The David & Lucile Packard Foundation

Children and Families Initiative

Initiative Overview

Families and communities are the building blocks of our society, and an investment in children is an investment in our collective future. We work to ensure that families have the support and resources they need to have healthy pregnancies and births and give their children a strong, healthy start in life.

The Challenge

When children are born healthy into families that can support their development, they are much more likely to grow up healthy and reach their full potential. That healthy start in life begins with healthy pregnancies and births.

But for many parents in the U.S.—even though they'd do anything for their children – a healthy start is frustratingly out of reach. We see this in the rates of maternal and infant mortality in our country— roughly twice what they are in other wealthy nations. It's also reflected in the personal experiences of so many families. Our grantees tell us that the families they serve feel frustrated and left behind by these systems, and anyone who has tried to find affordable child care or navigate a complex health issue can attest that the programs intended to help families can be disconnected, confusing, and difficult to navigate.

This crisis has unequal impacts; for example, in the U.S.:

- Black women are nearly three times more likely and Indigenous women two times more likely to die as a result of pregnancy compared with White women;

- Black and Indigenous babies have double the risk of infant mortality as do White babies;

- Latino children are two times more likely and Indigenous children three times more likely than White children to be uninsured, preventing many families from accessing essential care.

Building a future where all children and families can thrive means addressing these urgent and unequal outcomes and barriers to care.

That's why we support partners working to ensure that the health care, child care, and financial supports systems that serve moms, expectant parents, and families with young children are better connected, easier to access, and better equipped to meet the diverse needs of families.

All families deserve to have healthy pregnancies and healthy births – and all babies deserve the healthy, strong start in life that's essential for their development.

Our Strategy

We support grantees who are working to ensure the health care, financial and child care systems that support moms, families, and children are stronger, more connected, and better designed to meet the needs of all families.

When these systems work together to support families, it will lead to a decrease in disparities by race and improved maternal and child health outcomes for all families.

The Children and Families initiative works at three levels:

1 Community Level

We support community-based service providers and advocates who are intimately familiar with what moms, expectant parents, babies, and families need to thrive as they find innovative ways to meet these needs.

2 Systems Level

Systems are made up of the people who work within them. We invest in efforts to engage these people to strengthen and connect the health care, child care, and financial support systems from within so families can easily get the quality care and support they need.

3 Policy Level

We support advocates working at the state and federal level to champion policies designed to support families, expectant parents, and young children.

These three approaches are interconnected, and our strategy invests in all three levels to create enduring change for children and families.

Our Goal

The Children and Families initiative works to ensure that all moms and families can have healthy pregnancies and births, and all children can have a strong, healthy start in life. Recognizing that some communities face greater challenges to ensuring a healthy start, we focus on the communities with the greatest need…and equitably serves the public good.

LEARN MORE

For more information about the Packard Foundation's California Communities initiative, visit packard.org/initiative/child-and-family-initiative.