



**America's Kids:  
Our Decisions,  
Their Future**



**Children and the  
2012  
Elections**

## About This Guide

This guide was produced by Voices for Utah Children in collaboration with Voices for America's Children. We appreciate the support of our colleagues at the Child & Family Policy Center in Iowa in the analysis of federal child policy issues which were used as a basis for this report.

Voices for Utah Children is a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping build better futures for children in Utah by advocating for public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. We are a member of Voices for America's Children.



Voices for America's Children is the nation's largest network of multi-issue child advocacy organizations, with 62 member organizations in 47 states, District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands. Voices works with many other community, state and national level organizations to improve the lives of all children, especially those most vulnerable, through sound public policies.



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**I CAN'T ELECT LEADERS WHO WILL CARE ABOUT MY NEEDS  
VOTE FOR ME**





# Introduction

The 2013 Congress faces major responsibilities, but none is more important than the responsibilities to our nation's children. In Utah, children comprise over one-third of the state's population. Utah is one of ten states where the number of children grew by more than 100,000 in the past decade. These numbers are not expected to decrease as Utah continues to have the highest birth rate in the nation. Our children are an essential component of Utah's long-term economic growth. Families, government and other organizations all share the responsibility to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential.

Utahns, like all Americans, are deeply concerned about our children and their future, particularly in the aftermath of the Great Recession. Although families are largely responsible for equipping children with the skills they need to be successful adults, government also plays a role in ensuring the health, safety, education, security and opportunity for the next generation. As demographics change for Utah children causing an expansion in school-age population, increasing ethnic and racial diversity, and more children confronting poverty, it is increasingly important for Congressional candidates to discuss child policy issues, an area often overlooked in campaigns and elections.

Voters seldom question whether candidates for public office support children. After all, the quintessential image of a candidate is holding and kissing a voter's baby. Although candidates generally do not disagree about the importance of children or their future role in our state and nation there is little to no discussion about the pressing needs of children, let alone potential solutions.

Of course, children's issues are not the only issues that warrant discussion during the campaign season, but they are issues that demand dialogue and public attention.

Your campaign can help raise awareness of these pressing problems by developing and presenting children's policy issues as part of your campaign.

The "Elect Children's Issues" information on the following page provides examples of actions candidates for Congress have taken to promote children's issues. Hopefully, you will use some or all

of these examples to help raise awareness of issues impacting our children.

By raising these issues in the campaign, candidates can ensure that the electoral process does right by our children and Utah's future.

Our hope is that this guide will provide an overview of the issues confronting Utah children so that your campaign establishes policy positions in response to the questions listed below.

- 1. What federal actions should be taken to ensure that all children have health coverage that meets their health and nutrition needs?*
- 2. What federal actions should be taken to meet the needs of vulnerable populations of children including those living in foster care and those who are victims of abuse.*
- 3. What federal actions should be taken to ensure that every child entering kindergarten is ready to learn?*
- 4. What federal actions should be taken to close the "readiness gap" that appears before kids start school and accounts for so much of underachievement and school failure?*
- 5. What federal actions should be taken to ensure America is a world leader in educating its next generations.*
- 6. What federal actions should be taken to ensure that children living in poverty or in families struggling to make ends meet are having their basic economic needs met?*
- 7. What federal actions should be taken to ensure children have equal opportunities for success and know they can succeed if they work to the best of their abilities?*
- 8. What federal actions can be taken to address the growth of single parenting and its implications for children's nurturing and development?*



## “ELECT CHILDREN’S ISSUES”

- *Establish a child-policy committee drawing on respected experts and child advocates within your district.*
- *Ask child policy experts to provide information on federal programs and the services they provide within your district and throughout Utah.*
- *Schedule meetings, listening sessions, or forums with groups and organizations that specifically serve or advocate on behalf of children.*
- *Agree to meet with child advocates when requested, and agree to include child policy concerns as a portion of at least one debate with political opponents, if those are scheduled.*
- *Conduct “work days” or field sessions visiting and touring or working at child-serving organizations.*
- *Issue policy statements on children’s issues and include those statements in campaign materials including on your campaign website.*
- *Recruit and enlist volunteers that will work on behalf of children’s issues.*
- *Include statements about the importance of the federal government in child policy in public speeches and at candidate events.*
- *Raise child policy issues when interviewed by the media.*

# Overview:

## Securing America’s Future – Ensuring the Health, Safety, Education, Security and Opportunity of the Next Generation

### Current Federal Role in Child Policy

America prizes individual rights and responsibilities and recognizes the fundamental role of parents to raise their children. Parents are their children’s first and most important teachers, nurses, safety officers, counselors and mentors.

At the same time, no one in this country has ever made it alone. Our nation was formed in recognition of our interdependence. Americans understand we have a collective responsibility

*The federal government shares responsibility with our state and local governments for ensuring the well-being of children—particularly the most vulnerable children.*

to ensure “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” for all—and that this responsibility is greatest for children, who are dependent on others to provide for their needs.

Currently, the federal government assumes a primary role in providing for the safety and

security of seniors and persons with disabilities, particularly through Medicare and Social Security, which provide the same benefits regardless of where individuals live. This is a major part of the federal budget.

The federal government shares responsibility for ensuring the health, safety, education, security and opportunity of children with state and local governments—with a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of our most vulnerable children. Although smaller than the share going to seniors and persons with disabilities, activities focused on children comprise a significant part of federal investments and attention. An overview of those activities are described below.

### Healthy Children

Good health and sound nutrition are critical to child well-being. The federal government shares responsibility with states for financing health insurance coverage to children in families without

*Two federal programs—Medicaid and the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP)—now cover one-third of all children in the country.*

employer-based coverage or sufficient financial resources to secure it. As health insurance costs have risen and employer-based family coverage has declined, the two federal programs providing health services for children—Medicaid and the Children’s

Health Insurance Program (CHIP)—have come to cover one-third of all U.S. children. In addition, the federal government has promoted public-health and health-prevention activities, with the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant specifically devoted to the healthy development of very young children. Through food and nutrition programs, it addresses malnutrition, hunger and obesity.

### Safe Children

While most families provide loving and safe homes for their children, some are unable to or do not. The federal government shares responsibility

*The federal government shares responsibility with Utah in preventing or stopping the maltreatment of children at the hands of their parents.*

with the states in preventing or stopping the maltreatment of children at the hands of their parents—whether through physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect. Since 1935, the federal government has provided funding and direction to states to protect children from abuse and neglect, with the three-fold goals of

safety, permanence and well-being. While initially most federal funding was devoted to providing foster-care placements when children were removed from their homes, the federal government has increasingly supported efforts to encourage adoptions, help youth in foster care transitioning to adulthood, and strengthen and preserve families by removing the risk without removing the child.

## Children Ready For Success in School

*Federal investments in education focus on meeting the needs of low-income students and those with special needs.*

States and local school districts provide primary funding for public education, but the federal government provides additional support and regulatory guidance focused on children who require compensatory services or have special

educational needs. Through the Education and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal government provides funding support to one in five primary and secondary education students. Through Pell grants and federal tax credits, the federal government works to make higher education affordable to students who otherwise could not afford that education. In addition, the federal government focuses attention on young children's educational development. That effort started in 1965 with the establishment of the Head Start program and extends today to other early childhood services, including home visiting and early care and education.

Since the funding sources for education and development are very different depending on the age of the child, the analysis of the federal government's role in education provided in this guide is described separately for the earliest learning years (birth to five) and the elementary and secondary school years (six to seventeen).

## Economically Secure Children

*The federal role has shifted to providing temporary assistance to support families getting into the workforce instead of staying at home to care for their children.*

Children need housing, clothing, food and other necessities. Families are responsible for meeting those basic needs, but not all families, even when employed full-time, have the means to do so. Today, children are the age group most likely to

be in poverty, and we know poverty limits children's health, safety, education and opportunity. In the 1960s through 1980s, the federal approach to addressing poor children's economic needs was through welfare payments to families under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program.

Primarily through welfare reform and tax policies, the federal role has shifted its emphasis to providing temporary assistance to support families in getting into and staying in the workforce, rather than remaining at home to care for their children. This includes child care for lower-income working families, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) for basic nutrition needs, and the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit to recognize the cost of raising a family. Substantial federal support has also been provided to improve child-support enforcement and ensure that both parents contribute to meeting a child's basic needs.

## Children with Equal Opportunities for Success

America prides itself on being a land of opportunity. The demographics in America are changing, and children are leading the way. Nationally, while four in five seniors and two in three working-age adults are white and non-Hispanic, only half of children birth to four are white and non-Hispanic. By the year 2025, there will be no "majority" group among American children.

This creates new challenges and opportunities for states and the federal government in ensuring the health, safety, education, security and opportunity for children. The growth in diversity of America's population is most apparent in the child population, but varies substantially across states, regions and neighborhoods. Nationally, one in five students is or was an English-language learner, but this varies widely by school district and has been subject to profound changes in very short periods of time.

While many policies regarding children and families are made at the state and local levels, states and localities with high proportions of low-income

children, or experiencing dramatic changes in their demographics, often do not have resources within their jurisdictions to address these issues. There is huge variation among states in fiscal capacity and the presence of low-income children. In most of the programs identified above, the federal government has sought to play the national role of providing greater

*The federal government has sought to equalize resources across the country, so where children are born does not dictate how well they can succeed.*

equality of resources across the country, so where children are born does not dictate how well they succeed. In all areas of policy, but particularly child policy, the federal government plays a role in establishing a foundation of support for all children where states cannot be expected to do it alone.

## Children in Nurturing Families

Broad agreement exists that strong families are the foundation of a prosperous nation. There is also strong public reluctance to intrude into the primacy of the family in raising children. At the same time, the current rates of divorce and single parenting affect children’s overall health. Research is clear on the critical importance of nurturing to healthy child development and the primary role of the family in providing stability, continuity, and nurturing. While there is limited funding directed specifically toward strengthening or preserving families, many federal programs include provisions designed to address concerns about the family, including recent emphases upon fatherhood and support for faith-based initiatives.

## The Federal Role and Challenges Ahead

The federal government’s overall role in promoting the public good is being debated intensely today. But there is agreement on the need to reduce the size of the federal deficit and to do so through financing only those services that meet a broad public purpose— but there is not agreement about where those reductions should be made.

## Federal and Utah Spending

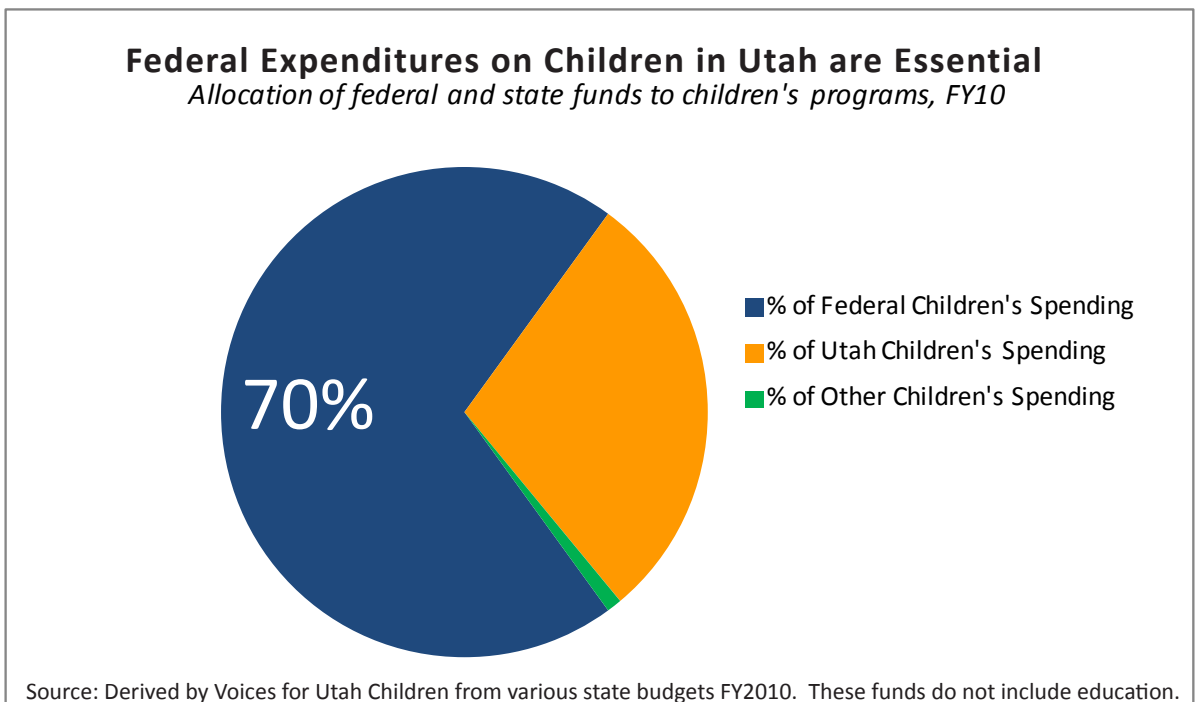
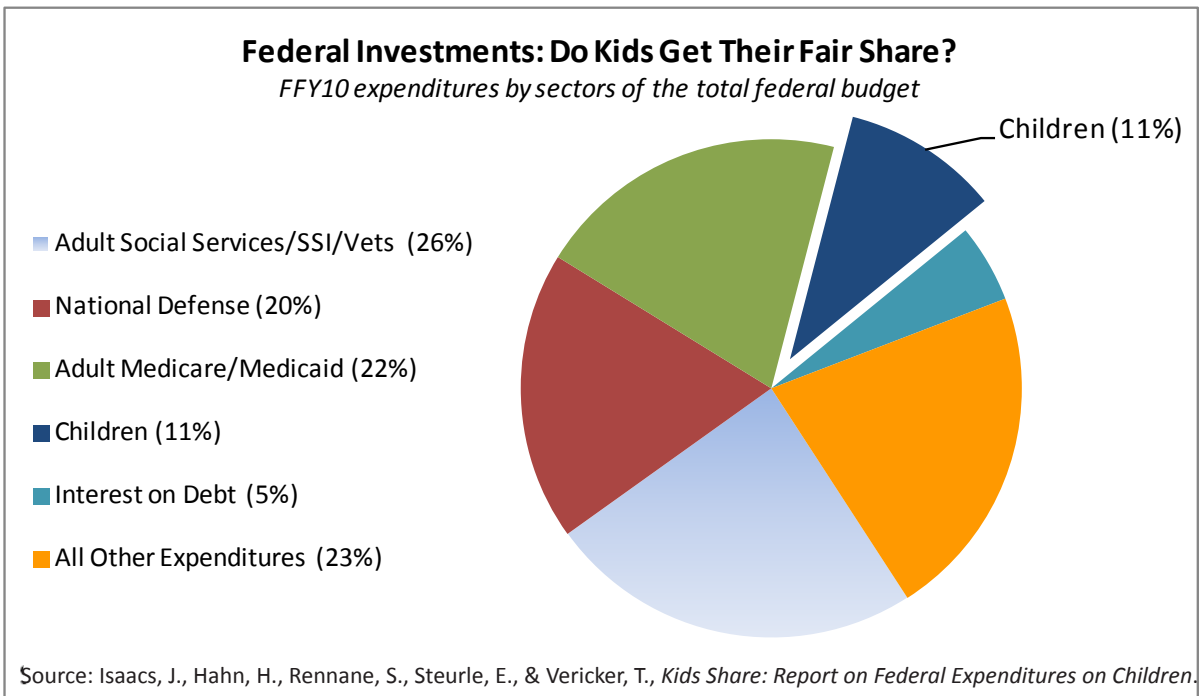
Federal investments in service to children are small in comparison with those for seniors, but they are a very significant share of the non-defense and debt-service budget under consideration for reduction.

The purpose behind the investments described in this section is to ensure the health, safety, education, security and opportunity of the next generation. While there may be disagreement on how this purpose can best be achieved, there is general consensus that this is a fundamental role for government. The best way to develop federal policies that achieve these ends is to assure that discussions on the role of the federal government – in child health, safety, education, security and opportunity – are an explicit part of candidate platforms, media coverage and analysis, and electoral activities so the electorate is informed and involved in setting the course for securing America’s future.



## Do Kids Get Their Fair Share?

Nationally, children represent 22% of the population. However, the share of the federal budget in recent years for children’s programs has been approximately 8-11% (depending on whether tax credits are included in the calculation). For FY 2012, federal funding for kids has dropped below 8%. Investments in children are cost effective in the long-term.



# Healthy Children

## Government's Role in Ensuring the Health of Our Kids

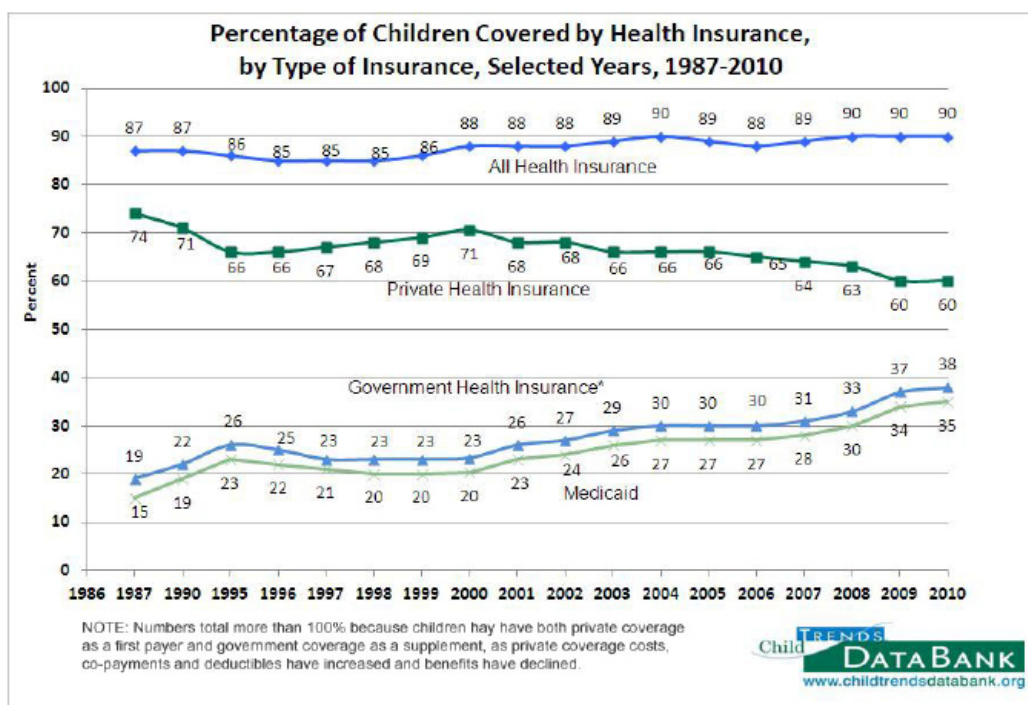
Children need access to medical care to treat illness and injury and provide preventative and developmental services. In the United States' health care system, health coverage is critical in making sure that care is provided for in a timely and coordinated manner. As a result, there is great disparity in the health of children who have health coverage and those who are uninsured.

Historically, health coverage has been provided through a parent's employer. This system has always had flaws in terms of ensuring that everyone has access to coverage, the quality of benefits that coverage provides, and making sure that care is affordable for families. The rising cost of health care has exacerbated these problems: fewer employers are offering coverage to their employees and their employees' families; the scope of benefits has been trimmed; and co-pays and deductibles have increased. Fortunately for kids, Medicaid and the

Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) have provided options to families who cannot afford coverage. In fact, for nearly 50 years, Medicaid has provided cost effective and high quality care to millions of children.

In the 1980s, 75% of kids were covered by private health coverage; today, only 60% of children are. Yet with the expansion of Medicaid and the creation of CHIP, the percentage of kids with health coverage over that same time has increased from 87% to 90%.

Medicaid and CHIP are federal-state partnership programs. Medicaid was created in 1965 to aid states in providing health coverage to poor families. In 1997, the federal government created CHIP to help low-income working families who have incomes that are too high for Medicaid get health coverage to their kids. Generally, Medicaid serves children in families earning less than 100% of the federal poverty level (\$23,050 for a family of four) and in Utah, CHIP provides coverage to kids in families with incomes up to 200% of poverty. For both programs, the federal government provides states with matching funds to help pay for services and to administer the programs. Currently, the federal government pays about 70% of the cost



## **Reducing the Number of Uninsured Children in Utah**

Utah can reduce the percentage of uninsured kids in our state from 12 percent to the low single digits by modifying three policies permissible under federal law:

### **Simplify the eligibility process by removing Medicaid's asset test**

Medicaid's asset test is a hurdle that all families applying for Medicaid and CHIP must complete. However, the test is not used to determine whether a child will receive coverage; it's only purpose is to determine whether a child is covered by the Medicaid program or the CHIP program. Over the years, the benefit package and the cost sharing protection in these programs have evolved to become very similar. As a result, forcing families to jump this administrative hurdle is unnecessarily burdensome to families, expensive to the state to administer, and serves no purpose other than making it more difficult for eligible children to sign up and stay enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP.

### **Implement 12 month continuous eligibility in Medicaid**

Once a year, children in Utah's CHIP program sign up for coverage. As with private insurance, their coverage is good for a year regardless of changes of family circumstances. Medicaid works differently. State Medicaid eligibility workers have the discretion to determine how often a family must provide information demonstrating their eligibility. Some families may provide the state income information on a monthly basis. The frequency of Medicaid eligibility verification causes thousands of children to lose their Medicaid coverage every year. By making Medicaid operate more like CHIP and private insurance, it will be easier for kids to keep their coverage.

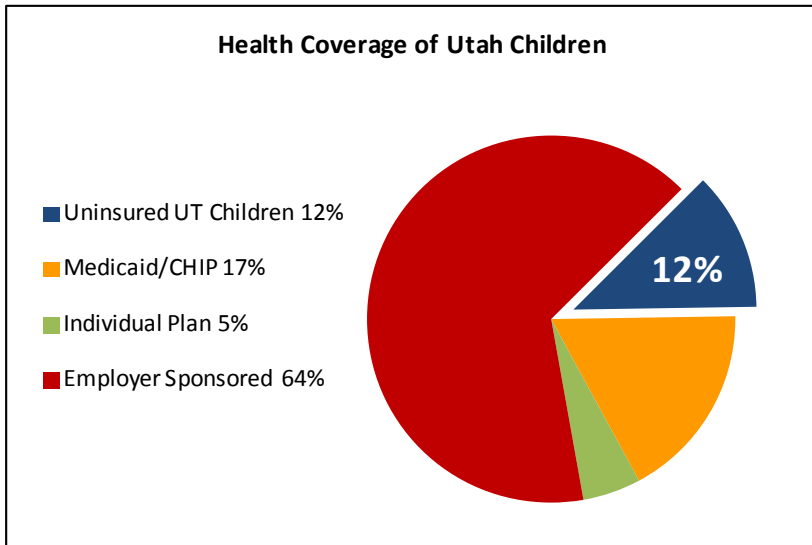
### **Remove the five year waiting period that legal immigrant children must wait before enrolling in Medicaid and CHIP**

Most newly arrived immigrants who are lawfully present are barred for five years from accessing Utah's Medicaid and CHIP programs. Kids grow up fast. Denying Medicaid and CHIP coverage to children lawfully in our state does not make sense in making sure these children get off to the right start. Extending coverage to these kids will not only promote better access to care and improved health outcomes for them, it will also enable Utah to simplify its Medicaid and CHIP outreach and enrollment. This will help enroll eligible citizen children because the message that all lawfully residing kids are eligible will create a "welcome mat" effect for many mixed-citizenship-status families.

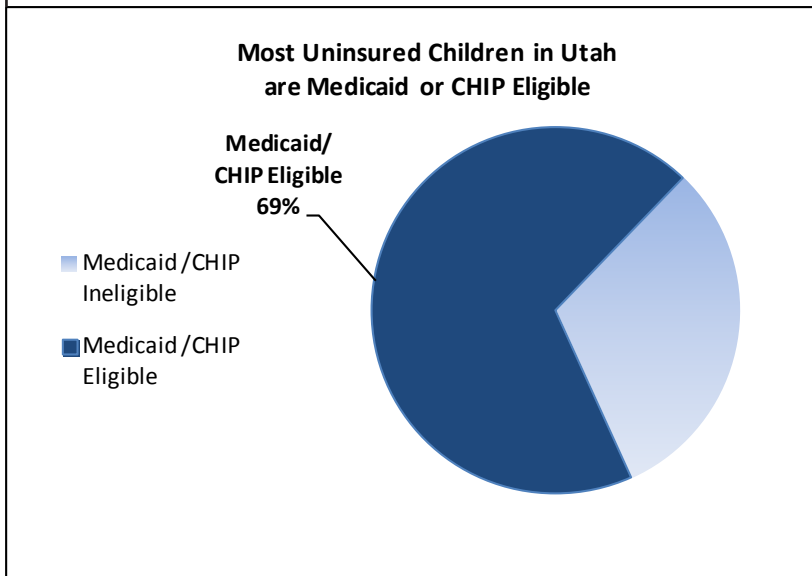
of Medicaid and 80% of the cost of CHIP. States, however, retain responsibility of determining eligibility and administering the programs.

In 2011, over 200,000 Utah children benefited from these programs. There are still over 100,000 (12 percent) uninsured kids in Utah; most of whom are income eligible for Medicaid and CHIP.

Child Health (MCH) Block Grant program, and the Vaccines for Children (VCF) program, to provide preventive and public health services. A number of federal demonstration programs seek to improve children’s health and development, including ones to address the rise in obesity among children and ones responding to children with special health care needs, including oral and behavioral health needs.



Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation, statehealthfacts.org. Urban Institute and Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured estimates based on the Census Bureau’s March 2010 and 2011 Current Population Survey (CPS: Annual Social and Economic Supplements) Accessed June 26, 2012



In addition, there are a number of child-focused food and nutrition programs designed to reduce malnutrition and promote healthy eating. The Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), school lunch and breakfast programs, and the child care food program all incorporate nutritional guidelines in providing meals and food for children.

### Children’s Health and Challenges Ahead

In addition to the 8 million children who are still uninsured, including more than 100,000 Utah children, the United States faces significant challenges in ensuring the health of the next generation. For the first time, America’s children face the prospect of growing up less healthy, having more debilitating and costly chronic health conditions as adults and living shorter lives than their parents. Diet, exercise and exposure to environmental toxins all play a role in the rise in obesity, diabetes, asthma and other health conditions. There are major child-health disparities by income, race and geographic location

Medical coverage, however, is only one aspect of ensuring children’s health and development. Children need safe homes and neighborhoods, sanitary living conditions, nutritious foods, opportunities for exercise and nurturing families to maximize their health and development. The federal government also supports public health programs, including the Maternal and

which compromises the nation’s future. While current health care costs for children remain small in relation to that of adults, the future costs for treating their health threatens the financial viability of the health care system, as well as the health and productivity of American society.

## Context for Federal Electoral Dialogue

The federal government currently plays a major role in providing health insurance and preventive health services for children. At the same time, the federal government is grappling with rising health care costs in both Medicare and Medicaid.

Public opinion polls show strong support for ensuring that children, in particular, are covered by affordable health insurance, but they also recognize the need to contain current and future health care costs. The public is concerned about the overall health of children and would like more attention to prevention.

One-third of all children in the U.S. receive health coverage through Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). While 10 percent of children nationally and 12 percent of Utah children remain uninsured, the rate of child health coverage has increased as a result of these public programs.

**What federal actions should be taken to ensure that all children have coverage that meets their health and nutrition needs?**



# Safe Children

## The Federal Government's Historical Role in Child Safety

Many factors go into keeping children safe, including environmentally safe conditions and secure communities. In particular, children need to be safe and secure in their families, with their parents and caregivers. Nationally, there are approximately two million cases of child abuse and neglect investigated annually and over 700,000 confirmed cases of abuse or neglect. Over 400,000 children are in foster care at any point in time. States and the federal government spend in excess of \$25 billion annually on children living in out-of-home placement due to confirmed instances of abuse or neglect.

In Utah, there were 26,767 cases of child abuse and neglect investigated, and 11,543 confirmed cases of abuse or neglect in 2011. Over 4,664 children were in foster care in 2011. In 2011, the federal government provided almost one-third of the funding Utah appropriates for child welfare services.

While the responsibility for developing and administering child protection systems is largely a state responsibility, since 1935 the federal government has provided funding to states to develop child-welfare services and systems. Over three decades, both Republican and Democratic administrations have expanded federal funding and strengthened the accountability of states for meeting the needs of children and youth in foster care or at risk of placement into care. The first Bush administration provided family support funding to establish more preventive responses to children and families. The Clinton administration

strengthened pathways to adoption for children for whom reunification was not viable. The second Bush administration placed new emphases on developing connections that help foster youth transition successfully to adult life.

While there have been a number of changes to federal funding and the development of new programs to support vulnerable children, the single largest source of funding remains Title IV-e, which primarily provides basic services for children who are in foster care or adopted as special-needs children. The vast majority of funding goes to maintenance and treatment services for children once they are removed from their homes—not to preserve children safely in their families or prevent abuse in the first place.

## Child Safety and the Challenges Ahead

The guiding tenets of federal legislation have been to secure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in the foster care system, preserving families where that is possible and speeding reunification or adoption when children must be placed outside the home. Despite these tenets, children who enter the child welfare system—and particularly children who are placed into foster care—are much more likely than their peers to struggle academically, be in poorer physical health, and have social, developmental, psychological and behavioral problems, be unemployed, and reside in adult mental health and corrections systems. Half will not graduate from high school on time, giving them limited options for immediate employment or for long-term career paths. Children of color are disproportionately involved in the child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems and these systems often struggle to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to children and their parents.

Research shows that the long-term success of children who enter the child-protective system is dependent not only on being kept safe and receiving needed treatment services, but upon their maintaining or establishing long-term ties with

caring adults and having continuity in relationships outside the protective service system. At the same time, placement of children into foster care often disrupts existing relationships and makes it difficult to create others. Too many children “age out” of foster care, leaving them without a family on whom they can depend when they turn 18. While safety is often the immediate concern, the issues of permanence and well-being of children are also critically important to their healthy development, yet often receive much less attention in state child-welfare systems.

### Context for Federal Electoral Dialogue

Public opinion consistently shows that voters want government to play a strong role in protecting children and keeping them free from harm, while not intruding into family prerogatives in child rearing.

Nationally, 400,000 children are in foster care and there are 2 million reported cases of child abuse each year. In 2011, 4,664 Utah children were in foster care. There were 26,767 reported cases of child abuse that year. The federal government provides nearly half of all funding that states (one-third of the funding in Utah) use to provide for child abuse prevention and treatment, including foster care and subsidized adoptions.

**What federal actions should be taken to address the needs of this vulnerable population of children?**



# Children Ready for School

## The Federal Government's Current Role in School Readiness

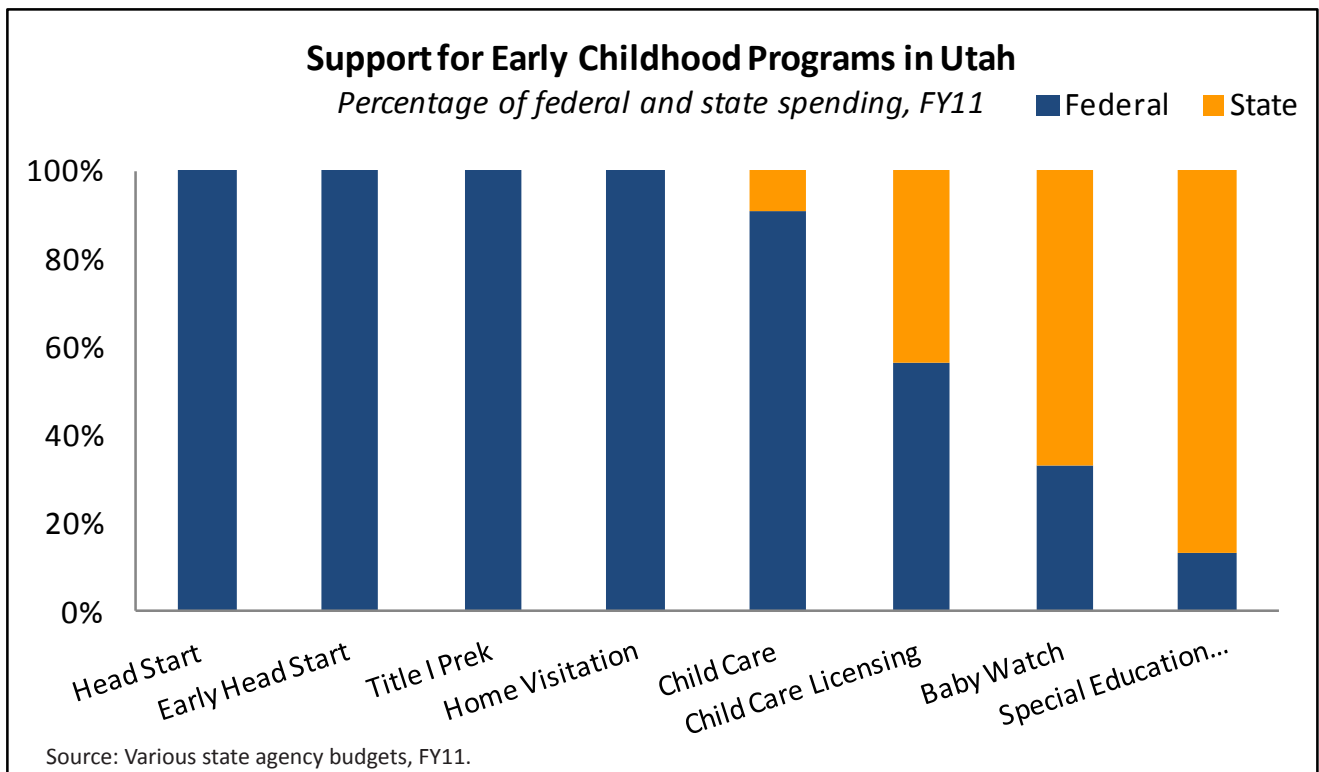
Brain research and neuroscience have established that the first five years of life are critical for a child's overall development and determines their ability to acquire the skills and behaviors needed to succeed in school and life. In the years before they start school, children are learning to express themselves and take on increasingly complex tasks at the same time they are developing physically, socially and emotionally.

In FY11, the federal government contributed over 70 percent of total spending on early childhood programs in Utah.

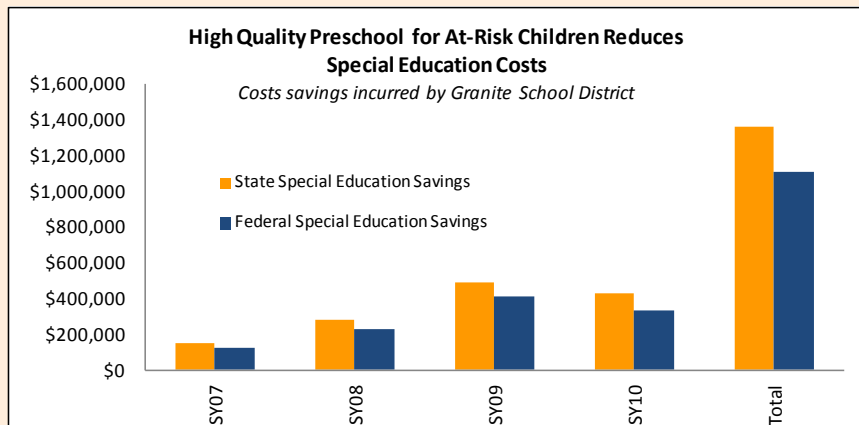
In 1964, as part of the War on Poverty, the federal government established one of the first national programs directed at young children, Head Start.

Administered through community agencies, it is still the largest federal initiative to promote child development in the pre-school years. Head Start serves as both a child development and an anti-poverty program, providing preschool experiences for low-income 3- and 4-year-olds. The program serves slightly less than half of all children who are eligible (with its eligibility level of 100 percent of poverty). In 1994, the Early Head Start program was established to serve disadvantaged infants and toddlers and their families. This is a much smaller program that provides intensive services for very young children. The federal government also supports preschool programs, through Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), for children with disabilities.

In addition to Head Start, the federal government now plays a major role in making child care available for working parents. Since 1970, the proportion of young children living in families where both parents (or the only parent) works has increased from 30 percent of all families to 70 percent of all families. Declining real wages over the last 40 years, particularly for those without a college degree, has meant that most families require two incomes to raise children. As funding



Research shows that low-income children who participate in high quality early education have a lower incidence of special education referral than low-income children who do not attend high quality preschool. Voices for Utah Children quantified the federal and state cost savings in special education for 3 cohorts of at-risk preschoolers in the Granite School District. Over \$1.1 million in federal special education funds were saved over 4 years and over \$1.3 million in state cost savings were achieved.



Source: Compiled by Voices for Utah Children from data provided by Granite School District, August, 2011.

for welfare payments has declined, the federal government has increased its funding support to states to provide subsidized child care to lower-income families.

Federal expenditures for child care assistance create jobs in small businesses and support working Utah families. The economic impact of the \$800 million child care industry in Utah compares favorably to other sectors of the economy, such as construction. According to one study, the child care sector in Utah has a larger impact on economic output than sectors that are typically thought of as engines of economic growth, including transportation.

Most recently, the federal government placed an even greater emphasis upon strengthening early learning in the early years. In 2010, the federal government developed a “home visiting” block grant to the states to provide evidence-based home visiting to families with young children, designed to improve healthy development and readiness for school. This effort joins Early Head Start and the infants and toddlers program, Part C of IDEA, which supports children with disabilities, as federal programs to serve very young children (birth-2). In 2011, the U.S.

Departments of Education and Health and Human Services established a “Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge” competitive grant program to foster innovation and leadership among states in developing overall high-quality early-learning systems.

## Children’s Readiness for School and the Challenges Ahead

While the majority of children progress through early childhood healthy and prepared for school, a significant number start school already at risk. By the age of three, there are large differences in the average

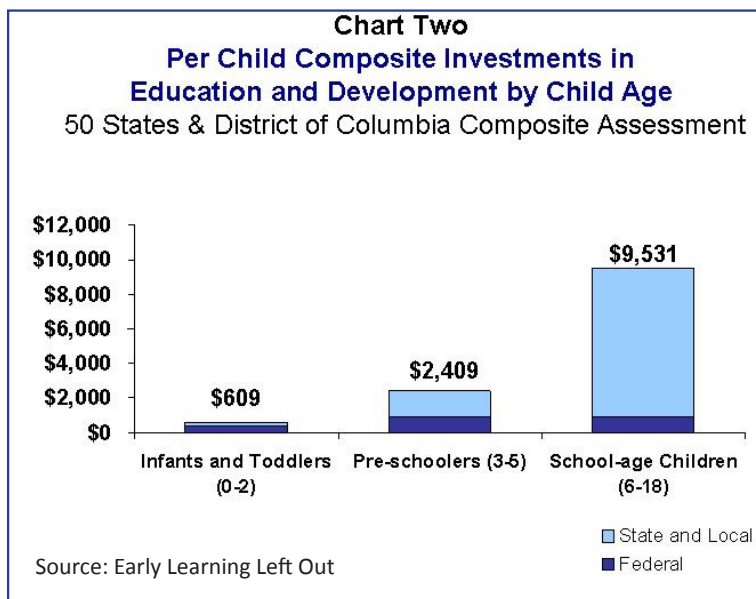
vocabularies of children based on parental socio-economic status. These differences extend to the time of school entry, and half of all subsequent school difficulties can be predicted by the time children start kindergarten. Despite federal investments in child care, there remains a mismatch between what families can afford to pay for care and what it costs to ensure high-quality care. Much of the care families can afford and have access to is rated as fair or poor.

During the first years of life, toxic stress, adverse childhood experiences and untreated developmental delays and emotional distress are particularly damaging and can have lifelong consequences—in physical and mental health, educational success and justice-system involvement. Approximately 20 percent of all young children have some diagnosable behavioral, developmental or mental-health condition, but over half are not detected until the child reaches school. Families of different racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds may experience difficulties securing professional child-care services that match their own backgrounds and experiences.

While there are a multitude of federal programs serving young children and their families, overall public per-child investments in young children’s education and development remain small in comparison with that for school-aged children. For every dollar government (federal, state, and school district) invests in the education of a school-aged child, government invests only 7 cents in the education and development of an infant and toddler (0-2), and 25 cents in a preschooler (3-5). While 90 percent of the education investment in school-aged children is at the state and school district level, half of the investment in young children’s education and development is made by the federal government.

## Context for Federal Electoral Dialogue

Public-opinion polls consistently show that voters want candidates to speak out on how they will help ensure the success of the next generation, and, in particular, how they will ensure young children start school equipped for success. Support for investing in children has increased as a result of research showing the big returns on investment from high-quality early-childhood programs. At the same time, polls show voters feel they have limited information on whether candidates propose public policies to support young children.



Many children who start school behind will never catch up. High quality early-childhood programs like Granite School District’s Preschool Program, have been shown to improve school readiness in a cost-effective manner.

**What federal actions should be taken to close the “readiness gap” that appears before kids start school and accounts for so much student underachievement and school failure?**

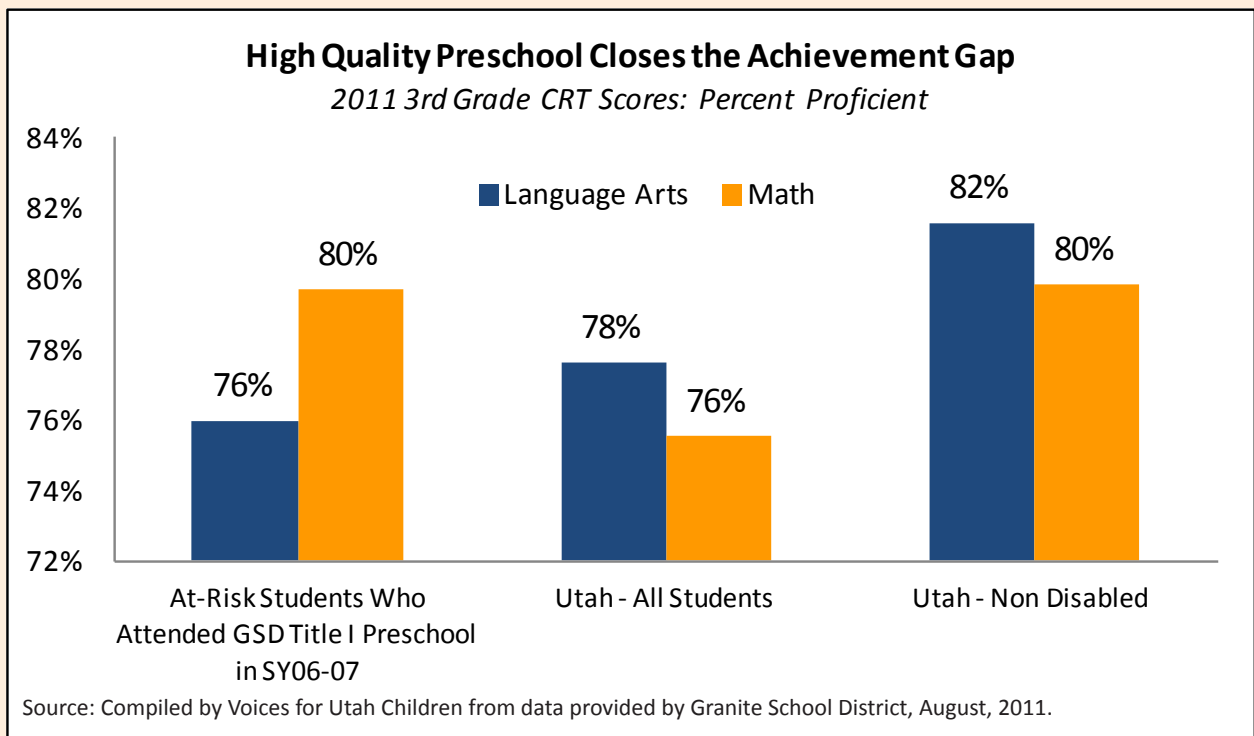


## Title I Preschool Vital to School Readiness

Economic research shows that investments in children, age 5 and younger, improve school readiness and decrease crime, teen pregnancy, delinquency, substance abuse, and welfare dependency. The science of early brain development demonstrates how child development, before the age of 5, is the foundation for a prosperous society. Brain architecture is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth. Early experiences affect the quality of that architecture by establishing either a sturdy or fragile foundation for learning, health, and behavior in later years.

The improved outcomes for at-risk children associated with high quality early childhood programs are significant when considering approaches to addressing Utah’s achievement gap. Studies show that one of the most important predictors of third-grade test performance is school readiness at kindergarten entry. The Granite School district in Salt Lake City has a high quality Title I preschool program. The Granite School district uses approximately 9% of its Title I allocation to provide preschool for at-risk children in their Title I designated schools. The Granite District Preschool Program was designated a “Center of Excellence” by the U.S. Department of Education in the first year of implementation of an Early Reading First Grant.

The Granite Preschool Program has been successful in closing the achievement gap. Economically disadvantaged children who attended the Title I preschool program in SY06-07 completed 3rd grade in the spring of 2011 at the 11 schools most impacted by poverty in the school district. These at-risk children scored similarly in Language Arts (LA) as all children in the state and outperformed all children in the state in Math.



# Children Successful in School

## The Federal Government's Current Role in Education

America has long been recognized as a world leader in the education of its children and youth, starting with its K-12 education system. Education is seen as a key to social mobility and success in American democracy, and Americans highly value education.

The transformation of the economy over the last several decades into the information age requires much higher levels of education and skill from young people entering the workforce, both for their own success and for the continued growth of the economy. In the current world economy, education is even more key to America's economic prosperity and leadership, as American workers must compete internationally as well as within the country.

Approximately 90 percent of all children enrolled in K-12 education are in public-school systems financed by a combination of state, local, and federal funding. States and communities play the primary role in financing public education in America and setting standards, establishing curricula, building classrooms and monitoring performance. Nearly 90 percent of all funding for public schools comes from state and local sources.

At the same time, the federal government plays a very significant role in financing certain aspects of the country's K-12 education system, largely through grants to states and local education agencies. In FY2011, the federal budget supported over 60 different discretionary K-12 programs, totaling over \$43 billion and representing nearly 10 percent of all federal discretionary, non-defense spending. Three-fifths of this funding is directed to two particular grant programs to states – Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (\$14.5 billion) and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (\$11.5 billion).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was established in 1965 to provide equal access to education and reduce the achievement gap. Title I of ESEA finances compensatory and remedial education

services to disadvantaged students, focusing on schools with high proportions of students from low-income families. The most recent reauthorization of ESEA was in 2001 as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

NCLB imposed many new requirements on states and local education agencies to test children's academic performance and then hold schools accountable for showing improvements for all students and all subsets of students. NCLB has been criticized for emphasizing testing over instruction and for being an unfunded mandate on state and local educational systems, but it has brought much greater attention to gaps in student achievement across schools, districts and categories of students. In particular, NCLB has drawn attention to schools that yield significant and persistent gaps in test performance by race and English language learner status and has required states to show progress in closing those gaps.

## Children's Education and the Challenges Ahead

Once recognized as the undisputed education leader, America's international standing in educating its children and youth, even through high school, has fallen relative to other countries. While post-secondary education is a near necessity for securing family-sustaining employment, over one-quarter of American youth fail to graduate from high school on time. International comparisons on math, science, and reading skills show American students overall fare poorly on some measures with those of America's major trading partners and competitors. While many American children still receive the highest level of educational instruction possible, too many do not. Even those who graduate from high school and go onto college often need remediation in order to meet college standards.

There are a variety of local, state and national initiatives to improve America's educational system, including initiatives led by foundations, the business community, parents and community leaders as well as by government. Some have focused on middle- and high-school achievement, with a particular emphasis on science and mathematics development. Others have focused on the early-elementary years, with an objective of reading proficiency for all children by the end of third grade. Some have focused primarily on in-school reform

efforts that emphasize instructional rigor and teacher quality. Others have focused on school and community partnerships to strengthen in-school and out-of-school learning opportunities. Still others have focused on creating alternatives through charter schools, open enrollment and homeschooling to improve the educational system.

There also have been proposals to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education and federal direction over public education, which would leave education decisions entirely to state and local control. Meanwhile, disparities in educational achievement across the states and across communities within states are profound.

## Context for Federal Electoral Dialogue

Americans value education and the ability of any child, regardless of family or community background, to advance and succeed through education. Most American voters see it as a foundation of America's strength and commitment to democracy. While there is strong support for ensuring high quality educational opportunities and belief in the need for educational reforms and improvements, there is less consensus on how to achieve that end—and the particular role the federal government should play to that end.

In Utah, only 78.4% of students graduated from high school in 2009 leaving 21.6% facing a highly technical world without a high school degree. Making up a significant share of Utah children lacking basic education are Latino students. These students are dropping out of high school at a rate of approximately 50%.

The 2011 National Assessment of Education (NAEP) scores for Utah show that only 33% of students in 4th grade are “proficient” in reading and 43% in math. Nationally, Utah ranked 26 in reading and 22 in math.



While America has been the international leader in educating its population, America has to compete in a world economy where other countries have dramatically improved their education systems and, on some measures, now exceed America's overall performance—both on completing secondary education and on obtaining higher-level degrees.

**What federal actions should be taken to ensure America is a world leader in educating its next generation?**

# Economically Secure Children

## The Federal Government's Historical Role in Child Economic Security

The federal government has had a long-standing role in providing safety net supports for children and their families but that role has changed significantly over time. The importance of the safety net has increased significantly during the Great Recession.

In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act implemented Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. Known as "welfare reform," the change represented a fundamental shift from an entitlement to a block grant and emphasized the role of welfare payments as temporary and serving primarily as a bridge to employment. Since the enactment of TANF, the number of people who receive benefits has declined from 12.3 million to 4.4 million.

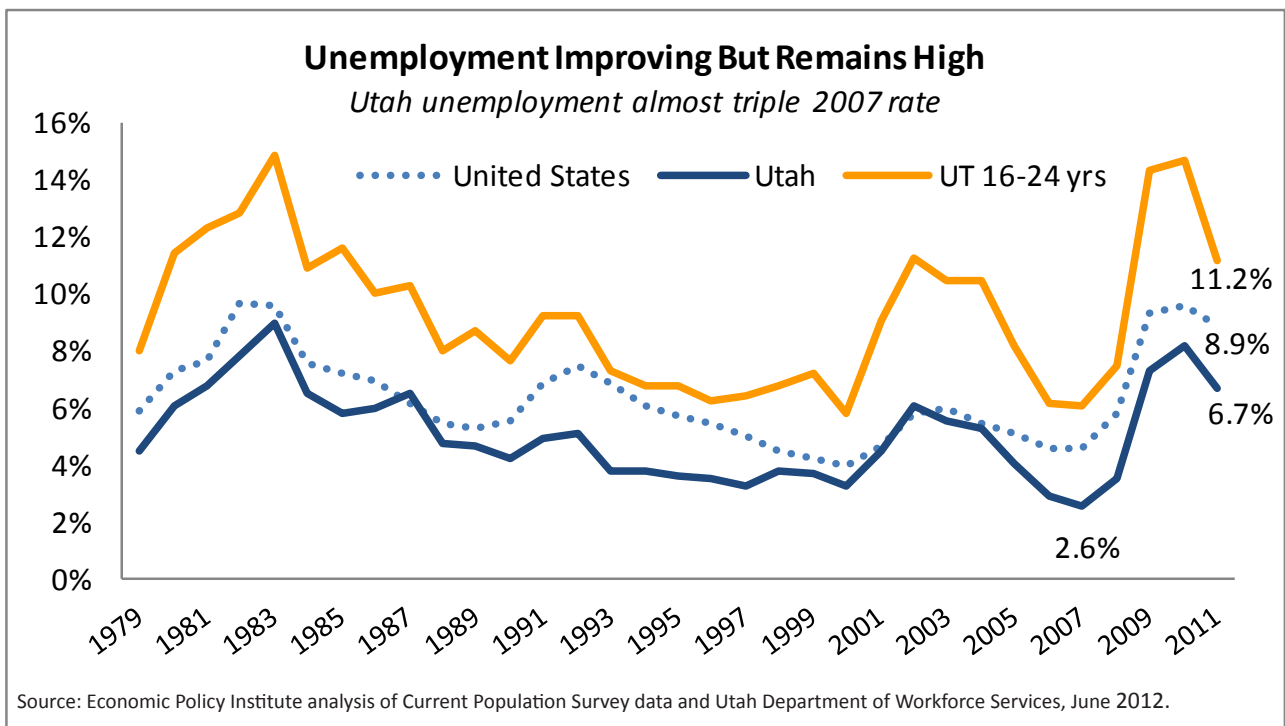
While the overall provision of payments to families has declined dramatically, the federal government has substantially expanded its support to low or

moderate income working families with children within the tax code, both by increasing the benefits under the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program and establishing a refundable child tax credit. Supplemental food and nutrition benefits (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) also have increased, and federal and state child support enforcement actions have expanded.

In Utah, the number of families receiving TANF benefits has declined from 47,644 households in 1995 to 13,194 in 2011, a decrease of 72 percent.

TANF now amounts to \$5.9 billion in benefit payments. This amount ranks well behind the EITC (over \$40 billion for families with children), SNAP (\$58.3 billion, half to children) and Supplementary Security Income benefits for children with disabilities (\$10.1 billion), as a source of economic support to children and their families.

***These programs are vital to all low-income workers but particularly the 96,545 working Utahns who are unable to escape poverty.***



In addition to providing direct economic assistance, the federal government also provides work supports to families in the form of child-care assistance, primarily through the Child Care and Development Block Grant and health insurance coverage under Medicaid and CHIP.

200% of FPL, a measure which better represents what families spend to meet basic needs. On international comparisons, America's poverty rate among children is more than double that of most other industrial Western democracies.

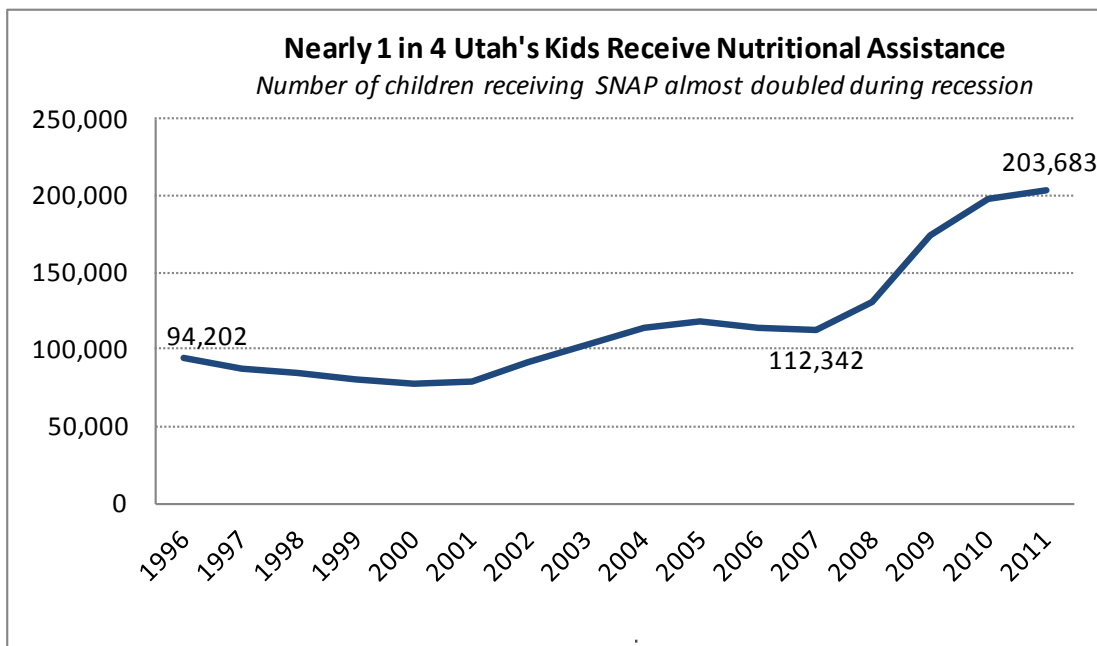
In 2008, over 158,000 low income workers in Utah received the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and over 189,000 received the refundable portion of the child tax credit. As a result of these tax refunds, the federal government provided almost \$602 million to low or moderate income Utahns. Supplemental food and nutrition benefits have also increased. SNAP now provides nutritional assistance to 203,683 Utah children. This is 23% of Utah's total child population.

In 2010, 16% of Utah children lived in households below the FPL and 40% lived in households below 200% of poverty.

Even temporary poverty can have long-term negative effects on children. Long-term poverty for children is strongly associated with poorer overall physical health, mental health, educational achievement, as well as greater justice-system involvement. Children living in poverty are in jeopardy because of financial shortfalls that can make meeting essential needs for food, clothing, and housing problematic. They live in conditions where there are fewer supports and opportunities for growth and investment in their future. Children of color experience much higher rates of poverty and are much more likely to live in economically distressed communities. These higher rates are likely the result of ongoing income and employment gaps. These limit the investments families can make in their children and render these families more vulnerable to economic uncertainty.

## Child Economic Security and the Challenges Ahead

Even with these programs, children are more likely to live in poverty than any other age group in America society. In 2010, 22% of children lived in households below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) --\$23,050 for a family of four-- and 43% lived in households below



Child poverty also is very strongly associated with family structure and parental education. Rates of poverty among children are highest among single-parent families headed by women with high-school diplomas or less. More than one-third of all

Source: Utah Dept. of Workforce Services, June 4, 2012.

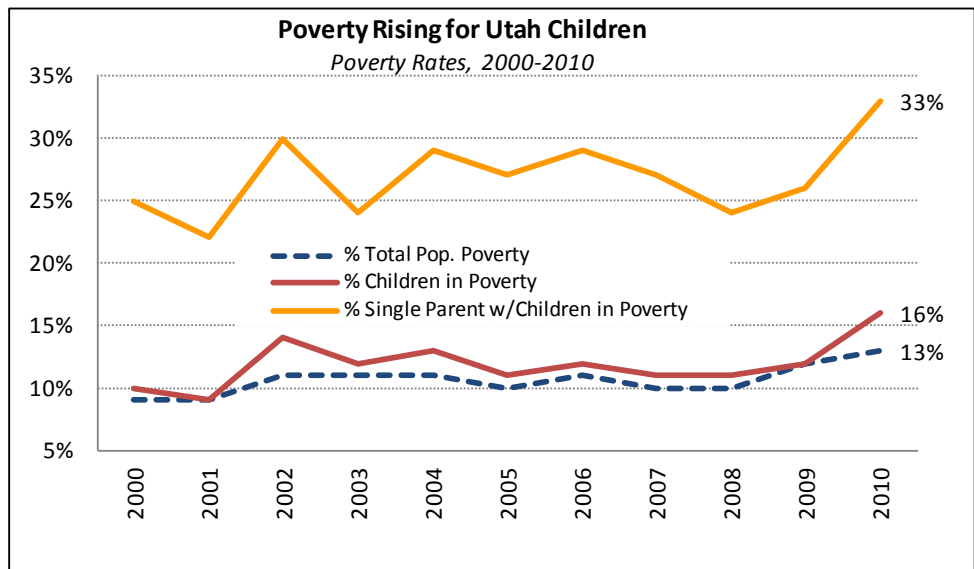
American children now reside in homes headed by a single parent, and 60 percent of all children in poverty reside in such households. Even though single-parent families are more likely to be in the workforce today

Although the unemployment rate in Utah is improving and is currently at 6.0%, young workers have an unemployment rate twice that of their older counterparts. The high unemployment rate among young workers is particularly troubling given Utah's tradition of early family formation, and the impact that unemployment has on families. There has been a 25% increase in the number of children with at least one employed parent since 2008.

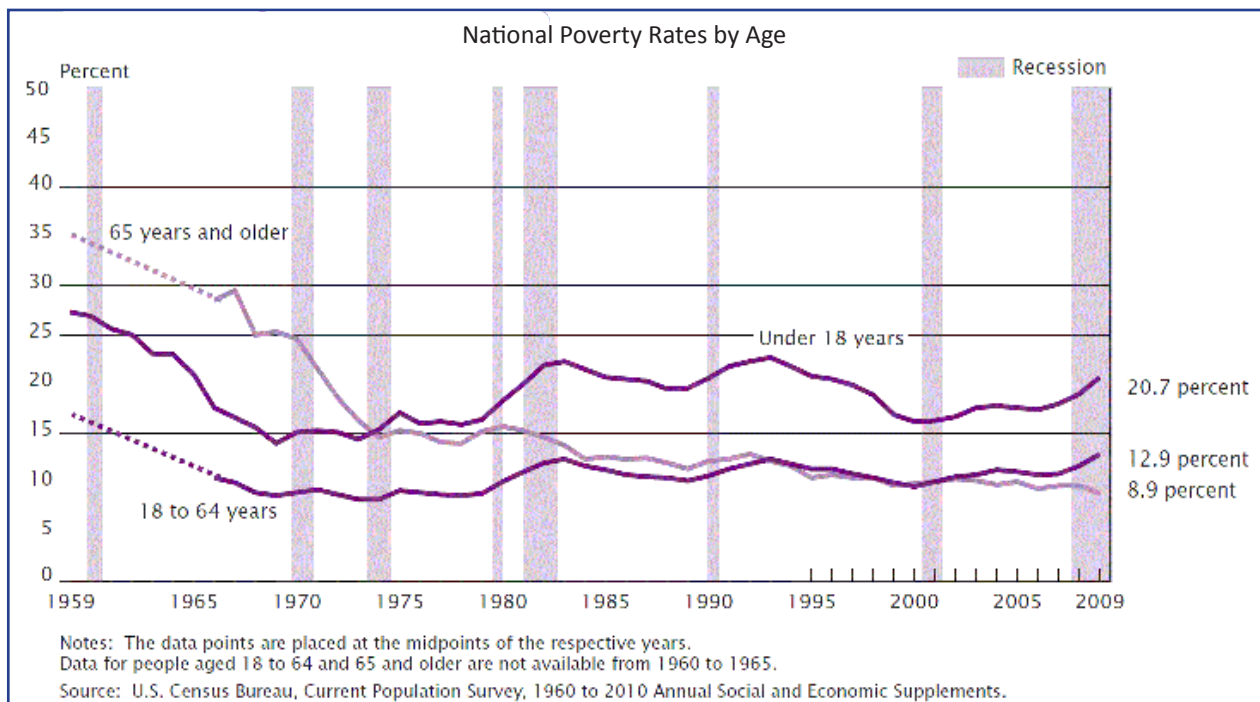
In 2010, over 68,000 Utah children resided in homes headed by a single parent. One-third of Utah children in single-parent families lived in poverty that year.

than in the past, they are much more likely to be in poverty.

The severe economic recession of recent years also has plunged formerly working, self-sufficient families into poverty and housing foreclosure. Nationally, the unemployment rate remains at a twenty year high of 8.9%. Since 2007, the percentage of children with at least one unemployed parent has more than doubled.



Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, www.datacenter.kidscount.org



As unemployment rose and income decreased, foreclosure rates in Utah increased, affecting 56,000 children since 2007.

## Context for Federal Electoral Dialogue

Jobs and the economy are certain to be a major part of the federal policy dialogue and debate. A return to pre-recession employment and economic security levels, however, will not address the needs of a large share of more than 15.5 million children (137,000 in Utah) living in poverty. In fact, in order to reduce child poverty, responses must address the needs of workers, particularly single parents, currently in the low-wage workforce that enable them to get ahead.

While jobs and the economy top the list of issues of voter concerns, public opinion polls also show strong concern for working families with children. A large majority of voters believe government has a responsibility to support working families with children, at least to a level that they can meet their family's basic needs.

Twenty-two percent of American's children and close to 16 percent of Utah children live in poverty. More than twice those amounts live in families that struggle to make ends meet.

**What federal actions can ensure that the economic needs of these children are met?**



# Child Opportunities for Success

## The Federal Government’s Historical Role in Ensuring Equal Opportunity

America has a long and unfinished history of extending and expanding legal rights to its residents—abolishing slavery, providing for women’s suffrage, outlawing segregation in classrooms and public and private establishments and making discrimination in employment and housing illegal. It also has sought to provide compensatory services to enable those who have faced discrimination to succeed. The aspirations of these provisions have yet to be fully achieved, as considerable research documents.

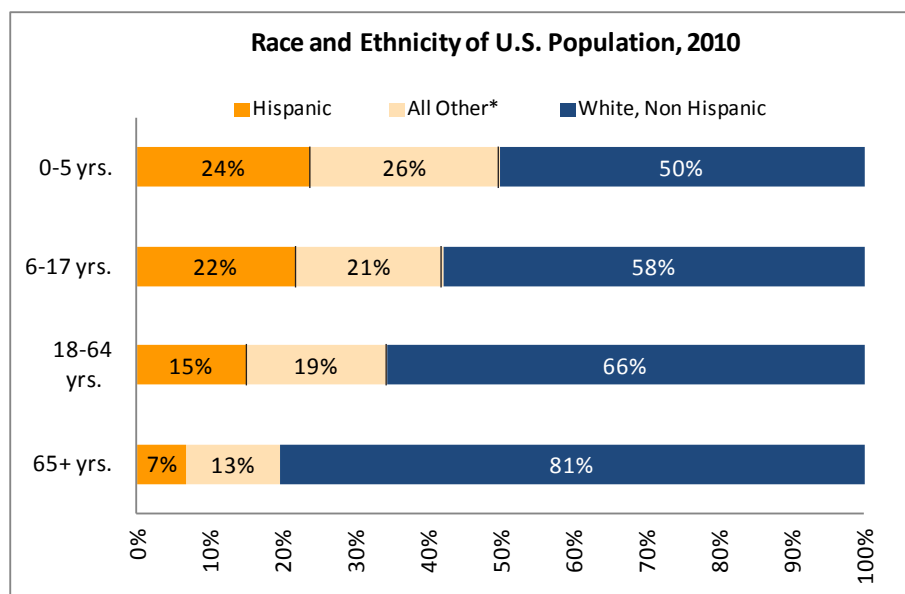
In some instances, there has been action by Congress establishing opportunities for populations of children that have been affected by past discrimination or current economic barriers—such as the Head Start program and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In most instances, however, federal action to ensure equal opportunity has been built into legislation, often through provisions that require children from all backgrounds have access to or can participate. In health, for instance, *Healthy People 2020* has established specific goals and objectives to reduce health disparities by race, and translation services are required within many federal programs providing health services to low-income populations. In education, No Child Left Behind requires reporting by race on education testing and closing disparities as well as improving performance overall. In child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems,

discretionary grants and federal directives exist within funding to reduce the overrepresentation of minorities.

As a nation of many immigrants, the United States also has established policies regarding immigration, which themselves have changed over time. With respect to children, current federal policies require that public education be available to all children residing in the United States, regardless of citizenship or immigration status and that federally funded community health centers provide health services to them. At the same time, many federal programs require legal immigrants to live in the country for five years to be eligible for benefits and prohibit benefits to undocumented persons. The federal government maintains special relationships with Native American tribal reservations, working through tribal governments rather than the states in providing federal programs.

## Equal Opportunity and Challenges Ahead

America is becoming a much more diverse nation, and children are leading the way. In 2010, 50% of young children (0-5) and 42% of school-aged children (6-17) were Hispanic/Latino or of color, compared with 34% of the working-age population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

\*African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Native American and Other.

(18-64) and 20% of the retirement-age population. Hispanic/Latino children accounted for over half of the child population growth from 2000 to 2010. At a minimum, this demographic change requires education, health and human services and workforce systems in Utah and the nation to respond effectively and equitably to children and their families from increasingly diverse language, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Utah is also becoming more ethnically and racially diverse due largely to the increased diversity among Utah children. In 2010, 24.4% of the youth population was minorities compared to 17.4% of the adult population. From 2000 to 2010, Utah's total population increased by 530,716. Approximately 33% of the adult population growth was accounted for by minority population growth. In comparison, 56.6% of Utah's youth population was minority growth.

Despite major changes in law and practice to stop discrimination, disparities remain. Children of color and children from poor families or neighborhoods experience much poorer education outcomes and are much more likely to become involved in the child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems. The average wealth of white households is 20 times that of African American households and 18 times that of Hispanic households.

A large percentage of Utah's population growth in the past decade was due to immigration. One of the biggest unresolved concerns is children who were born in the United States and have at least one undocumented parent. The manner in which immigration laws are enforced can break up such families and have serious adverse consequences to children.

## Context for Federal Electoral Dialogue

Public opinion polls show that a majority of white voters feel that the country now has embraced equality of opportunity. However, most voters of color believe that racism and discrimination still exist and that the government should play a greater role in reducing disparities.

While immigration policy has its own set of issues, public opinion polls show that many Americans still view it through a strong racial and cultural lens. In the absence of immigration reform from the federal government, many states – including Utah – have moved forward with their own legislation, largely focused on enforcement. However, an historic signing on immigration reform took place November 11, 2010 at the Utah State Capitol. Representatives from corporations and businesses, state and city governments, community organizations and faiths stepped forward to lend support to what's titled "The Utah Compact" in hopes of influencing the tone of the discussion on immigration.

There are pronounced disparities in child outcomes—across racial and economic groupings.

**As Utah and the nation become even more diverse, with children leading the way, what federal actions should be taken to ensure children have equal opportunities for success and know they can succeed if they work to the best of their abilities?**

# THE UTAH COMPACT

## A DECLARATION OF FIVE PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE UTAH'S IMMIGRATION DISCUSSION

**FEDERAL SOLUTIONS** Immigration is a federal policy issue between the U.S. government and other countries—not Utah and other countries. We urge Utah's congressional delegation, and others, to lead efforts to strengthen federal laws and protect our national borders. We urge state leaders to adopt reasonable policies addressing immigrants in Utah.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT** We respect the rule of law and support law enforcement's professional judgment and discretion. Local law enforcement resources should focus on criminal activities, not civil violations of federal code.

**FAMILIES** Strong families are the foundation of successful communities. We oppose policies that unnecessarily separate families. We champion policies that support families and improve the health, education and well-being of all Utah children.

**ECONOMY** Utah is best served by a free-market philosophy that maximizes individual freedom and opportunity. We acknowledge the economic role immigrants play as workers and taxpayers. Utah's immigration policies must reaffirm our global reputation as a welcoming and business-friendly state.

**A FREE SOCIETY** Immigrants are integrated into communities across Utah. We must adopt a humane approach to this reality, reflecting our unique culture, history and spirit of inclusion. The way we treat immigrants will say more about us as a free society and less about our immigrant neighbors. Utah should always be a place that welcomes people of goodwill.

*Governor Norm Bangert*

*Deborah Bayle, United Way of Salt Lake*

*Lane R. Beattie, Salt Lake Chamber*

*Mayor Ralph Becker, Salt Lake City*

*Kenneth Bullock, Utah League of Cities and Towns*

*Mayor Wilford W. Clyde, Springville City*

*Mayor Peter Coroon, Salt Lake County*

*Karen Crompton, Voices for Utah Children*

*Wes Curtis, Utah Center for Rural Life,  
Southern Utah University*

*Jeff Edwards, Economic Development  
Corporation of Utah*

*U.S. Senator Jake Garn*

*Mayor Matthew R. Godfrey, Ogden City*

*U.S. Congressman James Hansen*

*The Right Rev. Bishop Scott Hayashi,  
Episcopal Church in Utah*

*Rev. Steven Klemz, Pastor,  
Zion Evangelical Lutheran*

*Paul Mero, Sutherland Institute*

*Mark Shurtleff, Attorney General*

*Dean Singleton, Publisher, The Salt Lake Tribune*

*Governor Olene S. Walker*

*The Most Rev. John C. Wester, Bishop of the  
Salt Lake City Catholic Diocese*

*Mark H. Willes, CEO/President,  
Deseret Management Corp.*

*Join this grassroots movement and add your name to hundreds of other  
Utahns who support reasonable immigration reform at*

**UTAHCOMPACT.COM**

## Utah Family Demographics

<b>2010 Census</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Total Population	2,763,885	100.0
Under 5 years	263,924	9.5
5-9 years	249,572	9.0
10-14 years	227,951	8.2
15-19 years	221,090	8.0
 Total Households	 877,692	 100.0
Family Households	660,234	75.2
with children under 18	346,439	39.5
 Husband-Wife Families	 535,827	 61.0
with children under 18	278,270	31.7
 Male Householder, no wife present	 38,858	 4.4
with children under 18	19,678	2.2
 Female Householder, no husband present	 85,549	 9.7
with children under 18	48,491	5.5
 Race		
One Race	2,688,367	97.3
White	2,379,560	86.1
Black or African American	29,287	1.1
American Indian or Alaskan Native	32,927	1.2
Asian	55,285	2.0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	24,554	0.9
Some Other Race	166,754	6.0
Two or More Races	75,518	2.7
 Hispanic or Latino, can be any race	 358,340	 13.0
 <b>2006-2010 American Community Survey</b>		
Grandparents Living With Their		
Grandchildren under 18	50,420	
 Grandparents Responsible for Their	 18,005	 35.7
Grandchildren under 18		

Source: 2012 Utah KIDS COUNT "Measures of Child Well-Being in Utah".



# Children in Nurturing Families

## The Federal Government's Role in Nurturing Families

Families are children's most important teachers, nurses, nutritionists, safety officers, and mentors. Strong communities are needed to support families in these roles. Yet, too many families struggle to provide the nurturing and stable home environments children need. Through a combination of poverty and stress, immaturity and mental illness among parents, too many children are vulnerable to a host of poor outcomes.

Research is clear on the critical importance of a child having consistent and loving family relationships, but the federal role in promoting such relationships has been one of intense debate. People's conceptions of what constitutes loving family relationships differ, as do conceptions of the role of faith, values and norms in determining them. This extends to the definition of what constitutes a family and what resultant rights and responsibilities to confer on gay and lesbian couples and the children in their households. It extends to the role of government in promoting marriage or making it a condition of receipt of certain benefits. It also extends to the rights that un-emancipated children have in relation to their parents in such fundamental issues as selecting a faith or making decisions about their education.

While these issues remain subject to sharp division and debate, the federal government has enacted a wide array of demonstration grants to strengthen families, including programs designed to reduce adolescent pregnancy and fatherhood initiatives to increase the role of fathers in supporting their children, economically and emotionally. Some of these have been "faith-based" initiatives.

## Nurturing Families and Challenges Ahead

Although many single parents do an excellent job raising their children, research also is clear that children do best in stable and nurturing households where there are two parents to provide support. When people talk about the "breakdown of the family," they most often do so with respect to the increase in single parenting and divorce, which has occurred across all racial and ethnic groups.

In one of the most significant demographic trends in America, the rise in births to unmarried women and the rise in divorce rates have resulted in a commensurate rise in the proportion of children who spend at least part of their lives growing up in single-parent households.

The U.S. Census shows that there has been a steady increase in the proportion of all births that are to single mothers—from 5 percent in 1960 to 32 percent in 1995 to 41 percent in 2009. There has been a similar rise in the proportion of children under 18 living in a single-parent household, from 9 percent of all children in 1960 to 34 percent in 2009.

Utah has the highest percentage of children living in two-parent families. In the 2010 Census, 81% of Utah children resided in two-parent families.

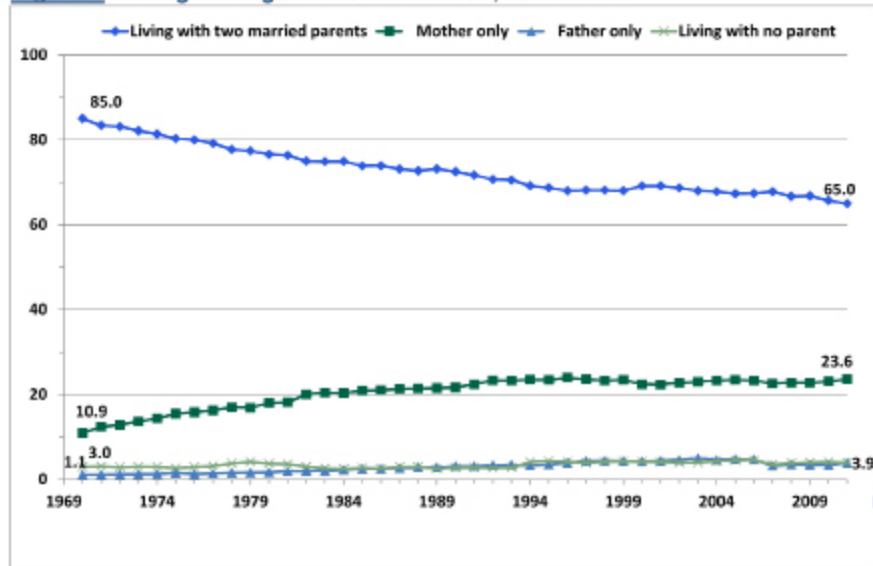
Over four in five of these single-parent families are headed by women, and these families are five times more likely than married-couple families to be living in poverty. Divorce accounts for a significant share of at least temporary single-parenting, with half of all marriages ending in divorce. When there is domestic violence or high levels of conflict among parents, divorce may be better for the child, but in almost all instances divorce represents an adverse childhood experience that requires additional attention in order to mitigate risks of harm to the child. All these have consequences on children and their opportunity to grow into healthy, successful adults.

Research also shows that women without a high-school diploma are more likely to live in poverty, be unmarried, have more children and bear them at a younger age. Similarly, the fathers of these children are much more likely to have low education, criminal justice-system involvement, and difficulty obtaining and keeping employment. While not the only cause of single-parenting and child poverty, lack of education and the opportunity it provides for economic success play a significant role. Fortunately, adolescent parenting has declined, but becoming a teen parent remains a leading reason for dropping out of high school. Sixty percent of unmarried teen mothers do not complete high school and 98% do not obtain a college degree.

## Context for Federal Electoral Dialogue

There is general consensus that government should recognize and support families as the foundation of society and respect their rights to raise children according to their values. Yet this is not absolute. On some issues, such as child safety and protection from abuse, the public views the child's needs as superseding parental rights. On others, such as how to better support families in provide nurturing environments for their children, government policies and practices within existing public systems play a role.

**Figure 1: Living Arrangements of Children, 1970-2011**



Note: Children living with two married parents may be living with biological, adoptive, or non-biological parents. Children living with mother only or father only may also be living with the parent's unmarried partner. Source: "Families and Living Arrangements: Living Arrangements of Children" Tables 1-4. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>. Data for 2003: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2004, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. <http://www.childstats.gov/ac2004/tables/pop6.asp>. Data for 2004-2011: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements". Table C-2. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/.html>.

The family is the foundation for the next generation, and children do best in families with stable, nurturing, consistent care. Yet family structure is changing in America, most notably with an increase in single parenting.

What federal actions can be taken, in particular, to address the growth of single parenting and its implications to children's nurturing and development?

## About Us

At Voices for Utah Children, we believe that all children should be healthy and safe, ready for school, and live in families who can meet their needs and invest in their future. To achieve this vision, we focus on five key areas that benefit the healthy development of all children.

**Health:** All children deserve to receive affordable, comprehensive and high-quality health care.

**School Readiness:** All children and their parents deserve to receive the services and support they need to enable them to start school prepared for success.

**Safety:** All children deserve to be safe in their homes and communities from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

**Economic Stability:** All children deserve to live in families that can provide for their needs and make investments in their future.

**Diversity:** All children deserve to achieve their full potential in a society that closes opportunity gaps and recognizes and values diversity.

### What Makes Us Unique?

Big wins for kids don't just happen by accident. They happen because of advocacy – when skilled professionals backed by thoughtful funders show policymakers that we can and should act to keep kids safe and help them grow. We start with one basic question: "Is it good for kids?" As a multi-issue child advocacy organization, Voices for Utah Children is making a difference in our kids' lives by:

**Raising awareness.** Through research, media campaigns and advocacy work, we continue to communicate the most vital needs of Utah's children.

**Influencing policy.** By having a voice in decisions made by policymakers, we help ensure that the needs of children are raised in every policy debate.

**Uniting our community.** By bringing the power of a community together – legislators, business executives, private funders, government agency representative, nonprofit directors, and ordinary citizens – we help identify and resolve the tough problems facing Utah's children and families.

## History

Irene Fisher, Executive Director of the anti-poverty organization Utah Issues, attended a national conference in 1983 sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), a national child advocacy organization. Irene was impressed with CDF's effectiveness as advocates for child care, child health, child nutrition, prevention of child abuse, and other problems that impacted children whose parents were least able to advocate for them. She believed that a similar state-level organization could play an important role in Utah with its young and vulnerable population. Utah Children was created in 1985 as an advocacy group that would not provide direct services, but would provide a voice for Utah children in public policy decisions.

In 2002, Utah Children became Voices for Utah Children. Today, we are recognized as a credible, nonpartisan, and forceful voice for children and families by policymakers, the media, and the public. The Spring 2007 issue of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* called Voices for Utah Children "the state's best-known advocate for children's issues, and the go-to source for the media, state agencies, and elected officials on issues affecting children." We are a member of Voices for America's Children.

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