

# Parenting: Facts, Baltimore City Issues, Options for Advocacy



Prepared by the Grantee Assistance and  
Public Policy Committee

## FACTS

- 90% of brain growth occurs between the ages of 0 and 5.
- Parents and caregivers are first teachers. Parents' use of language in the first years of their children's lives accounts for almost two-thirds of the variance in verbal test scores when children are 9 to 10 years old.
- Maternal depression, particularly among poor women without strong support networks and with other health/substance abuse problems, causes mothers to have trouble giving their infants the consistent, loving interaction they need to thrive.
- In comparison to a randomly assigned control group, Early Head Start children show significantly better development, and their parents (fathers as well as mothers) are more likely to pursue healthy parenting strategies, read to their children more, avoid subsequent births, and be moving toward self-sufficiency. Families that were enrolled in the program during pregnancy have the strongest results. Both home- and center-based services are beneficial, and the combination is especially powerful.
- Inadequate preschool opportunities and experiences are correlated strongly with high rates of illiteracy, school dropout, crime (both juvenile and later, adult), and welfare dependency; greater need for remedial and special education; and loss of workforce productivity by parents, all at significant human and public cost.

## BALTIMORE CITY ISSUES

- Far fewer Baltimore low-income children are served by Head Start and Early Head Start than are eligible. Programs for 0-3 year-olds are in especially short supply.
- 27% of Baltimore City children entered kindergarten in 2004 ready to learn (measured by physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language development, cognition, and general knowledge).
- >50% of Baltimore City adults are functionally illiterate or have significant literacy needs; state and federal adult literacy funds have been cut severely in the past several years.
- There were 13.6 reports of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 persons 0-17 in Baltimore City in 2003 (statewide rate is 5.3).

## ADVOCACY OPTIONS

- Ask any candidate running for office who seeks your contribution what he or she has done or plans to do to support early childhood development.
- The Baltimore Leadership in Action Program (B-LAP) has developed a comprehensive 5-year plan for improving Baltimore City children's school readiness. Contact Lisa Kane, Annie E. Casey Foundation, lkane@aecf.org.
- Advocates for Children and Youth hosts the Maryland Children's Action Network (MD CAN). Their 2006 public policy agenda can be found at <http://www.acy.org/2006%20Public%20Policy%20Agenda.pdf>.
- MD CAN publishes a helpful guide to advocacy (whom to contact, how to contact, protocols, what to say, etc.) at [http://www.acy.org/web\\_data/Champions%20for%20Children%20PP%20Book%202.pdf](http://www.acy.org/web_data/Champions%20for%20Children%20PP%20Book%202.pdf)

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