

For future success, focus on Minnesota children's first 8 years

Written by John Michaelson, Minnesota News Connection
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In Minnesota, 1 in 3 children are in poverty or low-income

The first eight years of a child's life are the most critical in determining if the child will go on to success, and a [new report](#) says that's why investments are needed. According to Stephanie Hogenson, outreach specialist for the Children's Defense Fund Minnesota, the strategy must focus on all aspects of a child's well-being.

"And we know if we can invest early in all children to ensure that they are stable and have access to high-quality and preventive health care in the early years, they have better outcomes not only later in childhood but even into adulthood," she declared.

This week's report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that for third graders, nearly two in three are behind in terms of cognitive development. The figures for low-income and minority children are even worse.

Hogenson said another part of supporting children is using a two-generational approach, meaning also strengthening programs that help their parents.

She said that's "because parents are the most important adults in a child's life and the biggest contributor to their success. So we can help by improving access to existing income-support programs and also by expanding educational and job-training opportunities for parents."

In Minnesota, one-third of children, or more than 400,000 kids, live in poverty or in families considered low-income.

The Casey Foundation report, "The First Eight Years: Giving Kids a Foundation for Lifetime

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Success," is at www.bit.ly/1czHwzu .