in juvenile pretrial detention centers every day in the United States—yet 70 percent of these offenders are nonviolent and pose no risk to the community. And even a short stint in detention increases the likelihood of problems in adolescence and adulthood. To reduce the inappropriate detention of young people, while protecting public safety and saving dollars, the Casey Foundation developed the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI).

ONE FELLOW'S SUCCESS

Between 2004 and 2006, **Craig Levine (2000)**, senior counsel and policy director at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (www.njisj.org), worked with Essex County, New Jersey, to implement JDAI and reduce the number of youth in Essex's juvenile detention center. To evaluate progress, Essex County tracks the number of youth in the detention center compared with a pre-JDAI average daily population of 244 youth in 2003. They also measure the mean and median length of juveniles' stays in the facility.

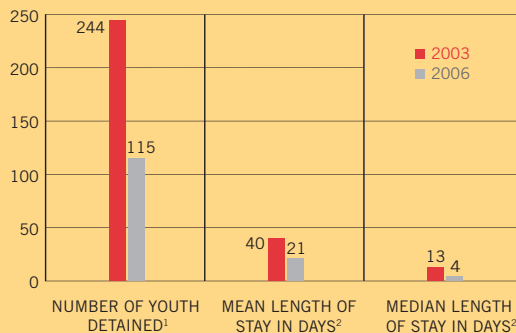
Collaborating closely with a broad-based steering committee, for which he served as facilitator, and with technical help from the Casey Foundation, Levine helped Essex County define and develop three pivotal strategies to meet its goal, including:

- Increasing the range of alternatives to detention
- Developing technologies to match youth with appropriate alternatives to detention
- Expediting juvenile case processing to minimize stays for youth requiring detention

The chart below illustrates these strategies' effectiveness. Essex County achieved a remarkable reduction of 53 percent in the number of youth detained, as well as 48 and 69 percent reductions in the mean and median length of stay, respectively. This success highlights the value of implementing a results-based plan of action, underpinned by a proven reform initiative, reliable data, and the efforts of skilled and committed reform partners.

PROGRESS BY THE NUMBERS

NUMBER OF YOUTH AND LENGTH OF STAY IN ESSEX COUNTY, NJ, DETENTION CENTER



¹Average daily population during the calendar year.

²Of youth released during the calendar year.

Too often, when cities decide to demolish or upgrade public housing, current residents find themselves facing the specter of homelessness as the pool of available, affordable housing shrinks. In Chicago, the Housing Authority's 10-year Plan for Transformation—the largest reconstruction of public housing in U.S. history—aims to improve both its dilapidated housing units and the lives of the 25,000 families who inhabit them. The Plan guarantees the *Right to Return* to all current public housing residents who qualify under new lease regulations.

ONE FELLOW'S SUCCESS

When **Molly McGrath (2001)** joined the Chicago Department of Human Services (CDHS) as deputy commissioner in 2003, she realized that the biggest obstacle to helping families move into newly refurbished public housing was the challenge of meeting new lease regulations requiring employment. When the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation began in 1999, over half of the housing authority's residents had no work history and read below a fifth-grade level.

In response, McGrath helped CDHS and the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) implement a major effort to provide residents with the social services they needed to obtain and keep employment. A key component of this strategy was applying a results-based accountability (RBA) framework to CHA's work. This change caused an important shift in the program. All efforts became dedicated to only those activities that would have the highest impact on the overall goal of the Plan, namely that the maximum number of residents retain their public housing. Staff received training in RBA, and CHA began tracking not only service utilization but also tenants' outcomes. These included job placements, employment rates, household income, and housing occupancy rates. To ensure a tenant-centered focus among the numerous contractors working for the housing authority, McGrath instituted a performance-based procurement process. This new approach awarded city contracts based on tenant outcomes rather than on services provided.

Due to this results-based, client-focused approach, tenants of public housing in Chicago are measurably better off. Upon implementation of these strategies, job placements for tenants began to rise, as did employment rates. These gains took place at a time when Illinois's unemployment rate was rising among the general population. In addition, data show that working residents of Chicago's public housing are earning more money, and more and more residents are obtaining and remaining in new public housing.

PROGRESS BY THE NUMBERS

Job Placements: 8,000 job placements. A 48% increase in the number of placements between 2005 and 2006 alone.

Employment Rate: 25% employed in 1999 to 39% employed in 2006 (a 56% increase).

Income: A 39% increase in income from work.

Occupancy: In 2005, new public housing units at 98% occupancy (indicating families meet new lease requirements).



“IN THE END, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE MAY HAVE TRANSFORMED IS THE BEHAVIOR OF PUBLIC SYSTEMS. IF WE CAN DEDICATE OURSELVES TO BEING BOTH RESULTS-DRIVEN AND CLIENT-CENTERED, A DRAMATIC REDUCTION IN POVERTY IS EMINENTLY DOABLE.”



“PERMANENCY PLANNING STARTS THE DAY A CHILD COMES INTO FOSTER CARE. WORKERS MAKE DECISIONS THAT CAN PUT A CHILD ON A PATH TOWARD PERMANENCY OR KEEP HIM STUCK IN FOSTER CARE. WHEN WORKERS UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF THESE DECISIONS, THEY WILL BE MUCH MORE FOCUSED ON PERMANENCY FROM DAY ONE.”

One of the primary goals of child welfare services is to find appropriate, permanent placements for children in foster care, whether through reunification with their birth families, placement with relatives, or through guardianship or adoption. Despite this, thousands of children continue to grow up in foster care as overburdened child welfare agencies are unable to find permanent solutions for their vulnerable clients. In some states and localities, these agencies and their failings become the focus of negative public and media attention. In the 1990s, Washington, DC's Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) was placed into federal receivership for its systemic failures.

ONE FELLOW'S SUCCESS

Brenda Donald (1995) became CFSA's chief of staff in 2001 as the agency emerged from receivership and entered a period of extensive court-ordered reform. She subsequently became the agency's director in 2004. Under Donald's leadership, CFSA incorporated permanency for foster children into its core mission and included it as a focus of staff training. Increased staffing levels and drastically reduced caseloads allowed social workers to increase visits to client families, thereby gaining a better understanding of each unique family situation.

Using workers' increased knowledge of client families and children, the agency began aggressively seeking possible options for permanency. In 2004, CFSA initiated family team meetings (FTMs) for all children coming into foster care. These meetings led to more successful reunifications and more guardianships. The agency also restructured its criteria for matching children with adoptive families and established a post-permanency support program. In addition, CFSA worked through community-based collaboratives to provide support services for kinship and foster families, as well as families attempting reunification.

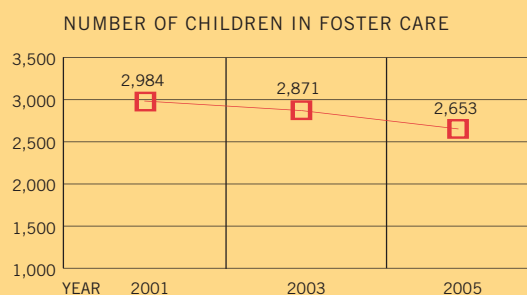
These reforms have allowed CFSA to make progress on most permanency measures for children in foster care. More and more children are leaving the system due to reunification, adoption, or permanent legal guardianship.

PROGRESS BY THE NUMBERS

Increased Adoptions: From 315 in 2003 to 404 in 2004.

More Reunifications: From 330 in 2003 to 446 in 2005.

Shorter Stays: Children staying 2 years or more reduced from 66% in 2004 to 61% in 2005.





“COLLABORATION IS ESSENTIAL TO IMPROVING RESULTS. EVERYONE NEEDS EVERYONE ELSE TO BE SUCCESSFUL.”

Although most Americans have heard of food stamps, millions of eligible families fail to apply. Barriers to participation include excessive, confusing paperwork; burdensome documentation; the requirement to apply in person during regular business hours; and fear of stigma. Families in San Antonio, Texas, are no exception: in 2003, only a little more than half of eligible families in Bexar County received food stamp benefits.

ONE FELLOW’S SUCCESS

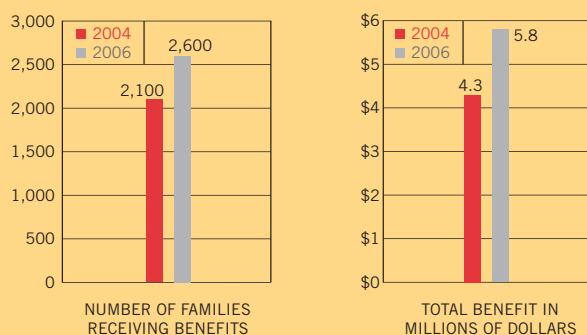
Committed to ensuring family economic success, the City of San Antonio, through the Casey Foundation’s Leadership in Action Program, formed a community collaborative in 2004 to improve residents’ food security. The collaborative included representatives from approximately 20 local stakeholders, including state and city government, nonprofit groups, and community organizations. Led by **Dennis Campa (1997)**, director of Community Initiatives for the City of San Antonio, the collaborative spent 18 months analyzing data and crafting strategies to boost the number of low-income families applying for and receiving food stamps.

Ultimately, Campa and the collaborative chose to direct most of the program’s funds to a local food bank, which received a contract from the city to help residents complete their food stamp applications. The collaborative also encouraged other local agencies to promote the program. In addition, Campa met with the USDA and the state agency handling the food stamp program to seek a matching funds agreement. The city agreed to provide \$145,000 for food stamp outreach, and the USDA matched it with a similar amount.

The results of San Antonio’s food stamp outreach were impressive, illustrating the effectiveness of community collaboration. In three years, the participation rate among eligible families rose from 56 percent to 72 percent, and the number of families receiving benefits rose by nearly 25 percent. In 2007, the federal government again matched the city’s program budget dollar for dollar, doubling San Antonio’s \$145,000 investment in food security for its needy residents.

PROGRESS BY THE NUMBERS

FOOD STAMP BENEFITS INCREASING





“IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN REQUIRES INTENTIONAL COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP AS WELL AS BUILDING AND MAINTAINING ENDURING, TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS.”

“It takes a village to raise a child,” says the famous African proverb. In the case of a large, multiethnic county like Los Angeles, it takes significant collaboration among government, nonprofits, and communities to ensure the well-being of the county’s children and youth.

ONE FELLOW’S SUCCESS

Since 2000, **Yolie Flores Aguilar (1993)** has served as chief executive officer of the Los Angeles Children’s Planning Council (CPC), a public/private collaborative organization that brings key stakeholders together to work on issues pertaining to children and families in Los Angeles County.

The CPC focuses particularly on encouraging improvement on five key indicators of childhood well-being: good health; safety and survival; economic well-being; social and emotional well-being; and education/workforce readiness. Key strategies include:

- **The Children’s ScoreCard:** This biennial report collects a wide range of data measuring progress on the five key indicators. CPC’s partners, including government agencies, nonprofits, and community groups, use this information to make decisions about policies and programs.
- **The Service Planning Areas (SPA):** In 1997, CPC created eight regional SPA councils, plus an American Indian Children’s (AIC) council, to guide local work on children’s issues. These SPA/AIC councils represent and are linked to community-based organizations, neighborhood groups, schools, and county and city government agencies. An important vehicle for community engagement, the councils focus on strengthening the capacity of parents, residents, and youth to become strong advocates for children and families.
- **Funding and Mini-grants:** The CPC encourages community engagement by providing resources to assist local citizens in improving their communities. These resources include funding for community organizers, technical assistance, and meeting facilitation, as well as mini-grants for neighborhood action plans.

CPC’s efforts are having a measurable impact on the indicators of children’s well-being in the Los Angeles area, as shown by data from the 2006 Children’s ScoreCard:

PROGRESS BY THE NUMBERS

Good Health: Children with health insurance increased from 81% in 1997 to 92% in 2005.

Safety & Survival: Violent crime incidents dropped by 41% over a 15-year period.

Social & Emotional Well-Being: Children in foster care decreased by 28% between 2000 and 2004.

Education/Workforce Readiness: Fully credentialed teachers increased by 19% between 2000 and 2004.

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The primary mission of the Annie E. Casey Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.

ABOUT THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY FELLOWSHIP

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Children and Family Fellowship is an 18-month leadership development program for experienced human services and community development professionals. Fellows are drawn from a talented pool of highly qualified, experienced leaders who are already making a difference in the lives of disadvantaged children and families. They have a record of career advancement, and a strong desire to maximize their leadership potential. The Fellowship program, designed to be a challenging, life-changing experience, develops strong, visionary leaders who can improve outcomes for children, youth, and families from positions of leadership in the public, nonprofit, and even for-profit sectors.

Upon completion of the program, Fellows join the ever-growing Casey Fellows Alumni Network. The Network provides opportunities for professional collaboration and supports Fellow-to-Fellow relationships that maximize the impact of the Fellowship experience. The Network meets semiannually and conducts ongoing professional development activities. It also provides resources to support Fellows, including grants and technical assistance resources. By continually investing in Fellowship Alumni, the Casey Foundation positions its Fellows to lead their organizations in major systems reform and develop community capacity-building initiatives, whether in child welfare, juvenile justice, housing, education, or other areas critical to the well-being of vulnerable families.

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