



# CONNECTED TO THE ISSUES

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## Winter 2015

### Also in this issue

- Ring in the New Year with New Clients .....2
- ACS Team Spotlight: Heather Lenz .....2
- Something Completely Different!...2

### Tools You Can Use

You may have noticed the new and enhanced website ACS launched in 2014 to celebrate our [10th Anniversary](#) ([advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/newsletters/archive/ACS\\_newsletter\\_decade.pdf](http://advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/newsletters/archive/ACS_newsletter_decade.pdf)). Did you know our new site contains a host of new tools that you can access at any time? Take a look and browse our latest research and tools for advocacy, communication, strategy and capacity building.

For example, check out our [20 Ways for Youth to Impact Policy](#) ([advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/resources/20\\_ways\\_to\\_impact\\_policy\\_-\\_for\\_youth.pdf](http://advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/resources/20_ways_to_impact_policy_-_for_youth.pdf)), a two-page quick guide for young people who want to engage in advocacy to help them raise their voices in support for any policy issue. By utilizing this tool, youth advocates (and the adults who work with them) will learn how to stay informed about policy issues, build relationships with key leaders and decision makers, become a champion for a cause by engaging in the conversation, and rally community members to help drive policy change.

As we gratefully close 2014 celebrating our 10-year anniversary, we look forward to 2015 as we begin our second decade of service and success! In this issue, we take a look forward—at some of the trends that will shape the work of our clients and our company this year and beyond, at some new relationships we’re pleased to begin, and at the wealth of tools and resources that are constantly being added to the new ACS website. We also highlight the recent work of our own Heather Lenz *and* a special surprise from one of our strategic partners!

*Happy reading and Happy New Year from all of us at ACS!*

### Five Trends for 2015

At ACS, we monitor trends in the fields we serve. Last year we noticed growing momentum behind five trends that we agree are ripe for further development and wider adoption. Some are trends in the fields we serve. Others are trends we see among our clients. Both can have a great impact on communities and we are excited about moving forward in each area in 2015.

**A Two-Generation Approach to Poverty**—It’s a fact that children learn a great deal from their parents—including their outlook on earning potential in life. While Head Start has addressed the needs of children and families in poverty for nearly 50 years, benefits to families focused more on parenting needs and less on services that foster advances in employment and income, such as child care assistance and job training. New programs funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and others, and policy statements from [CLASP](#) ([clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Two-Gen-Brief-FINAL.pdf](http://clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Two-Gen-Brief-FINAL.pdf)) and other advocates, are calling attention to the need to help both parents and children advance together in order to permanently break the cycle of poverty. This [attention to two-generation strategies](#) ([edcentral.org/2gen-strategies](http://edcentral.org/2gen-strategies)) is important to ACS because it has the potential to have a positive impact on many of our clients. For example, our client Franklin County Job & Family Services (FCDJFS) and the Franklin County (Ohio) Infant Mortality Task Force employs strategies to improve the health of both newborns and their mothers. Additionally, some of our early childhood development clients are working to increase parenting supports that complement infant health and development work. These efforts can only lead to better outcomes for all, and we look forward to helping them grow.

**Improving Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color**—ACS produced two pieces of research in recent months related to our work with boys and young men of color. The first is a [scan of effective programs](#) ([advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/resources/YBMOC\\_research\\_summary\\_11514.pdf](http://advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/resources/YBMOC_research_summary_11514.pdf)) currently at work across the country. The second looks at the policies and programs addressing the school-to-prison pipeline (to be published later this month) and zero-tolerance programs, both of which disproportionately have a negative affect on boys and young men of color. We are encouraged by the attention the needs of boys and young men of color have received from the Obama administration and from many influential local and national funders. We have been honored to work with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on their Forward Promise initiative in 2014 and are excited to expand our work in this critical area in 2015.

*[Continued on page 3](#)*

## ACS Team Spotlight

### Heather Lenz Boosts National Early Childhood Advocacy

Policy Associate Heather Lenz has been diving deep into early childhood policy issues lately—and the result is one of the best sets of policy advocacy tools we have ever seen. “This was really a great project,” says Heather. “We helped our client, NAEYC, explore the world of electoral advocacy with a strategic eye to how statewide affiliates (chapters) and nonprofits can engage in electoral advocacy at the state and local levels. Our customized tools enhanced NAEYC affiliate advocacy activity by mapping out a step-by-step process with supporting documents that allow users to dig deeper at every stage.”

NAEYC affiliates in Wisconsin, Idaho and South Carolina have piloted the tools with great results. All three affiliates built stronger stakeholder relationships, elevated messaging and engaged in on-the-ground voter education strategies that gave early childhood issues new prominence in the 2014 elections. Better yet, all three are eager to use the tools to help bring early childhood to the forefront in the next election cycle.

“The ACS tools we customized for NAEYC make it easy to think critically through the process to make a clear, actionable plan for their national work,” says Heather.

Best of all, these tools will be available on the ACS website and can be used for any issue area for any nonprofit in the [Tools & Resources \(advocacyandcommunication.org/tools-resources\)](http://advocacyandcommunication.org/tools-resources) section!

## Ring in the New Year with New Clients

As we kick off our work in 2015, we are delighted to welcome the following clients to the ACS family:

- The [Heising Simons Foundation](http://heisingsimons.org) (heisingsimons.org) in Los Altos, California anticipates tremendous growth in 2015 and looks to ACS, and our partner [Putnam Consulting Group](http://putnam-consulting.com) (putnam-consulting.com) to support them in a proactive communication initiatives and assist in hiring expert communication staff to implement it.
- ACS will finish up work begun late in 2014 to facilitate conversations between the City of Cleveland’s [Healthy Cleveland Initiative](http://clevelandcitycouncil.org) (clevelandcitycouncil.org) healthy-cleveland/and the Cuyahoga county-wide Health Improvement Partnership—[Cuyahoga \(HIP-C\) Consortium](http://hipcuyahoga.org) (hipcuyahoga.org) to identify potential areas of coordination between the two health initiatives.
- [Zero To Three](http://zerotothree.org) (zerotothree.org) has asked ACS to conduct a national scan of messaging used to communicate about the importance of early childhood development. We will explore the use of messages around health and mental health, brain development, home visitation programs and more to understand how they fit into successful communication frames. Once our scan is complete we will use our expertise to help early childhood advocates hone the most successful messages to support their local efforts. ▲

## And Now For Something Completely Different!

At ACS we love to partner with creative people, so we were delighted when one of our lead writers, Betsey Russell, told us she had released a new novel, [Other People’s Money](http://elizabethrussellfiction.com) (elizabethrussellfiction.com). Even better, it’s a mystery set in the world of foundations and nonprofits—a subject that ACS staff and clients can really appreciate! The book features Katie Nelson, a program officer at a large Atlanta foundation who dreams of seeing her board fund a Latina health clinic. But when the clinic goes up in flames and kills an unknown woman, everyone she trusted becomes a suspect, and Katie finds her own life in danger. Read the first two chapters for free on [Betsey’s website](http://elizabethrussellfiction.com) (elizabethrussellfiction.com) or [order](http://amazon.com) (Amazon.com) an e-book or print copy online. ▲

## Five Trends for 2015

*Continued from page 1*



### Be Empowered

Want to learn how communication, strategy development or advocacy can move your organization forward? Need an expert for training sessions or conference presentations? Contact one of our team members below, call toll-free at 1-877-372-0166 or check out our website at [www.advocacyandcommunication.org](http://www.advocacyandcommunication.org)

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**Promising Attention to Early Childhood**—Nothing demonstrated a commitment to high-quality early childhood education in 2014 like the launch of the [PRE4CLE initiative](http://clevelandmetroschools.org/pre4cle) ([clevelandmetroschools.org/pre4cle](http://clevelandmetroschools.org/pre4cle)). ACS provided the facilitation for this groundbreaking effort to ensure accessible, affordable, high-quality pre-K for every four-year-old, then three-year-old, in Cleveland. We coordinated a [White House visit](http://cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2014/10/hud_secretary_julian_castro_says_cleveland_gets_it_about_the_need_for_preschool_video.html) ([cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2014/10/hud\\_secretary\\_julian\\_castro\\_says\\_cleveland\\_gets\\_it\\_about\\_the\\_need\\_for\\_preschool\\_video.html](http://cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2014/10/hud_secretary_julian_castro_says_cleveland_gets_it_about_the_need_for_preschool_video.html)) for PRE4CLE and were delighted to see it gain national attention as a model approach. In 2015, we look forward to helping build the PRE4CLE infrastructure through advocacy and communication, spreading the success of PRE4CLE to other parts of the country, as well as helping our national early childhood clients the [BUILD Initiative](http://buildinitiative.org) ([buildinitiative.org](http://buildinitiative.org)) and the [National Association for the Education of Young Children](http://naeyc.org) ([naeyc.org](http://naeyc.org)) strengthen their influence and messages to increase investment in pre-K.

**Communication Strategies for Multi-Partner Initiatives**—More than ever, nonprofits and funders appear to share an idea that solving intractable community problems means engaging a wider circle of players. With Collective Impact as the concept used more frequently, we have seen many of our clients mobilize broad networks of stakeholders for common goals. Outlining the value and role of the Collective Impact process and keeping all of those players on the same page requires a strategic approach to communication. We have been honored to help organizations tackle this challenge and anticipate doing even more in 2015—including helping [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Forward Promise](http://rwjf.org/en/grants/grantees/forward-promise.html) ([rwjf.org/en/grants/grantees/forward-promise.html](http://rwjf.org/en/grants/grantees/forward-promise.html)) grantees mobilize community partnerships with on-the-ground messaging, and facilitating conversations related to the Healthy Cleveland Initiative and the Health Improvement Partnership—Cuyahoga (HIP-C) Consortium to identify potential areas of coordination between the two health initiatives and bringing together multiple partners for FCDJFS's effort for Franklin County's Infant Mortality Task Force Presumptive Eligibility Committee.

**Helping Funders and State Agencies Engage More Deeply with Communities**—Throughout 2014, ACS developed many new relationships with charitable foundations that needed help training their grantees, facilitating community conversations, and developing and communicating key messages about their work. In addition to the Forward Promise work for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation noted above, we worked closely with the [Cleveland Foundation](http://clevelandfoundation.org) ([clevelandfoundation.org](http://clevelandfoundation.org)) and the [George Gund Foundation](http://gundfoundation.org) ([gundfoundation.org](http://gundfoundation.org)) to create PRE4CLE—a city-wide effort to provide accessible, affordable, high-quality pre-K to all five- and four-year-olds. We also helped First Things First in Arizona build the capacity of early childhood regional directors throughout the state and facilitated meetings with a broad range of diverse community stakeholders to improve the developmental screening process for young children. We are eager to help more funders engage with their communities in meaningful ways that produce results in 2015! ▲

3

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