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**Report shows critical investments needed  
for children from birth to age 8**  
*Funding for early childhood programs in Kansas uncertain*

TOPEKA — The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s latest policy report, “The First Eight Years: Giving Kids a Foundation for Lifetime Success,” shows that kids who enter kindergarten with below-average language and cognition ability need supportive measures to develop their social, emotional and learning skills.

“In Kansas, investments in young children are at a critical juncture,” said Shannon Costoradis, president and CEO of Kansas Action for Children. “We know that next year our state will receive more than \$17 million from the tobacco arbitration agreement in addition to our annual tobacco settlement payment, and this report demonstrates why it’s so important for Kansas to dedicate that money to early childhood programs.”

The report details how a child’s development across critical areas of well-being is essential to make the transition into elementary school. According to newly released analysis of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten, which tracked 13,000 children who were in kindergarten in the 1998-99 school year, only 36 percent of children were on track in the cognitive knowledge and skills area by third grade.

The analysis also shows that as family income decreases, the percent of children on track also decreases. Just 19 percent of third-graders in families with income below 200 percent of the poverty level had developed age-appropriate cognitive skills. For higher-income families, 50 percent of children were on track. Children who don’t meet these key developmental milestones often struggle to catch up in school or graduate on time and have a harder time becoming economically stable adults.

The report asserts that for children to succeed, it is vital for classroom learning to be integrated with other aspects of child development. To prepare America’s children for success, the report sets forth three broad policy recommendations:

- **Support parents so they can effectively care and provide for their children.** States and the federal government should make it easier for parents to navigate the array of programs that can help families by aligning and streamlining services.



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- **Increase access to high-quality birth through age 8 programs, beginning with investments that target low-income children.** States should adopt Early Learning and Development Standards that set clear expectations for child development. States must also ensure access to affordable and comprehensive health care with screenings that can catch disabilities or developmental delays in youth children.
- **Develop comprehensive, integrated programs and data systems to address all aspects of a child’s development and support their transition to elementary school.** States should use consistent measures of child development that provide broad assessments of well-being, including progress across key aspects of development.

“The First Eight Years: Giving Kids a Foundation for Lifetime Success” includes data on children from birth to age 8 for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. The full report is available at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private national philanthropy that creates better futures for the nation’s children by strengthening families, building economic opportunities and transforming neighborhoods into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow.

For more than 30 years, Kansas Action for Children has been shaping policy that puts children first. Visit [www.kac.org](http://www.kac.org) to learn more.