



Rebalancing: Children First

A Consensus Report of the

AEI BROOKINGS

Working Group on Childhood in the US

The working group agrees that public investment, adequate family income that is based in part on parental employment, and loving relationships in safe and nurturing environments are all critical to ensuring that children have what they need to prosper. One area of resounding agreement among this diverse group is the need to rebalance national investments toward children.

The working group focused its attention on children ages 12 and younger. Across critical domains—household resources, family structure and stability, early development, health, education, and the teenage years—the report presents key facts about the state of childhood in the United States, assembles evidence on policy effectiveness, and establishes a set of priorities for progress. Find the full report [here](#).

Rebalancing the Federal Budget toward Children

The working group supports substantially increasing public investment in children in the context of budget neutrality—in other words, rebalancing existing resources toward children. Increased spending on children should be financed by offsetting new spending with cuts to entitlement programs that benefit upper-middle-class and affluent seniors; so-called corporate welfare, including agriculture subsidies; subsidies to well-off households in the federal tax code; and increased tax enforcement.

Priorities for a Healthy American Childhood

The working group believes that stability—in resources and relationships—is the foundation for a healthy American childhood. The consensus report that builds on decades of peer-reviewed research to describe the condition of American childhood and finds many places of consensus for policy priorities, including:

The working group supports policies that provide a childhood in the US in which children are healthy, learning, and thriving. This includes access to high-quality and affordable health care and early childhood education.

The working group supports increasing resources available to low-income families with children to support healthy development, including making the Children Tax Credit available to households with no earnings and increasing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits by 20 percent for families with children ages 5 and younger.

The working group supports policies that lead to parental employment, better parenting, and a healthy relationship between parents. This includes helping people to be ready for parenthood before they start a family, policies to strengthen and encourage marriage, supporting parents in the acquisition of new skills that lead to better jobs, and increasing the value of the Earned Income Tax Credit.