

# **Children's Interagency Coordinating Council FY 2023 Report to Congress**

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

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# I. Background and Introduction

## A. Child poverty and well-being in the United States

Child poverty in the United States remains a significant problem that carries enormous negative implications for the well-being children, their families, and our nation. Growing up in poverty has wide-ranging and long-term effects. A wealth of evidence points to the negative consequences of child poverty, including putting children at higher risk of experiencing behavioral, social, emotional, and health challenges. There are significant associations between child poverty and lower educational attainment, reduced economic prospects, impaired cognitive and emotional development, and a greater likelihood of risky behaviors, delinquency, and criminal behavior in adolescence and adulthood. The costs of child poverty to society are also immense, with estimates ranging from \$800 billion to just over \$1 trillion per year based on lost productivity, increased health care, and other expenditures.<sup>1</sup>

Children experience the highest official poverty rates of any age group in the U.S. In 2022, the most recent year for which we have data, the official child poverty rate, which is based on family cash income and direct cash assistance, was 15.0 percent, which means 10.78 million children were living in poverty in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> This overall child poverty rate masks significant demographic disparities. The 2022 official child poverty rate for American Indian and Alaska Natives is 37.1 percent, representing more than 1 in 3 children. For Hispanic children, the rate is 21.7 percent, and the rate for Black children is 22.3 percent, both representing more than 1 in 5 children. Non-Hispanic White children in the U.S. have a lower official poverty rate of 9.7 percent, or about 1 in 10 children.<sup>3</sup>

Many federal programs are designed in part to prevent poverty among children or help lift children out of poverty when their families face economic instability. Estimating poverty using the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM)<sup>4</sup> accounts for a broader range of federal assistance programs and resources such as tax credits. The Census Bureau estimates the impact on child poverty of individual elements included in the SPM calculation, and in 2022 the effect of the refundable Child Tax Credit alone was 1.4 million fewer children in poverty. This number was even higher in 2021, with 2.9 million children estimated to be

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<sup>1</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2019. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/25246/a-roadmap-to-reducing-child-poverty>.

<sup>2</sup> Shrider, Emily A., and John Creamer. "U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-280." In *Poverty in the United States: 2022, Table A-3. Poverty Status of People by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1959 to 2022*. U.S. Census Bureau, September 2023. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/income-poverty/p60-280.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Shrider and Creamer (2023). Poverty estimates for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) children are for AIAN alone, rather than AIAN in combination with another race category. Poverty estimates for Black children are for Black alone, rather than Black in combination with another race category. Poverty estimates for non-Hispanic White children are for non-Hispanic White alone, rather than in combination with another race category. Poverty estimates for Hispanic children are for Hispanic children of any race.

<sup>4</sup> The SPM differs from the official poverty measure by accounting for several government programs that are designed to assist low-income families but are not included in official poverty measure calculations. The SPM also accounts for geographic variation in housing expenses when calculating the poverty thresholds and includes federal and state taxes, work expenses, and medical expenses. For more information, see <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2022/09/difference-supplemental-and-official-poverty-measures.html>.

brought out of poverty by the refundable Child Tax Credit, largely the result of the major one-year expansion to the federal Child Tax Credit in the American Rescue Plan.<sup>5</sup>

Numerous federal agencies oversee the implementation of policies and programs designed to reduce child and family poverty and that have been shown to improve child well-being.<sup>6</sup> However, the persistence of child poverty and its far-reaching consequences underscore the pressing need for decision makers across agencies to collaborate in a coordinated effort to further improve well-being by reducing child poverty.

## **B. Creation of the Children’s Interagency Coordinating Council**

As part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, Congress provided funding for the Children’s Interagency Coordinating Council (CICC). On page 1957 of the Explanatory Statement that accompanies the legislation,<sup>7</sup> Congress instructed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as follows:

*“Children’s Interagency Coordinating Council.—The agreement includes \$3,000,000 for the Children’s Interagency Coordinating Council to foster greater coordination and transparency on child policy across agencies. The Council shall enter into agreement with NASEM [the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine] to prepare a report to Congress analyzing federal policies that have affected child poverty. The study should rely on the U.S. Census Bureau Supplemental Poverty Measure, among other sources of information. The Council will also examine and periodically report on a broad array of cross-cutting issues affecting child well-being.”* ▲

HHS’s Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), Office of Human Services Policy, is leading the effort to stand up the CICC. ASPE contracted with Mathematica and its partners, BLH Technologies and Child Trends, for assistance with activities related to establishing the CICC in fiscal year (FY) 2023. This report highlights FY 2023 activities to plan for and launch the CICC, including advocate engagement, gathering information from federal and nonfederal partners through key informant interviews, developing research projects, and planning a kickoff event for early FY 2024.

## **C. Expected initial CICC members**

After considering input from advocates and key informants, ASPE expects to establish the CICC with the following initial member agencies:

- Social Security Administration
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of Defense

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<sup>5</sup> Shrider, Emily A., and John Creamer. “U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-280.” In *Poverty in the United States: 2022, Table B-8. Effect of Individual Elements on the Number of Individuals in Poverty Using the Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2021 and 2022*. September 2023.

<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/income-poverty/p60-280.html>.

<sup>6</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2019. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/25246/a-roadmap-to-reducing-child-poverty>

<sup>7</sup> Available at <https://www.congress.gov/117/cprt/HPRT50348/CPRT-117HPRT50348.pdf>.

- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- U.S. Department of Justice
- U.S. Department of Labor
- U.S. Department of the Treasury

## II. Activities and Accomplishments for FY 2023

### A. Outreach and communication

Many of the FY 2023 CICC activities focused on outreach and communication with both federal and nonfederal partners, including advocates, other federal interagency groups, and key informants.

#### 1. Engagement with child-focused organizations

Child-focused organizations have been interested and invested in the CICC from the beginning. Led by First Focus on Children, a group of interested organizations sent several letters to HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra encouraging the establishment of the CICC. Between March and September 2023, ASPE met with First Focus on Children and other organizations that contacted ASPE regarding the CICC. During these meetings, the organizations provided information on their activities, their interests in the CICC, suggestions of important partners, and other general input related to the CICC. Organizations represented at those meetings were as follows:

- ChildFund International
- Children's Policy and Funding Initiative at Tides Center
- First Focus on Children
- Keep Kids Safe
- National Children's Alliance
- Pivot Advocacy
- Save the Children (U.S.)
- Strategy for Humanity
- Together for Girls
- UNICEF USA

#### 2. Coordination with other federal interagency groups

ASPE leads or participates in many ongoing interagency efforts that address issues related to the overall goals of the CICC, such as the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, the Council on Economic Mobility, the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Early

Childhood Federal Partners Interagency Work Group. We have also participated in the Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics in the past. (See Box 1 for more information on these groups.) ASPE is coordinating with federal agencies in a manner that complements these existing efforts, leverages their efforts where appropriate, and carves out a role for the CICC that is meaningful and useful to its member agencies. As an initial step, in FY 2023 ASPE shared information about the launch of the CICC with several of these existing interagency groups.

### **Box 1. Related federal interagency groups**

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#### **Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

- Established by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as amended.
- Independent organization in the executive branch formed to coordinate federal programs related to delinquency, unaccompanied juveniles, and missing and exploited children.
- Chaired by the U.S. Attorney General (Department of Justice).
- More information at [juvenilecouncil.ojp.gov](https://juvenilecouncil.ojp.gov)

#### **Early Childhood Federal Partners Interagency Work Group**

- Staff-level working group that serves as a forum for shared learning, shared action, and movement toward shared impact across early childhood programs and initiatives across the federal government.
- Convened by HHS's Administration for Children and Families, Office of Early Childhood Development.

#### **Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics**

- Founded in 1994 and formally established in 1997 under Executive Order No. 13045.
- Mission is to foster coordination and collaboration and to enhance and improve consistency in the collection and reporting of federal data on children and families. Also aims to improve the reporting and dissemination of information on the status of children and families.
- Convened by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.
- More information at [childstats.gov](https://childstats.gov)

#### **Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs**

- Responsibilities relative to youth programs were defined in Executive Order 13459, issued in 2008.
- Seeks to promote positive outcomes for all youth through:
  - Promoting enhanced collaboration at the federal, state, and local levels in order to leverage existing resources and improve outcomes
  - Disseminating information about evidence-based strategies for youth
  - Producing a federal website on youth, [youth.gov](https://youth.gov)
- Chaired by HHS/ASPE.
- More information at [youth.gov/about-us](https://youth.gov/about-us)

#### **U.S. Interagency Council on Economic Mobility**

- Established in 2019.
  - Provides an interagency structure for coordination on crosscutting issues related to economic mobility.
  - Coordinated by HHS/ASPE.
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### **3. Key informant interviews**

To inform the focus of the CICC, ASPE sought to gather input from subject matter experts at federal agencies and outside government through key informant interviews. Between May and August 2023, Mathematica conducted 21 one-hour semi-structured interviews with 48 federal and nonfederal key

informants. (See Box 2 for the list of federal agencies and Box 3 for the list of nonfederal organizations.) Two semi-structured discussion guides were used, one for federal informants and one for nonfederal informants. ASPE staff conducted three additional one-hour interviews with federal informants in August and September 2023 using the same federal discussion guide. Interviews included both small-group and individual interviews.

ASPE selected key informants who work on federal programs and policies related to child poverty and well-being. The interviews included federal leaders and program-level career staff, nonfederal key informants from foundations, advocates, consultants, and nonfederal researchers.

Overall, federal and nonfederal informants believed that the CICC could act as a powerful convener to bring together representatives from federal and nonfederal agencies, state and local governments, research institutions, nongovernmental organizations, practitioners, and the public to collaborate on the design and implementation of cross-sector child well-being initiatives. Informants also generally thought that the CICC could improve child service systems by creating clear objectives and promoting action-oriented collaborations.

## Box 2. Federal agencies represented in FY 23 key informant interviews

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Executive Office of the President</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Office of Management and Budget</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>U.S. Agency for International Development</b></li> <li>• <b>U.S. Department of Agriculture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Food and Nutrition Service</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>U.S. Department of Commerce</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– U.S. Census Bureau</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>U.S. Department of Defense</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Youth Outreach Programs/Military Family Readiness Policy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>U.S. Department of Education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Office of Elementary and Secondary Education</li> <li>– Office of Special Education Programs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Administration for Children and Families</li> <li>– Centers for Medicare &amp; Medicaid Services</li> <li>– Health Resources and Services Administration</li> <li>– Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Office of Policy Development and Research</li> <li>– Office of Public and Indian Housing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>U.S. Department of Justice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>U.S. Department of Labor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Employment and Training Administration</li> <li>– Office of Disability Employment Policy</li> <li>– Women’s Bureau</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>U.S. Department of the Treasury</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Office of Tax Policy</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
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### Box 3. Nonfederal partners represented in FY 23 key informant interviews

American Enterprise Institute	National Conference of State Legislatures
Aspen Institute	Niskanen Center
Children’s Services Council of Broward County (FL)	SchoolHouse Connection
The Duke Endowment	Zero to Three
Family Justice Group	

## B. Research related to child poverty and well-being

As part of establishing the CICC, ASPE is supporting research, data analysis, and reporting on federal policies impacting child poverty.

### 1. NASEM expert panel and recommendations

In FY 2023, ASPE executed a sole-source contract with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) to study the impacts of federal policy on child poverty, as directed by Congress.

NASEM will convene scholars for a consensus committee to consider evidence from members of the public and people with lived experience as well as family economic data to assess the following:

- Impacts of the federal Child Tax Credit and the earned income tax credit (EITC) in 2021 on the level of poverty for all U.S. children and the level of poverty for specific populations of children, including children in different racial and ethnic groups and other populations of interest, such as children in urban and rural areas and children in immigrant families
- How the implementation of the CTC in 2021 facilitated or reduced program access and therefore its effectiveness for reducing poverty
- Which changes to the tax rules and requirements and the procedures for administering the CTC and EITC, if adopted, would further reduce the number of U.S. children in poverty

NASEM expects to complete the study in March 2025.

### 2. Additional research

In FY 2023, ASPE developed several additional research projects to inform and support the overarching CICC goals. These projects will examine cross-cutting child poverty and well-being issues, including exploring policy changes that reduce effective marginal tax rates while increasing total household resources, participation trends for children’s safety net programs, strengthening the effectiveness of child support for families with low incomes, and strategies to support well-being across federal programs.

## III. CICC Kickoff Event

ASPE held a kickoff event for the CICC in early FY 2024, on November 15, 2023, at HHS headquarters in the District of Columbia. The event was also livestreamed for invitees not in the area; the recording is available at <https://youtu.be/fCnA1LQAQQk>.



The kickoff event began with opening remarks framing the challenge of child poverty based on the evidence, followed by a presentation on NASEM's [A Roadmap to Reduce Child Poverty](#) (2019), which noted that there are many evidence-based child poverty reduction approaches. The first panel featured a variety of nonfederal perspectives, including researchers, a practitioner, a family advocate, and a state administrator. This panel highlighted the importance of engaging families with lived experience in efforts to address child poverty and improve well-being. Panelists also noted the importance of involving fathers, providing direct economic supports for families, and including asset building. A second panel focused on federal efforts related to child poverty and well-being, highlighting efforts led by the Departments of Agriculture, Labor, and the Treasury, as well as HHS. Finally, Congresswoman Barbara Lee gave the keynote, charging attendees to "celebrate the progress that we've made and recommit ourselves to fighting for our nation's children."

## IV. Conclusion

As described in this report, ASPE has conducted many activities in FY 2023 to prepare for the launch of the new federal CICC. In FY 2024, we expect to continue to engage federal agencies to further develop the CICC's priorities, structure our work together, and begin to execute coordination work. Finally, we look forward to sharing the NASEM report after it is completed in 2025.