



## **Children, Youth and Families Working Group Public Policy Position Statement**

Revised September 27, 2007

### General Policy Positions

The Washington Grantmakers' Children Youth and Families Working Group (CYF) includes approximately 30 funders working together to improve the quality of life and well-being of the region's low-income children, youth and families. The group takes the following positions:

- Eliminating poverty should be a priority for both the public and private sectors.
- The principles of positive youth development should be applied to every public and private youth and family-serving agency.
- All children, youth and families are entitled to participate in high-quality programs and services.
- All youth should receive the services and support they need to successfully transition to adulthood.

### Priorities

CYF works to identify a common agenda with public officials that advance the goal of moving children and their families out of poverty. This includes proposed key cabinet and policy staff appointments, new initiatives, budget and policy recommendations. It also includes working with public and private stakeholders to implement and monitor its overall youth development plan.

Currently, CYF is committed to learning about and promoting issues through two task forces:

#### *The Older Youth Task Force*

Focusing on youth ages 13-21 years in areas of juvenile justice, foster care, disconnected youth and youth employment. Policy work includes:

- supporting the juvenile justice reforms being implemented by the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitative Service (DYRS) including implementing a new education program, overhaul of the Oak Hill Juvenile Detention Center and Youth Services Center, increasing the quantity and quality of community-based services and implementing a positive youth development frame to all DYRS's responsibilities and activities;
- supporting policies and services affecting youth who are aging out of the foster care system including the development of a youth transition center in DC;
- working with DC agencies to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for re-connecting disconnected youth; and
- increasing local government spending for both summer and year-round youth employment programs, as well as supporting the DC Department of Employment Services and Youth Investment Council's efforts to overhaul the youth employment program.

### The Out of School Time Task Force

Focusing on high quality before and after school programs, weekend and summer programs and child nutrition. Policy work includes:

- working with the DC Mayor and DCPS Chancellor to ensure that out-of-school time programs are a priority in all school reform efforts;
- ensuring continued government support for the long-term implementation of the DC Youth Investment Trust Corporation's initiative, Project My Time, funded with dollars from the Wallace Foundation to build an out-of-school-time system in the city beginning with middle schools;
- working with the DC Mayor and other policymakers to develop a meaningful, comprehensive out-of-school time plan for all city agencies;
- working with DC to adopt quality standards for out-of-school time programs;
- monitoring progress of DC-based organizations expanding to other jurisdictions in region;
- increasing DC government dollars for out-of-school time programs; and
- monitoring child nutrition policies and advocating for policies to expand number of children and youth who have access to three healthy meals.

### Underlying Principles

Strategic public sector investment is critical to providing opportunities for poor children and parents to break the cycle of poverty. Private investment, including philanthropic dollars, cannot match the amount available from the public sector. But in partnership, the public, private and nonprofit sectors can leverage each others resources to provide real pathways out of poverty.

A key strategy is for CYF to forge close working relationships with policymakers so that funders can inform the decision-making process of government and policymakers can have a better understanding of how to effectively partner with the philanthropic sector to fund programs and solve problems. Another important strategy is to ensure that our grantee partners have a "seat at the table" when critical policies are being considered and to support them in their efforts when appropriate.

### Background

CYF is working with a particular emphasis in the District which has the highest child poverty rates. A special focus is on families living in Wards 7 and 8. For the last two years, the number of poor families in the District has increased. This year's Census found that it rose to 19.8%, an increase of 17,000 poor residents in 2 years. A family of four is considered poor if its annual income is less than about \$20,800. According to the 2007 Kids Count data, 32% of the District's children are living in poverty. Approximately 2 in 3 children in DC are living in single-parent households. The majority of all children and youth in the city live in Wards 7 and 8, east of the Anacostia River.

For more information, please contact Carolynn Mambu, Washington Grantmakers' Director of Public Policy at 202-939-3433 or [mambu@washingtongrantmakers.org](mailto:mambu@washingtongrantmakers.org).