

Update: A Dozen Things to Watch

Just beyond this year's midpoint we're checking in on our dozen things to watch that we highlighted at the [beginning of 2017](#). In this update, ACS provides a quick look at the current lay of the land regarding a range of issues, many of which have seen significant change since January. While there continues to be speculation on all fronts related to many of the things to watch, ACS pledges to continue to follow these issues throughout 2017 and beyond, providing updates and information as it becomes available. The ACS team is ready to help you continue moving in the right direction on these or any number of other issues related to planning, advocacy, strategy development, and communication services. Contact us [here](#).

1. Shifting Priorities for Foundations

While it's still early to say with certainty, many in the philanthropic world, including [Inside Philanthropy](#), are having more and more conversations about what is being called the "Trump Effect," the anticipated impact that President Donald Trump's presidency will have on philanthropy. In April 2017, the [Center for Effective Philanthropy](#) published the report, [Shifting Winds](#), which was based on a survey of more than 160 CEOs of foundations. The survey indicated that nearly 75 percent of foundations are actively or planning to alter their giving as a direct result of Trump's policies. Areas in which foundations are considering making changes include, emergency grants, additional funding beyond existing grants, and general operating support.

In addition to the efforts of foundations throughout the country, studies also show a likely shift in the giving of individuals. Studies conducted by [PMX Agency and National Research Group](#) suggest that new patterns of giving are likely to arise among individuals. Both Democrats and Republicans express an increased interest in charitable contributions, and they are unsurprisingly focused on different priorities. While Democrats generally seek to offset the anticipated negative impact of Trump's policies in the health and social arena, Republicans generally are prepared to take advantage of the Trump White House's anticipated policies, particularly related to defense and religious-related causes.

While the full impact of the "Trump Effect" has yet to be seen, both foundations and individuals are preparing to shift their attention and efforts as a direct result of the policies of the White House, including the items slated for cuts in Trump's proposed budget, which calls for significant cuts to the

www.advocacyandcommunication.org

For more information about ACS, please contact us at info@advocacyandcommunication.org. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#).

Cleveland
1277 West 104th St.
Cleveland, OH 44102

Columbus
2612 Zollinger Road
Columbus, OH 43221

Washington, DC
300 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Suite 900, PMB 9005
Washington, DC 20001

Phoenix
207 North Gilbert Road
Suite 007
Phoenix, AZ 85234

Department of Health and Human Services to the tune of 18 percent, or \$15.1 billion dollars. The largest targets of these cuts are between \$5.8 billion to \$25.9 billion from the National Institutes of Health, and \$4.2 billion in federal grants for low-income communities, including the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which provides assistance to low-income people for heating costs. In addition, this budget would cut more than \$400 million in training programs for nurses and other health professionals. While this budget has yet to be voted on by the Congress, it indicates the administration's commitment to major cuts in the areas of health, human services, and workforce development.

2. Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce

The early childhood workforce has garnered [national media attention](#) related to potential changes to education requirements for preschool teachers. Many national organizations are currently working on coordinated efforts to support the professionalization of the early childhood education workforce including the [National League of Cities](#) (NLC), the [National Association of School Boards of Education](#) (NASBE), and the [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#). In addition to these organizations there are [many more stakeholders](#) engaged in the conversation and efforts nationally through NAEYC's efforts.

In addition to NAEYC's two-year initiative called [Power to the Profession \(P2P\)](#), which we highlighted [earlier in the year](#), NLC's [Cities Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce](#) initiative is working to leverage effective messaging about the early childhood workforce, so that cities can increase support and resources, and ultimately ensure children receive high-quality early learning experiences. The Cities Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce initiative highlights city innovation around the early childhood workforce and shines a spotlight on the importance of the workforce that cares for children.

Alongside the efforts of NAEYC and NCL, NASBE is working to strengthen state leadership in four states and to promote excellence in the early childhood workforce. These states have received a grant from NASBE to create an infrastructure to support the delivery of quality services to children and their families. Overall, NASBE seeks to elevate and accelerate an early childhood education agenda and policies to support it.

Research shows that childcare workers and preschool teachers with college degrees or certifications can improve outcomes for children, but many questions arise about whether those findings would hold true absent other factors like higher wages, classroom resources, and positive workplace conditions. Two recent articles—one in the [New York Times](#) and one in [Inside Higher Ed](#)—take a look at the thorny issues surrounding the professionalization of early childhood education.

The efforts of P2P, NCL, and NASBE are just three examples of the increased focus and effort to align activities and priorities related to defining, supporting, and professionalizing the early childhood profession. In short, the strengthening and professionalization of the early childhood workforce continues to be a topic to watch closely as we move through 2017.

3. Flexibility in the Every Student Succeeds Act

In accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states are now drafting and submitting accountability plans to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). As predicted earlier this year, the USDOE said they would provide greater flexibility to states in terms of how they plan to implement ESSA. But recent feedback to states from the USDOE is calling the previously stated level of flexibility into question. To date, 16 states and the District of Columbia have submitted their plans, and all others are required to be submitted by September 2017.

While states were under the assumption they were being afforded greater flexibility under the Trump administration, several states that have already submitted their plans have been asked to make modifications, and USDOE is taking a close look at the plans. Reactions by USDOE may give states that have yet to submit their plans insights into what modifications are needed to avoid topics of concern. In its first two rounds of feedback, the USDOE requested revisions from [New Mexico, Delaware, Nevada, Connecticut, Louisiana, New Jersey, Oregon, and Tennessee](#). For example, USDOE has inconsistently questioned whether states can use Advanced Placement (AP) tests as a tool to measure college and career readiness because those assessments may not be available to all students in all schools throughout the state. Currently AP assessments have been rejected in Delaware's plan but not in Louisiana or Tennessee. The USDOE's ultimate position on this issue may have a significant impact on states, as at least a dozen include AP within their implementation plans. Additionally, other tools that states are considering to gauge college and career readiness may face the same concern including, dual enrollment and vocational programming.

Overall, many in the K-12 field continue to be surprised by the somewhat strict level of review by USDOE, especially following United States Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos' rhetoric early in the year emphasizing that she and her team would be asking states to provide the bare minimum of information allowable under the law. States that have yet to submit their plans would be wise to err on the side of more information rather than less given this shift in tenor at the federal level. States should pay particular attention to components of ESSA understood to be vague such as setting "ambitious" achievement goals, assessments used to measure college and career readiness, and proposed student-achievement goals.

4. A Push for School Choice

Trump made a strong statement in support of charter schools and voucher programs by nominating Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education. DeVos has been a [long-time champion of for-profit charter schools and increased school choice](#). DeVos served as chairwoman of the board of [Alliance for School Choice](#) and was a co-founder of [All Children Matter PAC](#), which promotes school vouchers, tax credits to businesses that provide private school scholarships, and candidates in support of these issues.

Throughout the 2016 campaign, then-candidate Donald Trump touted his support for school choice. In fulfillment of his promise, his budget proposal allocates more than \$1.4 billion that would support charter schools and potential investment in voucher programs despite such programs continuing to receive mixed results from [studies](#) regarding their effectiveness. The details of the Trump administration's school choice, voucher, and charter school proposals are still largely undefined.

Despite the news that Trump's budget would allocate funds to school choice, it also cuts nearly \$14 billion in overall federal education funds, which will have a [negative impact on public school and charter school programs alike](#).

With so many budget and policy questions still unanswered, school choice remains a topic to watch for K-12 advocates as 2017 continues.

5. The Future of Two-Generational Approaches (2Gen)

As reported in our earlier update, [2Gen approaches](#) are both promising and popular as a way to address the needs of both children and their parents/caregivers to increase a family's ability to succeed. 2Gen is a workforce strategy that works to align supports for families to find and maintain employment, increase their education, and improve their health and wellbeing. According to a 2014 report, [Top Ten for 2-Gen](#), 70 percent of Americans believe that if policymakers want to make sure

low-income children are successful in early learning, then they also have to invest in their parents' economic wellbeing.

One program in Oklahoma, [Career Advance](#), that is administered by the [Community Action Project of Tulsa County](#) (CAP Tulsa), provides parents with access to high-quality child care and education through Head Start, while providing a variety of supports and training for parents. A recently released [study](#) about the impact of Career Advance's first year provides strong evidence that pairing high-quality Head Start programs with job training for parents provides positive outcomes for families

In addition to focusing on employment and increased education in an effort to increase the success of the whole family, some communities are testing 2Gen models in other issue areas, such as the state of Connecticut's [Family-Based Recovery program](#) to connect parents to treatment for opioid abuse more quickly.

2Gen approaches remain an area to watch as they evolve and are implemented and evaluated, and show continued promise as a way to strengthen workforce development, increase access to early childhood care and education, and overall, help families succeed.

6. New Investments in Housing and Preventing Homelessness

Since 2010 when the Obama Administration released [Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in America](#), federal Health and Human Service policy has been driven by a focus on ending homelessness. In fact, [the 2017 federal budget increased homelessness-related funding levels](#), with an increase in \$10 million for Youth Homelessness Demonstration Projects (YHDP) and an increase of \$7 million for education funding for Homeless Children and Youth.

[Ten communities that were awarded \\$33 million in grants by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD) [Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program](#) earlier this year have begun their projects to reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness. The following are several projects of particular significance.

- [San Francisco, California](#), is using its federal grant as seed money to spur additional city investments in homeless youth, with the city committing to \$1.54 million in additional funding to support San Francisco's youth, particularly those impacted by homelessness. The funding will expand hours at youth centers and expand outreach teams and rental subsidy programs.
- [Santa Cruz, California](#), will use its \$2.2 million from HUD to spur system change to positively shift services, individuals, and the community from a system that is culturally disconnected, fragmented, and incomplete to one that is culturally fitting and compassionate, unified and comprehensive.
- [Kentucky](#) will use its \$1.9 million grant to develop and provide housing options for homeless youth in an eight-county federally designated Southeastern Kentucky Promise Zone in the Appalachian region. The Promise Zone experiences rates of poverty and youth homelessness significantly above state and national averages.
- [Cincinnati, Ohio](#) is using its \$3.8 million to create a comprehensive strategy to eliminate barriers young people face, drawing upon the experience of youth who have endured homelessness to gain an understanding of the challenges of a complex housing system.

In addition to the exciting work being spurred by the YHDP, advocates and the philanthropic community throughout the country are continuing to monitor federal legislation, and homelessness trends as the national landscape and priorities continue to shift. For example:

- National Alliance to End Homelessness continues to watch the status of the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA), noting that [cuts to Medicaid](#) will be detrimental to individuals and families living in extreme poverty who experience homelessness.
- [Funders Together to End Homelessness](#) continue to monitor federal legislation, particularly during ongoing budget discussions. Philanthropy contributes nearly \$400 million towards housing and shelter initiatives, but HUD's budget is nearly \$46 billion. "When HUD funding goes up, good things happen. When it goes down, more people experience homelessness," Funders Together's [recent blog](#) post states. "Members of Congress should know that when they spend money on homelessness programs, their communities are much better off."
- [Voices of Youth Count](#) is a national initiative designed to fill gaps in the nation's knowledge about the scope and scale of youth homelessness, as well as the life circumstances and experiences of runaway, unaccompanied homeless, and unstably housed youth between the ages of 13 and 25 years old. Launched in October 2016, the initiative uses representative data to validate the size of the homelessness problem in America. Voices of Youth Count is led by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, a research center focused on providing public and private decision-makers with rigorous data analysis and achievable solutions to support them in improving the lives of society's most vulnerable children, youth, and families.

Efforts to decrease homelessness, particularly among youth, are an area of interest at the federal level that has been supported by both Obama and Trump. It is likely that investment will continue and remain a Health and Human Services priority during ongoing budget discussions.

7. Combining Early Care and Education Funding

The Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 established the Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) to review access and payment policies and to advise Congress on issues affecting Medicaid and CHIP. While CHIP's authorization is not in question, new federal funding will not be allocated beyond September 30, 2017 without Congressional action, leaving potentially millions of low-and moderate-income children in need of new health coverage. As a result, MACPAC released [a set of recommendations](#) earlier this year that recommended the extension of federal funding for CHIP through Fiscal Year 2022 with supporting recommendations that would limit budget uncertainty for states and ensure stability and continuity of health insurance for low-and moderate-income children.

The MACPAC recommendations also include support for states to test innovations leading to a more seamless system of children's coverage in the future, and modest changes to existing law to streamline the program and extend other child health initiatives that are expiring. These recommendations are in line with ACS' update earlier this year, which outlined an October 2016 report [Child Care: Information on Integrating Early Care and Education Funding](#) released by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) that outlined how state and local early care providers are leveraging multiple funding sources and partnering with others to provide more families with higher-quality care.

While the Trump administration's [budget proposal](#) would extend CHIP through Fiscal Year 2019, proposed changes would cut funding to the program by \$5.8 billion during the next 10 years and end federal matches to states. Overall, it is safe to say that the long-term funding for CHIP remains in question as Congress continues to discuss both health care reform and the federal budget.

8. New Investments in Boys and Young Men of Color

On April 24, 2017, President Barack Obama [met with young men and boys of color](#) in Chicago before he gave his first post-presidency speech at the University of Chicago. Additionally, President Obama participated in a roundtable discussion with young people from Chicago. Create Real Economic Destiny (CRED), located in the Roseland/Pullman neighborhood, provides workforce development opportunities for young adults in the neighborhood and is where President Obama first started his work as a community organizer. The Obama family has committed to continuing their engagement with young people through the [Obama Foundation](#) and [My Brother's Keeper Alliance \(MBK Alliance\)](#), an organization founded by President Obama to expand opportunities for boys and young men of color by calling on communities throughout the country to build and execute robust plans to ensure that all young people—no matter who they are, where they come from, or the circumstances into which they are born—can achieve their full potential.

Additionally, the MBK Alliance continues to host opportunity and youth empowerment and development summits in its MBK Challenge Communities throughout the nation. The [MBK Alliance Opportunity Summit](#) in Memphis gave more than 1,000 youth, including boys and young men of color, opportunities to meet with employers and to be hired on the spot. The inaugural [MBK Alliance Youth Summit in Albuquerque](#) hosted 100 young men between the ages of 16-25 and gave them the opportunity to engage in youth-led discussions that focused on key issues surrounding the creation of safe and supportive communities.

The [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Forward Promise](#) initiative continues to strengthen its focus on boys and young men of color and the effects of chronic trauma. With [a new national program office at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education](#), Forward Promise will examine how current and past traumas impact young people and what organizations and institutions are doing to promote healing from psychological wounds on individuals, families, and communities. The critical question the program asks is: If it takes a village to raise a child, what does it take to raise a healthy village? RWJF also announced an investment of \$12 million in [Empowerment Project](#) two-year grants, to be awarded in 2017, to help strengthen organizations that support youth development for boys and young men of color who have experienced trauma.

Finally, JPMorgan Chase & Co. expanded [The Fellowship Initiative](#) (TFI) to Dallas in addition to its existing fellowship programs in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. TFI helps create economic and workforce opportunity for young men of color by engaging them in a comprehensive, hands-on enrichment program that includes academic support, college access and persistence services, leadership development, and mentoring at a critical juncture in their lives. This year, 117 students completed TFI in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City; 100 percent of those students are graduating from high school. Combined, they have been accepted to more than 200 colleges and universities throughout the country.

While the Trump administration has been relatively silent on investments related to boys and young men of color, discussions and commitments among the philanthropic and non-profit communities are sure to continue.

9. Reauthorizing Head Start and Implementing New Performance Standards

[Head Start and Early Head Start](#) programs are up for reauthorization in 2017. And while future funding levels continue to be unclear from the Trump administration, initial budget conversations indicate that [significant increases aren't likely](#). While Congress continues to mull its decision to reauthorize Head Start, [research continues to](#) highlight the return on investment for high-quality early

childhood education programs. Although it's not surprising to people in the early childhood field, the study, conducted by Professor James Heckman, Distinguished Service Professor of Economics and Director of the Center for the Economics of Human Development at the University of Chicago, found that high-quality birth-to-5 programs for underserved children can deliver a 13 percent per year return on investment. Gains can be found through better outcomes in the areas of education, health, social behaviors, and employment.

While the jury on the reauthorization of Head Start is still out, studies like these reinforce the effectiveness and value of high-quality early childhood education. Advocates and supporters of Head Start continue to [urge Congress to reauthorize the program](#) as providers continue to implement the new [Head Start performance standards](#) that were published in September 2016. These performance standards are designed to improve program quality, reduce the compliance burden on programs, and improve regulatory clarity and transparency, all of which strengthen the outcomes for children. Advocates and Head Start agencies will continue their work to promote reauthorization as the year continues.

10. New Child Care Development Block Grant Funding

As we mentioned earlier in the year, the United States Office of Child Care published new rules to guide states on how to implement Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds and how to administer the program in a way that best meets the needs of children, child care providers, and families in September 2016. The rules apply to states, territories, and tribes administering the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), and incorporate and clarify changes made through the bipartisan CCDBG Act.

In addition to the new rules, the 2017 federal budget increased CCDBG funds by \$95 million, and Head Start received an \$85 million. Yet, according to a [January 2017 report](#) issued by [Center for Law and Social Policy](#) (CLASP), a national, nonpartisan, anti-poverty nonprofit advancing policy solutions for low-income people, the number of children served by CCDBG has reached an all-time low, a significant point of concern for advocates in the field. Fewer than 1.4 million children received CCDBG-funded child care in an average month in 2015; historically, this is the smallest number of children served in the program in the last 17 years, according to CLASP.

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) acknowledges that child care opportunities, supports, and barriers vary from state to state and has released the following [guiding principles](#) as a resource for states as they begin implementing the new rules:

- Building the supply of high-quality family child care is crucial for families and communities;
- Family child care needs a clear place in Consumer Education, Professional Development, and Quality Initiatives;
- Family child care needs clear consideration in licensing content and inspection strategy;
- Family child care networks and family child care associations can play a role supporting the license-exempt community who enroll children who pay with a subsidy as they experience inspections, many for the first time. Families count on this supply of child care, and as we build a pathway to licensure, support will be needed.
- Family child care is the early childhood workforce. Training and professional development has to make sense for the family child care environment, and be made accessible to the work-life of family child care providers;

- Accreditation is a commitment to continuous quality improvement and should be recognized as a way to meet/achieve QRIS rating levels;
- The details matter and NAFCC members have day-to-day experience with implementation of policy; and
- Federal and state investments are crucial for the successful implementation of CCDBG.

Another organization, [Child Care Aware](#), offers [informational sheets](#) online to help support states and territories regarding CCDBG topics.

Despite the new rules and resources to support their implementation, CCDBG funding remains underfunded and it is critical that states and local organizations to maintain their advocacy for continued investment in child care assistance in order to ensure the needs of children, child care providers, and families are being met.

11. Using Medicaid to Support Child Health

While conversations about repealing or replacing the Affordable Care Act (ACA), are still happening at the national level, the effects that possible cuts to Medicaid may have on children are likely to be substantial. The White House has committed to maintaining some funding to CHIP but cuts to Medicaid could compromise health care for the 30 million individuals covered today. [In a recent Huffington Post article](#), the potential pitfalls to cutting this funding are explored. The article suggests that cuts reduce the ability of providers to offer specialty care for chronically ill children and ignores preventative and wellness care for all kids. Primary care is critical for children, especially when considering preventing chronic diseases like obesity and asthma, and accesses to immunizations. As the budget conversations continue, the precise effects on Medicaid programs are currently unknown, but it's clear that any potential cuts would be detrimental to tens of million of children.

Additionally, schools (which are reimbursed by Medicaid for certain services) are preparing for the possible impact, as cuts to Medicaid are likely during discussions budget discussions. [According to administrators](#), schools receive an estimated \$4 billion in annual Medicaid reimbursements, and any cuts to that number would be a hard hit after continued reductions in state funding and weakening tax bases. The School Superintendents Association along with a number of other advocacy organizations including the National School Boards Association, the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, and the national teachers unions [issued a letter](#) urging congress to reject health care reform legislation.

Overall, health care in general and Medicaid supports for children specifically, remain topics to pay close attention to as conversations continue about health care and the federal budget continue.

12. Changes to the Federal Home Visiting Program

As we reported earlier in the year, [Federal Home Visiting Program](#), also known as the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, is set to expire at the end of the fiscal year (September 30 2017). It is a voluntary program to provide resources and skills to women and families to improve maternal and child health; prevent child abuse and neglect; encourage positive parenting; and promote child development and school readiness. Advocates in DC have created a [Home Visiting Coalition](#) to help build support for the federal home visiting program, with a goal of continuing and growing the program. The coalition launched a new website in early 2017 that includes resources aimed at demonstrating the impact of home visiting and how home visiting contributes to the community, and that outlines action advocates can take to support home visiting.



Earlier this year, [The Center for American Progress \(CAP\)](#) released an infographic detailing the Federal Home Visiting program as a common sense investment. CAP explains that home visiting programs reduce the likelihood of costly health outcomes like emergency room visits, substance abuse, child abuse and neglect. The infographic states that for every \$1 invested in home visiting, there is a \$3-5 return to society.

Although the program set to expire at the end of this fiscal year, [within Trump's budget proposal the Home Visiting Program would receive \\$400 million for fiscal year 2018](#). While this is welcome news for advocates, concerns about long-term funding for these critical services supporting families and children remain, and ultimately, the fate of the program rests in the hands of Congress.

While these important topics continue to evolve, ACS looks forward to keeping you updated on changes in these policies, which affect the people our clients care about the most. If you would like more information about how ACS can help you achieve your goals, please contact ACS at info@advocacyandcommunication.org.

Connect with Us!

To contact with our team, call toll-free at 1-877-372-0166, visit our [website](#), or find us on [LinkedIn](#)

Lori McClung, President, Lori@advocacyandcommunication.org

Scarlett Boudier, Vice President, Scarlett@advocacyandcommunication.org

Rebecca Cohen, Senior Strategist, Rebecca@advocacyandcommunication.org

Cassie Gaffney, Strategist, Cassie@advocacyandcommunication.org



Visit www.advocacyandcommunication.org or email info@advocacyandcommunication.org for more information. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#).

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