Are We Keeping Our Commitment to Youth?

Outcomes for children and youth ages 8-25 in Illinois

August 2017

Stable
Safe
Healthy
Educated
Employable
Connected
The fiscal scan documents how the state invests in programs and services to help youth meet six developmental goals to become “Stable, Safe, Healthy, Educated, Employable and Connected,” and provides a baseline of funding that will allow advocates and policymakers to analyze investments over time.

This paper provides a demographic snapshot of Illinois children and youth, ages 8–25**, and analyzes their standing on each of the six developmental goals. Having a better understanding of the overall well-being of Illinois children and youth will inform advocates, policymakers, educators and the broader community about their specific needs, and will provide a platform to advocate for targeted investments in programs and strategies that will promote positive outcomes across all six developmental goals.

**Addressing the Unique Strengths of Illinois Youth**

All children and youth have hopes and dreams for their future, but not all children have the same resources or the tools they need to thrive. To achieve positive outcomes for youth, Illinois must build an integrated web of services and supports, so that all youth reach not just one or two developmental goals, but all six. Ensuring children and youth reach each of the six developmental goals provides a stronger foundation as they become parents, educators, workers and leaders. Success for Illinois also means that all youth—regardless of their race, where they live, their family structure, or whether they are rich or poor—should be able to grow up with the tools they need.

A young person’s gender, family income, immigration status, neighborhood and race are important factors that shape their life experiences, and determine what they need to be able to develop and grow.

These factors influence a youth’s overall well-being, how they are treated, affected by policy, and served by institutions. Because of these differences, investments and policies must be developed and designed with a better understanding of how to address the diverse needs of youth and build on their unique strengths.

---

* This report includes the most recent data available since the completion of *A Fiscal Scan of Illinois Public Investments in Children and Youth, Ages 8–25*.

** Very little publicly-reported data is available specifically for the age group 8–25. Depending on the data source and demographic or outcome being measured, the ages reported may include a broader range of children and youth, (e.g. children younger than 8) or a subset of youth within the ages 8–25.
Equity for Youth of Color

Although this report focuses on the need to lift up all youth in Illinois, state-level indicators mask inequities among different groups of youth. For example, recent trends show that Illinois is improving on indicators of child well-being, but a deeper look at data disaggregated by race or by income indicates that many youth of color are left behind.

A variety of indicators—including poverty rates, educational attainment, unemployment, rates of crime victimization, incarceration rates, and health outcomes for youth of color—demonstrate that Illinois continues to be a more challenging place to live for Black and Latino youth.

In order for Illinois to be the best place to grow up, the State must address and repair inequities in state and local policies that have created harsh conditions for youth of color and their families.

Higher levels of economic and racial segregation, in addition to growing income inequality, underfunded schools, and unfair and unequal treatment in the criminal justice system have led to lower economic mobility for children of color. In Illinois, Black children and youth, ages 6–17, are three and a half times more likely to live in poverty than White children. Latino youth are more than twice as likely to live in poverty, compared to White children. The official 2015 federal poverty threshold for a family of four was an annual income of $24,257. Growing up in poverty can affect a child's overall well-being and lead to poorer health, lower educational attainment, lack of access to stable employment; and lower overall financial stability over their lifetime.

Poverty impacts people of color at a higher rate due to a long history of discriminatory policies that have created and maintained disparities, including restrictive housing policies in Chicago dating back to 1916; redlining of the 1930s that denied loans to African Americans; predatory lending practices in both the mortgage and check cashing industries; and, current zoning laws which have disadvantaged Black and Latino families, effectively cutting them off from the economic mainstream.

These restrictive housing policies have contributed to inequities across generations of Black and Latino Illinoisans, and continue to harm youth across the state, making them more likely to live in poverty, reside in unsafe neighborhoods and attend under-resourced schools.

Furthermore, these policies have denied youth of color the benefits of inter-generational wealth that are more often afforded to White children in families that have gained access to homeownership, the accumulation of wealth and other investment assets.

Decades of criminal and juvenile justice policies and disciplinary practices in schools have also harmed people of color, especially young Black men. In many cases, youth of color face harsher sentences and a greater likelihood of arrest for similar offenses as their White peers. A criminal record, a prior arrest,
incarceration, or any mark on a young person’s criminal record—no matter how minor—has a lasting impact on a child’s future educational achievement, employment opportunities and economic stability throughout their life.

Creating opportunities for youth of color requires an intentional effort by policymakers, leaders, educators and community stakeholders to remove obstacles that hold far too many youth behind. Instead, we must provide them with access to programs that support and promote their well-being.

Current initiatives in Chicago and across Illinois are starting to take a closer look at how state and local agencies, community-based organizations, communities of faith and others can work together to solve persistent problems and create clearer pathways for youth to succeed.

But every state and local effort must promote race equity by providing the support, services, and resources based on the needs of individual youth. Focusing on equality is not enough when some children start off with so much less than others.

Because the data demonstrate that in most cases youth of color are not faring as well as their White peers, the State’s approach to developing programs and policies must address these differences. From ensuring school staff receives high-quality professional development regarding the needs of subgroup populations, to equipping schools and communities with resources to reach youth with the highest and most complex needs, policies should be designed and targeted to put youth on a path to succeed.

**Illinois Population:** 12.9 million

**Population Age 8-25:** 3.1 million

- **Age 8-17:** 1.7m
- **Age 18-25:** 1.4m

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates 2015*

**Illinois’ Changing Youth Demographics**

As Illinois’ younger generation becomes increasingly diverse, the success of the state depends on how well advocates, policymakers, community leaders and parents can work to address the needs and unique strengths of youth. Illinois youth represent one in four Illinoisans (24.2 percent), with an estimated 3,109,167 children and youth ages 8–25 in the state.

Of the more than 3.1 million children and youth ages 8–25, roughly 1.7 million fall between the ages of 8 and 17, and 1.4 million fall between the ages of 18 and 25.
The majority of Illinois children under 18 are White (52 percent), followed by 24 percent Hispanic or Latino, 15 percent Black or African American, 5 percent Asian and 3 percent multiracial. Over the past decade, the share of Latino youth has grown from one in five (20 percent) to nearly one in four youth in the state (24 percent), while the population of White and Black youth has declined. The population of Asian children and children of two or more races increased slightly over the past decade.

Three percent (92,000) of children in Illinois are foreign born, and more than one quarter (27 percent) or 786,000 children in Illinois live in immigrant families.

Roughly 87 percent of children between ages 3 and 17 who are in school are enrolled in public school.

Eleven percent of children under 18 have a primary caregiver other than their parent (for purposes of this report, “parent” includes biological, adopted, foster and step-parents).
Snapshot of Illinois Youth by Developmental Goal

The report, A Fiscal Scan of Illinois Public Investments in Children and Youth, Ages 8–25, identified six developmental goals youth need to reach in order to thrive: Stable, Safe, Healthy, Educated, Employable and Connected. The following overview indicates how Illinois youth currently fare in these key areas.
Factors such as a child’s race, where they live, family structure (one versus two-parent family) and level of income often influence whether a child or youth lives in a stable environment. While a majority of children and youth in Illinois are financially secure, far too many live in poverty, which can create stress and instability due to a lack of resources and supports, including lack of sufficient food, lack of access to health care and poor housing conditions.

Decades of research shows that poverty harms children and can lower their future economic mobility, their health, educational attainment and employment prospects. Scientific research also indicates that the stress caused by growing up in poverty, or with one or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as having an incarcerated parent or other household disruption, can alter or harm a child’s brain development, with consequences lasting into adulthood.

Despite recent declines in the overall poverty rate, children are more likely to be poor compared to adults, and there are more Illinois children living in poverty today than before the Great Recession. Although children of all races and ethnic groups experience poverty, children of color are much more likely to live in poverty than White children.

More Children Ages 6-17 in Poverty than before the Recession

![Graph showing poverty rates for different racial and ethnic groups in 2008 and 2015.]

Source: Population Reference Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey
Overview of Economic Conditions for Children and Youth

- 18% (365,000) of children ages 6–17 lived in households with income below the poverty level in the previous 12 months. 22% (248,000) of 18–24-year-olds live in poverty.\(^\text{15}\)

- Black families in Illinois have a median household income of just $32,200, less than half the overall state median income for families with children ($70,400), and roughly a third of White ($90,200), and Asian ($97,400) median family income.\(^\text{16}\)

- 99,167 (12.7%) 18–24-year-olds were unemployed in 2016.\(^\text{17}\) See employment section for additional information about youth not in school and not working.

- 62% of 18–24-year-olds in the labor force work in low-wage jobs, earning below $11.81 per hour, or roughly $24,563 for a family of four.\(^\text{18}\)

Racial Disparities in Illinois Median Income

- Source: Population Reference Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey, Median Annual Income for Families with own children under 18

Child Poverty across Illinois

Illinois ranks 23rd in the United States for children 0–18 living in poverty.\(^\text{20}\) Although the overall child poverty rate (ages 0–18) has declined over the past three years, the rate is higher than before the Great Recession, and there are more children living in poverty in 2015 compared to 2007.\(^\text{21}\) In 2015, the child poverty rate was 19.1 percent (559,000) compared to 17 percent in 2007 (525,000).\(^\text{22}\)

Concentrated Poverty in Illinois Neighborhoods

Children living in areas of concentrated poverty experience disadvantages due to a lack of resources (e.g., safe parks), higher crime rates, lack of transportation and higher unemployment.

Areas of concentrated poverty are characterized as census tracts where the poverty rate is higher than 30 percent.\(^\text{23}\) In Illinois, 12 percent of children live in these high-poverty areas, with Black children 14 times more likely (43 percent) to live in areas of concentrated poverty than White children (3 percent).\(^\text{24}\)
While the overall poverty rate (all ages) in the city of Chicago is 22.3 percent, some neighborhoods experience much higher rates of poverty. Twenty-two Chicago neighborhoods have poverty rates above 30 percent. See Appendix 2 for neighborhood poverty rates exceeding 30 percent. Of the 102 counties in Illinois, five counties have child poverty rates that exceed 30 percent (Alexander, Hardin, Pope, Pulaski and Saline). See Appendix 1 for county-level child poverty rates.

**Housing Instability for Youth in Foster Care**

Compared to youth outside the child welfare system, children and youth in foster care in Illinois experience additional barriers to stability that can affect many aspects of their life, including housing instability, lower educational attainment, increased involvement in the criminal justice system and a greater dependence on public assistance.

The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, a comprehensive study of outcomes of youth who age out of foster care, found that these individuals are much more likely to be in jail or prison, compared to non-foster youth. And 31 percent of young adults in the study experienced repeated episodes of homelessness or “couch surfing” after transitioning out of foster care.

**Adverse Childhood Experiences**

Other factors that measure whether children and youth live in a stable environment include exposure to ACEs. The ACE study explored the effects of experiences such as child abuse, exposure to violence and separation from a parent on health outcomes of adults. Findings from the ACE study and subsequent research on ACEs have shown that the more exposure to childhood stress the more likely a child will experience poor health outcomes later in life, including alcoholism, adolescent pregnancy, suicide attempts, depression and other chronic health problems.
Abuse and Neglect

- 18.6% of children in Illinois have had two or more adverse childhood experiences.\(^\text{30}\)
- More than 55,700 youth between ages 6 and 17 were reported as abused and neglected in 2015.\(^\text{31}\)
- More than 14,430 children in Illinois were living in foster care or other out-of-home placement in 2017.\(^\text{32}\) Although Black children and youth ages 0–18 make up roughly 15% of the child population, 48% of foster youth are Black. While White children make up 52% of the child population, 42% of foster youth are White. Hispanic youth make up 24% of the Illinois child population and 8.5% of foster youth.
- The average length of stay for children in foster care in Illinois is roughly 37 months, the second highest across the country and more than 12 months above the national mean of 21.9 months.\(^\text{33}\)

Children with Incarcerated Parents

Children with incarcerated parents also have greater instability, are at increased risk of homelessness, have higher rates of poverty, and experience levels of stress and trauma similar to that experienced by a child exposed to abuse or neglect.\(^\text{34}\)

- 186,000 (6%) of Illinois children have had a parent in jail or prison at some point during their childhood.\(^\text{35}\)
- 14% of Black children have had at least one parent in jail or prison compared to 4% of White children.\(^\text{36}\)

Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System

Involvement in the juvenile justice system, including incarceration, has the effect of traumatizing a youth during a sensitive period of their development. With brain research showing that a child’s brain continues developing into the mid-20s, traumatizing experiences, such as incarceration and separation from a child’s family and community, can harm a child’s development.\(^\text{37}\)

Although the number of youth incarcerated by the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) has declined over the past decade across all race groups, the share of Black youth who are incarcerated has increased, while the share of White or Latino youth has decreased.\(^\text{38}\)

- More than 1,100 youth between ages 13 and 20 were admitted to IDJJ youth prisons in 2016.\(^\text{39}\)
- Although Black youth ages 12–17 represent 16% of Illinois youth, they account for two-thirds (66.2%) of youth prison admissions. White youth represent 53% of Illinois youth, but only 21% of prison admissions. Latino youth represent 23% of Illinois youth, but make up 12.8% of admissions.\(^\text{40}\)
- More than 8,950 Illinois youth ages 17–25 were in an adult prison in the state in 2015. This represents 19% of the total adult prison population in Illinois.\(^\text{41}\)

*See Employable section for discussion on how youth with a criminal or juvenile record are affected.*
A child’s race, where they live and where they go to school matter when it comes to determining how safe children are across the state. Crime and violence also have a disproportionate impact on children living in poverty and those living in high-poverty neighborhoods. Children of color, including Black and Latino youth, experience higher rates of crime and are more likely to live in unsafe neighborhoods than their White peers.\textsuperscript{43}

- 85.1\% of children in Illinois live in neighborhoods that are usually or always safe, leaving 15\% or nearly half a million (460,900) children living in unsafe neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{44}

- Black and Latino children are much more likely than White children to be living in unsafe neighborhoods in Illinois. Overall, 7\% of White children, compared to 27\% of Latino children and 26\% of Black children, live in unsafe neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{45}

- 20\% of Illinois K–12 students are unsupervised or alone between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Illinois high school students have the highest rate of unsupervised afterschool time with 28\%, followed by 20\% of Illinois sixth through eighth-graders, and 2\% of Kindergarten through fifth-graders.\textsuperscript{46}

- The rate of teen deaths in Illinois due to accident, homicide or suicide is roughly 37 per 100,000 in the population compared to 33 nationally.\textsuperscript{47}

- Black youth between 15 and 24 years old are overrepresented as homicide victims in Illinois. Although they make up just 1\% of the state population, 27\% of all homicide victims were Black men between ages 15 and 24.\textsuperscript{48}

- Just over one in 10 Illinois teens report experiencing sexual dating violence (11.1\%) or physical dating violence (11.3\%).\textsuperscript{49}
Raising healthy children and youth starts well before they get sick. It begins in a child’s home, their neighborhood, school and in their job. Ensuring that children are healthy is not just about getting them to stay active and eat well, but also about making sure all youth have a variety of resources that promote health, including quality and affordable housing, healthy meals, good jobs, safe neighborhoods, educational opportunities and quality health care.

When children and youth live in poverty and struggle to get by, they are at increased risk for developing a variety of preventable health conditions. For example, low-income families and people of color are more likely to live in poor-quality housing and be at greater risk of exposure to toxins such as lead paint or indoor and outdoor pollutants that can exacerbate health conditions.

Other health conditions, such as obesity, can be in part due to a lack of access to healthy and affordable food in urban neighborhoods with no local grocery stores, and diminished opportunities for physical education during and after school.

**Overall Health and Access to Preventive Care**

- 84% of children are in excellent or very good health. However, the share of Black (80.2%) and Hispanic (66.5%) children whose parent or guardian reported them as being in excellent or very good health is much lower compared to White children (92.9%).
- 89.1% of children have had a preventive medical visit in the past year.
- 3% (55,000) of Illinois children ages 6–17 are uninsured.

**Health Conditions and Risk Factors**

- 33.6% of children ages 10–17 are overweight or obese.
- 12.6% of Illinois high school students report being obese and 15.4% report being overweight.
- 11% of children ages 12–17 and 9% of children ages 6–11 have asthma. The rate of asthma for Black children (19%) is three times higher than for White children (6%) and Latino children (6%).
- Low-income children living below 200% of the federal poverty level have asthma at nearly twice the rate (10%) of higher income children (6%).
- 491,000 children under age 18 (17%) lived in households where they were unable to afford groceries at some point during the past year.
• 23 births per 1,000 were to teen mothers ages 15–19. The rate of births to Black teens (43 per 1,000) is more than three times the rate of White teen births (13 per 1,000). The rate of births to Latino teen mothers is two and half times higher (34 per 1,000) than the rate of White teen births.58

**Mental Health**

• 9.6% of children ages 2–17 have one or more emotional or behavioral health condition.59

• 29.3% of Illinois high school students report that their usual activities were disrupted at some point in the past 12 months due to feeling sad or hopeless for two or more weeks. Latinos were the most likely to report feeling sad or hopeless (34.7%).60

• 15.9% of high school students report that they have seriously considered attempting suicide within the past year. Young women were more likely (18.8%) to consider suicide than young men (12.9%).61

• In 2015, 9.8% of Illinois high school students attempted suicide.62

### Suicide Statistics Among Illinois High School Students (2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide</th>
<th>Made a Suicide Plan</th>
<th>Attempted Suicide</th>
<th>Attempted Suicide &amp; Received Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


• According to the 2012 Survey of Children’s Health, 55.1% of children ages 2–17 with problems requiring counseling have received mental health care.63 The survey also found that large gaps in mental health treatment exist for youth of color. Only 37.4% of Black children with conditions requiring treatment actually received treatment, followed by 39.7% of Hispanic children. White children had the highest rate of access with 62.2% receiving mental health care.64
Increasing educational attainment in Illinois will strengthen the state by providing all students with the skills and education to fill in-demand jobs of the future. Illinois can do more to increase educational success by developing new strategies that reduce the barriers that so many low-income students and students of color face along the education pipeline.

While academic preparedness and educational attainment are important indicators for tracking the success of Illinois students, understanding the strengths and needs of the student population is essential to informing policymakers and educators about what policies will improve student performance, and prepare them for college and their future career.

Even though a large share of Illinois youth between ages 18 and 24 are either enrolled in post-secondary education or have attained an Associate’s Degree or higher, there are still far too many who have not had the same access to post-secondary education and training, and a sizeable share that has not completed high school.

More than one in 10 Illinois youth ages 18–24 (12.5 percent) do not have a high school diploma. For youth of color, the high school attainment rate is lower, with nearly one in six Black youth (17.4 percent) and Latino youth (17.3 percent) lacking a diploma.

The Completion Gap: Educational Attainment of Illinois’ Young Adults (Age 18-24)
**Rise in Low-Income Student Population in Public Schools**

Low-income students in Illinois public schools are defined as those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, living in substitute care or receiving public benefits. These students have lower educational attainment and enroll in college at a lower rate compared to their higher income peers.

With the share and number of low-income students on the rise over the past decade, Illinois will need to address the achievement gap to keep students on track to graduate from high school and attain a college degree or credential.

Between the 2005-2006 school year and the 2015-2016 school year, the number of low-income students increased from 830,000 students (40 percent) to more than a million (1,018,848 or 49.9 percent). Of the total number of low-income students, about 760,700 are third- through 12th-graders.

**Share of Low-Income Illinois Students (2006-2016)**

![Pie charts showing the share of low-income students in Illinois public schools between 2006 and 2016.](image)

**Growing Diversity in Illinois Public Schools**

More than 2 million (2,041,779) students are enrolled in Illinois pre-K through twelfth-grade public schools. Of total public school enrollment, there are more than 1.5 million (1,524,534) third through twelfth-graders.

Statewide, just under half (48.8 percent) of public school students are White, 25.5 percent are Hispanic/Latino, 17.3 percent are Black/African American, 4.8 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, and 3.2 percent are two or more races.

Over the past decade, enrollment of Hispanic/Latino students, Asian students, and students that are two or more races has increased, while the share of White and Black student enrollment has declined. With these demographic changes, the share of students of color enrolled has increased from 44.3 percent in the 2005-2006 school year to just over half (51.2 percent) in 2015-2016.
Although student diversity has grown, teacher diversity in Illinois does not match the current student body in public schools across the state. In Illinois, there is a 32 percent gap between teachers and students of color. While high-quality teachers of all races can benefit student success, having a diverse teacher pool can promote learning, reduce absenteeism, and can introduce teaching strategies that help students make connections between their education, their backgrounds and their cultures. These influences can make school more welcoming by providing students of color with positive role models and can improve student motivation.

**Graduation trends**

High school graduation trends show that the education system is leaving large shares of students behind, even with recent improvements in completion.

In 2012, 82 percent of public high school students graduated with a diploma. By 2014, the rate increased to 86 percent across the state and remained flat through 2016.

Even though graduation rates have improved, too many students still do not graduate from high school, and race and income disparities in achievement persist. These uneven outcomes indicate that policy and educational reforms are not reaching students with the greatest barriers to completion.

Nearly one in four (23 percent) low-income students does not graduate within four years, compared to 14 percent of students across the state. And 25 percent of Black high school students do not graduate, compared to 10 percent of White students and 6 percent of Asian students.
In the 2015 school year, the graduation rate for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students was 72 percent, well below the state average of 86 percent. Illinois has the fifth highest English learner population in the country, with 78 percent of LEP students who are native Spanish speakers. Enrollment of LEP students in pre-Kindergarten through twelfth-grade public schools increased from 6.6 percent (136,968) in 2006 to 10.5 percent (214,387) in 2015-2016. As enrollment of LEP students continues to grow, schools must adapt to the changing language needs of students. Low graduation rates for limited English proficient (LEP) students demonstrate the need for Illinois to target training and recruitment of teachers to address the educational needs of students with language barriers.

Similarly, students with disabilities have a lower graduation rate of 70.5 percent. Overall there were 223,500 students with disabilities between ages 8 and 21 enrolled in Illinois public schools in 2015-2016. Approximately 12.3 percent of Illinois public school students with disabilities between ages 14 and 21 dropped out during the 2015 school year, an increase from 10.8 percent since 2014.

Children and youth living in foster care also experience major gaps in educational attainment compared to their peers well into adulthood. The Midwest Study of foster youth revealed that one in five (19.9 percent) former foster youth lack a high school diploma or GED, compared to just 6.1 percent of youth nationally, according to a representative longitudinal study known as the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Additionally, in all levels of education, young adult males who were formerly in foster care had lower levels of attainment than females.

Along the education pipeline, youth in foster care are more likely to be held back a grade which lowers their likelihood of educational attainment. One factor affecting school performance can be attributed to the number of school disruptions that youth in foster care experience. More than 70 percent of youth in foster care report two or more school changes while in care. And more than a third of youth (36.3 percent) report five or more school changes while in care.
School Suspensions

Providing Illinois public school students with a supportive learning environment requires an intentional effort to end policies that hold students back. When poorly designed and implemented, school disciplinary policies are one example of punitive measures that can fail students, teachers, and the broader school system, while disproportionately harming Black students.

Overall, the out-of-school suspension rate in Illinois is 6 percent.\(^8^9\) Black students are five times more likely than White students to have an out-of-school suspension—15 percent of Black students compared to just 3 percent of White students.\(^9^0\) Latino students and American Indian students also have higher rates of out-of-school suspensions at 5 percent, respectively.\(^9^1\)

![Black Students in Illinois More Likely to Have Education Disrupted by School Suspensions](image)

College Preparedness, Access, and Success

Although 71% of Illinois high school graduates enroll in a two- or four-year college within 16 months of graduation\(^9^2\), a large share of graduates are not ready for college level coursework.

- **College readiness:** Only 25% of Illinois High School seniors met college readiness benchmarks in all four subject areas on the ACT, including mathematics, English, reading, and science.\(^9^3\) 62% met college readiness standards in English, 40% met standards in math, and 40% met standards in reading. Only 34% met standards in science.\(^9^4\)

- **College remediation:** 49% of Illinois high school students require remediation in at least one subject: 41% in math, 22% in communications and 17% in reading.\(^9^5\)
How well Illinois succeeds in making sure youth are employable and engaged in the workforce depends on whether youth meet their educational attainment goals that will put them on a path toward a career. In addition to ensuring Illinois’ youth are educated, measures that indicate whether they are prepared to enter the workforce include various labor force indicators such as participation rates, unemployment rates and youth engagement in school and work.

Data on youth ages 16–24 who are both out of work and out of school—also referred to as “opportunity youth” or “disconnected youth”—show that far too many young people are falling behind without access to meaningful employment opportunities in the state. In Illinois, more than 40,000 youth ages 16–19 are not enrolled in school and are not working. In Chicago alone, nearly 12,000 youth ages 16–19 are out of work and out of school.

**Wide Gaps in Youth Employment and Engagement by Race**

- 39.3% of Illinois youth ages 16–19 participate in the labor force with a 22.9% unemployment rate.
- 75.6% of Illinois youth ages 20–24 participate in the labor force with a 12.6% unemployment rate.

**Rate of Illinois Youth Out of Work and Out of School**

![Bar chart showing the rate of youth out of work and out of school by race and age group in Illinois and Chicago.](source: 2015 American Community Survey, Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois at Chicago)
• Black youth ages 20–24 in Chicago were five and a half times more likely to be out of work and out of school compared to their White peers. Statewide, Black youth were more than two and a half times more likely to be out of school and work.

**Barriers to Youth Employment: Juvenile and Adult Criminal Records**

A young person with a criminal record will have diminished prospects for employment and future financial stability.

Incarceration also disrupts education, making it less likely that a person who has served time in jail or prison will obtain the necessary skills and education to move into stable employment. In addition, a criminal or arrest record makes a person much less likely to be considered for employment no matter how minor the offense or regardless of whether there is a finding of guilt.

In Illinois, only three out of every 1,000 juvenile arrests are expunged due to a complex legal process that makes it difficult for youth to access their right to expungement. This leaves nearly every youth who ever comes into contact with law enforcement with a permanent record.

The existence of these records presents barriers to employment, housing and education for youth as they transition to adulthood. Various studies indicate that criminal records are greater barriers to employment for people of color. For example, a New York study found that Black job applicants were less likely to receive call backs or interviews compared to White job applicants with similar records.
Research has shown that civic engagement is associated with benefits for both youth and society. Civic engagement may lead to enhanced self-esteem, an increased understanding of one’s own competencies and greater internal motivation to engage in positive social behavior. Society as a whole benefits when individuals become more engaged and invested in social issues and their communities.

Participation in Civic Life is Key

- 82% of children ages 6–17 participate in activities outside of school.\(^{104}\)
- 68.1% of Hispanic/Latino children participate in after-school activities such as sports, clubs, art, or other activities; followed by 79.1% of Black children and 89.8% of White children participating in after-school activities.
- 41.6% of youth ages 18–24 are active registered voters.\(^{105}\)
- 28.6% of 16–19 year olds and 19.4% of 20–24 year olds in Illinois engage in volunteerism (e.g., distributing food or clothes, fundraising for charity, tutoring, mentoring or other general labor).\(^{106}\)
Moving Forward for Illinois Youth: 
Policy Considerations

Every young person in Illinois has something to contribute and has the potential to succeed. To make sure all Illinois youth reach the six developmental goals—Stable, Safe, Healthy, Educated, Employable, and Connected—state policies and investments must be designed and targeted to address the needs of youth, while building on their strengths and helping them develop new skills.

Moving forward, policy makers, advocates, educators and community stakeholders should work to address inequities for youth of color; build a solid foundation for youth to succeed; and invest in communities to make sure Illinois is the best state for youth to live and grow.

The following are strategies and next steps for state and local policymakers, advocates and community members to move Illinois youth forward:

- Develop a statewide coordinated effort to advocate for positive youth outcomes across the six developmental goals.
- Identify gaps in available outcome data across the six developmental goals for youth ages 8–25.
- Collect and make existing outcome data publicly available and aligned to youth ages 8–25.
- Track how well state policies and investments outlined in the fiscal scan are reaching children and youth, especially youth of color who are disproportionately affected by poverty, unsafe neighborhoods and lack of resources in their communities.
- Design policies and programs to meet the needs of individual youth and address disparities in communities hardest hit by poverty and unemployment.
Acknowledgements

Author, Leslie Helmcamp is an independent consultant specializing in postsecondary education, workforce development, juvenile justice reform, and economic opportunity policy.

Report designed by Zane Maxwell with Sureline Productions.

This report was made possible thanks to generous funding from The Chicago Community Trust.

About Children’s Home + Aid

Children’s Home + Aid is a leading child and family service agency in Illinois. The organization helps children recover their health, their hope and their faith in the people around them. We link children to a network of opportunity and care, to extended family, teachers, mentors, and the resources of the neighborhood and community. For more than 130 years, the organization has gone wherever children and families need them and worked where it has been proven to be most effective: at home, in the classroom, in the neighborhood, in the course of daily life. The organization has offices located across Illinois and serves more than 40,000 children and families in more than 60 counties each year. For more information about Children’s Home + Aid, visit childrenshomeandaid.org.

In 2013, Children’s Home + Aid launched the Ahlquist Center for Policy, Practice + Innovation to incubate innovative practices to improve outcomes for children and families and to promote effective state and federal public policies. This document is part of a broader effort to develop a statewide agenda promoting positive outcomes for children and young adults ages 8–25.

For more information, contact Stefanie Polacheck at spolacheck@childrenshomeandaid.org.
Endnotes

18. PRB, 2016 Basic Monthly CPS.
20. Kids Count Data Center, ACS 2015 1-Yr.
22. 2015 ACS 1-Yr.
35. AECF, “A Shared Sentence,” See note 34.


39. IDJJ, See note 38.

40. The breakdown of youth by race in the overall population is for youth ages 12-17 while the admissions to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice represents a slightly different age range of youth ages 13-20.


42. Survey of Children's Health, See note 30; and Social IMPACT, “Cycle of Risk,” See note 36.

43. Survey of Children's Health, See note 30. Analysis of survey responses regarding unsafe neighborhoods and general neighborhood conditions; and Social IMPACT “Cycle of Risk,” See note 36.

44. Survey of Children's Health, See note 30.


52. Survey of Children's Health, See note 30.


54. PRB, 2015 ACS, 1-yr.

55. High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, See note 49.


58. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). 2014


60. High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, See note 49.

61. High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, See note 49.


63. Survey of Children's Health. NSCH 2011/12, See note 30.

64. Survey of Children's Health. NSCH 2011/12, See note 30. Note: Children of color are less likely to be referred or identified as needing mental health treatment at school; they are more likely to lack insurance; and several other factors such as immigration status, language barriers can limit access to mental health treatment for children of color. Accessed May 25, 2017. http://www.mamh.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Public/Disparities%20in%20Child%20and%20Adolescent%20Mental%20Health.pdf.


66. PRB analysis of 2015 ACS, WPFP, see note 65.


74. CAP, “Teacher Diversity;” See note 72; and LPF, “Teacher Diversity Database.” See note 73.


81. NCES, see note 78.


85. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health was a federally funded study of adolescence in the U.S. and how social contexts influence health behaviors and outcomes. See Chapin Hall, Midwest Evaluation, note 58, page 5.
96. 2015 ACS, public use files. Tabulations by Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois at Chicago.
97. 2015 ACS, public use files. Tabulations by Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois at Chicago.
98. 2015 ACS.
100. IJJC, see note 99. Note: The report found that confidentiality protections for youth with a juvenile record have eroded over the past four decades. The practice of record sharing among law enforcement agencies is widespread and has resulted in a greater likelihood of juvenile records being accessed, especially with the expansion of background checks by employers, colleges, and other institutions.

### Appendix 1: Child Poverty Rates, Counties with child poverty rates exceeding 20%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Poverty Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexander</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fayette</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallatin</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardin</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massac</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perry</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pope</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulaski</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richland</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saline</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Clair</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamson</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kankakee</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knox</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macon</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macoupin</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonough</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangamon</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermilion</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephenson</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnebago</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Appendix 2: Poverty Rates Exceeding 30% in Chicago Neighborhoods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>% in Poverty</th>
<th>Num. in Poverty</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>% in Poverty</th>
<th>Num. In Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armour Square</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>5,160</td>
<td>Humboldt Park</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>17,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auburn Gresham</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>13,469</td>
<td>North Lawndale</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>16,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>29,529</td>
<td>Oakland</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>2,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnside</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>South Shore</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>17,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Lawn</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>17,282</td>
<td>South Chicago</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
<td>9,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>7,040</td>
<td>South Lawndale</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>24,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englewood</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>12,062</td>
<td>Washington Park</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>5,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuller Park</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>West Englewood</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>12,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Boulevard</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>7,957</td>
<td>West Garfield Park</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>8,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Grand Crossing</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>12,350</td>
<td>West Pullman</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>9,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Poverty Rate</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Woodlawn</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>10,062</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year estimates, Social Impact Research Center, Heartland Alliance, Individuals in households with incomes below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level.