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**Advancing Equity for Women and Girls of Color: 2016 Updated Report**

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## INTRODUCTION

The White House Council on Women and Girls, since its inception, has focused on the needs and challenges of all women and girls. In 2014, as part of the effort to take into account the distinctive concerns of women and girls, the Council on Women and Girls launched a specific work stream called “Advancing Equity” to ensure that policies and programs across the federal government take into account the unique obstacles faced by women and girls, including women and girls of color and women and girls from marginalized communities.

In November 2014, the Council on Women and Girls released a report titled “Women and Girls of Color: Addressing Challenges and Expanding Opportunities” to identify barriers and disparities facing women and girls of color.<sup>1</sup> This report addressed work done over the first six years of the Administration to improve the lives of women and girls of color. It discussed important issues, such as educational attainment, economic security, health and safety, violence against women, and criminal and juvenile justice. It also included a call to action for the establishment of a federal interagency working group to develop opportunities for advancement, which commenced in March of 2015.

One year later, in November 2015, the Council released a new report “Advancing Equity for Women and Girls of Color” to highlight some of the additional steps taken by the Administration on issues faced by women and girls of color from 2014 through 2015.<sup>2</sup> In that report, the Council on Women and Girls identified five data-driven issue areas where interventions can promote opportunities for success at school, work, and in the community for women and girls of color. The five issues included:

1. **Fostering school success and reducing unnecessary exclusionary school discipline** by implementing supportive school discipline strategies and policies, including through public awareness of the impact on girls of color;
2. **Meeting the needs of vulnerable and striving youth** by recognizing and responding appropriately to the finding that many girls enter intervening public systems through a route that begins with sexual abuse and trauma;
3. Increasing access to **inclusive STEM education** to meet 21st century workforce demands and reducing opportunity gaps that affect women broadly in science, technology, engineering and math education and fields, but often affect women and girls of color the most;
4. **Sustaining reduced rates of teen pregnancy and building on success** through expanded access to knowledge about birth control and preventive health services;
5. Expanding pathways to **economic prosperity** through opportunities for job mobility and investments in fair, equitable workplace policies.

This updated report serves as a follow-up to the 2014 and 2015 reports, and as the culmination of the Advancing Equity work stream of this Administration. The Obama Administration has taken important steps forward in elevating, and addressing, key issues that cause disparities for women and girls of color, and women and girls from marginalized and underserved populations. Moreover, the call to action around this work has inspired philanthropic leaders, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations to continue efforts that sustain and build upon the successes achieved in improved life outcomes for women and girls of color and their peers.

## #1: FOSTERING SCHOOL SUCCESS AND REDUCING UNNECESSARY EXCLUSIONARY SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

When used appropriately, school discipline policies contribute to safe, well-functioning classrooms and productive learning environments. However, far too many schools have harsh, zero-tolerance discipline policies that are disproportionately applied, particularly in low-income and urban communities. As mentioned in our last report, the disparate treatment of students of color can affect their life trajectories. Suspended students are at risk of falling behind or dropping out and are also disproportionately funneled through the juvenile justice system.<sup>3</sup> Pregnancy and birth are significant contributors to high school dropout rates among girls. At the same time, disproportionate rates of exclusionary school discipline can lead to school disengagement, which is also a risk factor for unplanned pregnancy.<sup>4</sup>

In June 2016, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U.S. Department of Education (ED) unveiled [new data from the 2013-2014](#) school year showing gaps that still remain too wide in key areas affecting educational equity and opportunity for students. Information compiled through OCR's Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) includes student enrollment and educational programs and services data that are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, English learner status, and disability. The data show clear racial disparities in school discipline; while 6 percent of all K-12 students received one or more out-of-school suspensions, the percentage is 18 percent for black boys; 10 percent for black girls; 5 percent for white boys; and 2 percent for white girls.<sup>5</sup> Black girls are suspended at higher rates than girls of any other race or ethnicity and at higher rates than white boys (5 percent) and white girls (2 percent).<sup>6</sup> American Indian/Alaska Native girls are also suspended at rates that exceed those of white girls.<sup>7</sup> And while black girls represent only 20% of female preschool enrollment, they account for 54% of female preschool children receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions.<sup>8</sup> Black girls are the only group of female preschool students suspended at a rate disproportionate to their enrollment.

Because of the commitment of ED, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Department of Justice (DOJ) on this issue, tools exist to help schools create a supportive school climate, including [policy guidance](#), [resources](#) and [technical assistance portals](#) for educators and school leaders to facilitate new practices. Most recently, in December 2016, the White House released a [new capstone report](#) with updates about projects launched and local progress made in response to the Administration's [Rethink Discipline](#) efforts, which builds on the work of the Council on Women and Girls and the President's [My Brothers' Keeper](#) initiative. By encouraging supportive school discipline practices, schools foster success for all students and create conditions that improve the likelihood that students will stay engaged and in school. In addition to these existing tools, the Administration has taken the following key steps in the final year of the Administration to (1) support school discipline practices that promote safe, inclusive and positive learning environments, and (2) enhance public awareness about exclusionary school discipline, including how it disproportionately affects girls of color.

- In response to the racial disparities in preschool suspension rates, ED and HHS announced they are using Preschool Development National Activities funds to invest \$1 million in the Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to implement the [Pyramid Equity Project](#) in collaboration with the University of South Florida and the University of Colorado Denver. They will partner

with Preschool Development Grantees, Clifton Early Learner Academy in Clifton, New Jersey, and Cambridge Early Learning Center in Antioch, Tennessee to establish national models for addressing issues of implicit bias, and uneven implementation of discipline, including expulsions and suspensions in early learning programs. The project builds on the [Pyramid Model For Supporting Social Emotional Competence In Infants And Young Children](#), which is a framework of evidence-based early childhood teaching practices to promote social-emotional development, prevent challenging behavior, and provide all children with individualized supports.

- In March 2016, ED’s Office of Safe and Healthy Students released a new, free platform of web-based school climate surveys that will allow the nation’s schools to perform sophisticated analyses of school climate, enabling them to assess conditions for learning that range from safety to the quality of the instructional environment. The ED [School Climate Surveys](#) and the [Quick Guide on Making School Climate Improvements](#) will enable states, local school districts, and individual schools to collect and act on reliable, nationally-validated school climate data in real-time.
- In September 2016, the Administration cosponsored a conference called “[Trauma-Informed Approaches in School: Supporting Girls of Color and Rethinking Discipline.](#)” The one-day convening brought together states and districts, key researchers and experts, and nonprofit partners to focus on improving school systems’ approach to better serve girls of color who have experienced trauma. At this conference, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality launched a follow-up effort on trauma-informed schools for girls of color. The Center on Poverty and Inequality will build on the momentum of this conference by pivoting from its role as co-host to serving school system reformers who seek to implement trauma-informed approaches that are responsive to the unique needs of girls of color. The Center will invite the state teams present at the conference and others to provide more in-depth information about their needs in creating trauma-informed schools, with the ultimate goal of serving as a central convener of these groups.
- At the same conference, ED released “[Safe Place to Learn: Prevent, Intercede, and Respond to Sexual Harassment of K-12 Students,](#)” a resource package designed and written by the American Institute for Research, and the National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE). This resource package incorporates and emphasizes three instruments with which many schools are already working to create a school community committed to preventing discrimination based on sex: Title IX satisfaction, trauma sensitivity; and positive school climate. The materials in the package aim to help secure student safety through focus on three primary staff groups: administrative leadership; all building staff; and staff responsible for interceding and responding to students. The resource package contains guidance, e-learning training modules, resources to support new and ongoing conversations, and efforts to prevent bullying, sexual harassment, and violence, to provide safe and supportive learning environments for all students.
- The challenges surrounding the use of law enforcement in schools, particularly the impact upon girls of color, has been well documented throughout the years. The use of school resource officers (SROs) to administer routine school discipline in matters that should be handled by educators in schools is troubling. In September 2016, ED issued a [Dear Colleague Letter to Chief State School Officers](#) regarding the use of SROs and the administration of discipline in schools. A concurrent [letter](#) was released to law

enforcement by the DOJ. The letters were accompanied by the [Safe, School-based Enforcement through Collaboration, Understanding, and Respect \(SECURE\) Rubrics](#) to help education and law enforcement agencies to review and, if necessary, revise SRO-related policies in alignment with common-sense action steps to improve school safety, better outcomes for students and safeguard student's civil rights. At the same time, ED issued a [letter](#) to college campuses regarding the use of campus police and their responsibilities to protect the civil rights of students and reminding Administrators of their obligations under the Clery Act to take a number of actions to improve campus safety. It notes that in the campus policing context, community engagement efforts should include diverse members of the campus community particularly those with expertise on issues relevant to the campus context such as sexual assault and domestic violence.

- In November 2016, ED sent a [letter](#) to Governors, policymaker and school administrators conveying its opposition to the use of corporal punishment in schools and reinforcing other efforts on school climate and discipline. The letter highlighted the gross disparities in the application of corporal punishment against students of color. For example, data from the CRDC reveals that black girls continue to be 2.9 times more likely to be subjected to corporal punishment than white girls.<sup>9</sup> For these reasons and more, the letter strongly urges state policymakers to take steps to eliminate the use of corporal punishment in schools.

## **#2: MEETING THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE AND STRIVING YOUTH**

Girls and young women represent a significant share of juvenile arrests, delinquency petitions, detentions, and post-adjudication placements. For example, 20 percent of all juvenile arrests were for girls in 1992, compared with nearly 30 percent today, and girls of color are continuously overrepresented. Although African-American girls represent about 14 percent of the United States population, they constitute 32 percent of girls who are detained and committed.<sup>10</sup> Native American girls are only one percent of the general population but constitute 3.5 percent of girls who are detained and committed.<sup>11</sup>

Current evidence suggests there may be more aggressive enforcement of non-serious misdemeanors, outstanding warrants, technical violations, and “status” offenses, which only apply to a certain age class of people and would not be crimes if committed by an adult (e.g. running away, truancy, curfew violations, and being ungovernable).<sup>12</sup>

While the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act prohibits detaining youth for status offenses, a Valid Court Order Exception (VCO) allows judges to detain adjudicated youth if they violate a court order such as “attend school regularly.” Girls are disproportionately affected and are more likely to be held in placement for technical violations or status offenses than boys.<sup>13</sup> Girls account for a larger percentage of cases involving running away than boys in juvenile courts.<sup>14</sup> These behaviors can be symptoms or outcomes of trauma and abuse. Once in the system, girls may be treated as offenders, rather than girls in need of support, perpetuating a vicious cycle that is increasingly known as the “sexual abuse to prison pipeline.”<sup>15</sup>

Household dysfunction and exposure to chronic adverse stress caused by trauma during childhood are risk factors for trauma in adolescence and adulthood and have long-term impacts on health.<sup>16</sup> In turn, childhood trauma is a risk factor for domestic sexual trafficking, as is poverty, homelessness, and a history of engagement with child welfare services and/or foster care. African-American children make up 59 percent of all arrests for prostitution for those under the age of 18, which is more than any other racial group.<sup>17</sup> Studies suggest that African-American girls are trafficked at younger ages than their racial counterparts. They also witness and experience multiple forms of violence at higher rates than white peers.<sup>18</sup>

System involvement for girls for status offenses, technical parole violations, and assaultive behavior remains relatively high compared to other offense types.<sup>19</sup> In addition, there are racial disparities among females. In 2013, black females were nearly three times as likely as white peers to be referred to juvenile court for a delinquency offense and 21 percent more likely to be detained.<sup>20</sup> American Indian/Alaska Native girls were 40 percent more likely to be referred to juvenile court for delinquency and 50 percent more likely to be detained.<sup>21</sup> Girls and young women in the juvenile justice system have experienced far greater rates of violence than their peers, and these experiences continue into adulthood. Interventions that address the needs of girls and young women, particularly those who have experienced trauma, require a better understanding of the population of those affected through research and the release of data disaggregated by race, gender, and other variables.

In July 2015, DOJ's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) released new guidance on "Girls and the Juvenile Justice System." Recognizing that many girls experience violence and/or bias leading to their involvement with the juvenile justice system, the guidance calls for a developmentally informed approach that acknowledges intersectional disparities (the specific challenges that occur when race, gender, and other demographic variables intersect) and calls for the reduction or elimination of arrest and detention for status offenses, technical violations of probation, simple assault, family-based offenses, running away, and prostitution-related charges.<sup>22</sup>

Over the past year, the Administration has taken the following additional steps to (1) enhance programmatic responses by integrating evidence-based trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive perspectives into youth-serving systems and organizations, and (2) expand disaggregated data initiatives:

- In December 2015, DOJ announced new guidance designed to help law enforcement agencies prevent gender bias in their response to sexual assault and domestic violence, highlighting the need for clear policies, robust training and responsive accountability systems. The guidance serves two key purposes. First, it aims to examine how gender bias can undermine the response of law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to sexual assault and domestic violence. Second, it provides a set of basic principles that – if integrated into LEAs' policies, trainings, and practices – will help ensure that gender bias, either intentionally or unintentionally, does not undermine efforts to keep victims safe and hold offenders accountable.

- To support communities' efforts to put the above Guidance into practice, in October 2016, the Justice Department invested nearly \$10 million dollars in several new programs, including an award of \$5 million from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) to the International Association of the Chiefs of Police (IACP) to lead an initiative on identifying and preventing gender bias in law enforcement response to victims; awards totaling \$2.85 million by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to five grantees under OVW's Improving Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Grant Program, to integrate the principles outlined in the DOJ guidance into law enforcement policies, training, supervision protocols, and systems of accountability; three awards, totaling \$1.65 million by OVW for national technical assistance to be provided by IACP, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and End Violence Against Women International (EVAW) to develop resources, provide trainings, and help build the capacity of police departments; and a \$400,000 research award by OVW to evaluate the effectiveness of training based on the guidance for sworn officers in an urban police department.
- In September 2016, OJJDP awarded grant awards under the Practitioner-Researcher Partnership in Cognitive Behavioral Mentoring Program to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of innovative mentoring approaches for youth at high risk for delinquency/juvenile and criminal justice involvement or victimization and trauma. These mentoring approaches incorporate practices that are informed by research on cognitive behavioral interventions and techniques. Under this partnership program, Youth Guidance will develop and implement training and curriculum enhancements to its Working on Womanhood (WOW) Program and partner with the University of Chicago to evaluate it. WOW is a therapy-based intervention that is demonstrating promising results in reducing depression, trauma symptoms, and violence involvement, as well as improving academic and behavioral outcomes among young women in Chicago. The program targets 7-12th-grade girls exposed to traumatic stressors and/or with emotion regulation challenges who attend schools in distressed, high-crime, and low-income neighborhoods on Chicago's south and west sides. Under this project, Youth Guidance will refine its WOW curriculum by clarifying program definition, target population, and primary outcomes and then implement the enhanced program design with the target population. It will partner with the University of Chicago to evaluate the strategies and the cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) practices central to the WOW program to investigate the impact of the WOW counselor-student relationship. The project is expected to result in the development of standardized materials including the WOW curriculum, implementation manual, and training guide, as well as a Training Academy that will allow the curriculum to be administered with fidelity and replicated in diverse settings to serve an expanded number of participants
- In addition, in Fiscal Year 2016 OJJDP awarded grants under the Reducing Reliance on Confinement and Improving Community-Based Responses for Girls at Risk of Entering the Juvenile Justice System Solicitation. The program provides incentives for states, tribes, and localities to implement reforms, reduce reliance on secure placement, and improve community-based responses for girls at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. Award recipients, working with local public and private partners, have begun to examine girls' pathways into the juvenile justice system to end the placement of girls and young women who are status offenders or domestic minor sex trafficking victims in the



juvenile justice system; reduce the arrest and detention of girls and young women for simple assault and technical violations of probation and parole; amend mandatory arrest policies for domestic violence to reduce the number of youth arrested for intra-family conflict; and reduce schools' reliance on suspension and expulsion, which can lead to academic failure and increased vulnerability for juvenile justice system involvement. Grant recipients include the Vera Institute of Justice, PACE Center for Girls, Inc., Annie Malone Children & Family Service Center and the Illinois Department of Human Services, whom will all bring together state and local stakeholders to conduct a comprehensive assessment of girls' involvement in the juvenile justice system for domestic violence or related charges and to analyze the current juvenile justice, child welfare, and human services responses to these girls.

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families [Office on Trafficking in Persons](#) in partnership with the [HHS Office on Women's Health](#) expanded the [SOAR \(Stop. Observe. Ask and Respond\) to Human Trafficking Training](#) for health care providers in FY 2016, to now educate social workers, behavioral health professionals, and public health professionals about the ways to recognize and respond to human trafficking victims.
- Through support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the National Domestic Violence Hotline, in partnership with the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, will launch the first-ever crisis-line for Alaska Native and American Indian (AN/AI) women and girls, the Strong Hearts Helpline, in January 2017. The new helpline will provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services by and for Native women and will assist AN/AI survivors of domestic and sexual violence with safety planning, emotional support, and referrals to local resources.

### **#3: INCLUSIVE STEM EDUCATION**

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) skills play an increasingly important role in the 21st century economy. Significant opportunity gaps exist in STEM education and careers for women, especially for women and girls of color. We know that growth of STEM jobs is expected to outpace non-STEM jobs over the next ten years. Engaging historically underrepresented groups, including girls and young women, in STEM opens additional economic opportunity and meets growing workplace demands. Career and technical training also opens access to high skilled, high demand careers, which provide a route for the middle-class to attain STEM jobs. Expanding early outreach to connect girls to STEM allows students to approach science in an inquiry-based manner, applying STEM learning opportunities as a means to solve real-world problems in communities. Common outcomes of this strategy include increased confidence in math skills, improved attitudes toward and engagement in math, and increased plans to attend or enroll in college. Evidence-based changes to the way colleges and universities teach STEM (e.g. using active learning techniques in the classroom and providing early-learning opportunities) can increase STEM engagement for women, including women of color.

Over the last eight years, the Obama Administration's efforts have resulted in unprecedented levels of public-private collaboration in support of next-generation STEM education, all with a

focus on expanding participation of girls and other underrepresented groups. Efforts include policies, budgets and collaborations focused on maximizing federal investment in hands-on, rigorous STEM learning and innovative undertakings to inspire and recognize young inventors, discoverers, and makers. These efforts support the President's goal of training 100,000 excellent STEM teachers in a decade and graduating more engineers from U.S. universities. They also inspired more than \$1 billion of philanthropic investment; the creation of the White House Science Fair; and leadership commitments from more than 350 colleges and universities to provide pathways to degree attainment for students underrepresented in STEM.

2016 has been a year of action for expanding access to K-12 computer science (CS) education for all students. This year alone, 14 states have taken action to expand CS education; a new CS Advanced Placement course has launched and is already in 2,000 classrooms. More than 500 organizations have made commitments to expand CS learning.

Under the Obama Administration, the White House has announced specific steps to advance equity in STEM by: (1) enhancing pathways that engage underrepresented women in quality STEM education, including career and technical education (CTE), and (2) encouraging STEM participation by highlighting accomplishments of girls and women from diverse communities and by encouraging private sector efforts to recruit and retain diverse talent in STEM fields. In 2009, the Administration created the \$4.3 billion [Race to the Top](#) competition which encouraged states to develop comprehensive strategies to improve achievement and provide rigorous curricula in STEM subjects and broaden the participation of women and girls. To achieve this, states applying for these funds received competitive preference if they demonstrated efforts to address any barriers to STEM careers for women, girls, and other underrepresented groups. In the final year, the Administration has built on that progress by taking the following steps:

- As part of the Administration's [United State of Women Summit](#) in June 2016, ED's Office for Civil Rights and Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education released a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) to make clear that all students, regardless of their sex, must have equal access to the full range of career and technical programs offered. The letter explains the requirements under Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act for states to meet negotiated targets for participation and completion rates of males and females in programs that are nontraditional for their sex. The letter also clarifies the legal obligations under Title IX to ensure equitable access to CTE programs and provides examples of issues that may raise concerns regarding compliance with these obligations. While the letter focuses on discrimination based on sex in CTE programs, ED is focused on working with schools to ensure that their CTE programs are free from all forms of unlawful discrimination.
- In October 2016, The White House Council on Women and Girls, My Brother's Keeper (MBK), and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) collaborated with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) to bring 200 scholars, students, STEM education experts, community-based organizations, non-profit leaders, advocates and policy makers together who are committed to diversity and inclusion in STEM, with a specific focus on youth and communities of color. The conference allowed key players to assess the critical gaps

in the STEM ecosystem, and formulate calls-to-action to bring back to their communities and institutions

- In August 2016, NASA hosted the first-ever [MissionSTEM](#) Summit, bringing together over 300 stakeholders from academia, industry, government, and the non-profit sector for a two-day summit to discuss challenges, opportunities and promising practices related to diversifying the STEM workforce pipeline, promoting inclusion in academic environments, increasing minority serving institution participation in NASA business and grant opportunities, and advancing diversity through civil rights compliance for NASA grantees. Women of color in STEM led panel discussions that were a critical part of the Summit, including panels on making STEM program environments more inclusive to more broadly diverse populations, and addressing diversity and inclusion through civil rights compliance. Based on the information shared and needs identified at the Summit, NASA is developing a publication that will highlight promising practices for equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion in STEM.
- In December 2016, NASA is working with Twentieth Century Fox to highlight women pioneers in STEM past and present in conjunction with the release of the movie, *Hidden Figures*. Through events with students and cast members in Washington, DC, Hampton, Virginia, and Cape Canaveral, Florida, as well as through the launch of a [From Hidden to Modern Figures website](#), NASA is providing educational content that can be used to teach STEM concepts while also inspiring students, including girls of color, to envision the opportunities that exist in pursuing a STEM career.
- In December 2016, The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) launched the [Girls of Energy e-book and interactive website](#) to expose students, especially those underrepresented in the STEM disciplines, to STEM careers at DOE and its National Laboratories. The Girls of Energy e-book connects the science and technology at the National Laboratories and the stories of Women @ Energy scientists and engineers to lessons and activities that help students explore ways to help solve the nation's energy challenges. All educators will have equal access to materials such as the Smartphone Microscope, an inexpensive 3D-printed device that turns a digital camera into a 100X microscope. The Girls of Energy e-book and interactive website were launched on December 9, 2016, with hands-on activities and engaging STEM demonstrations at the Excel Academy, Washington DC's first all-girls public charter school.

#### **#4: SUSTAINING REDUCED RATES OF TEEN PREGNANCY AND BUILDING ON SUCCESS**

The number of U.S. teen births has steadily declined over the past two decades and is at a record low.<sup>23</sup> Two factors account for this decline; research indicates that fewer teens are sexually active and sexually active teens are more likely to use birth control.<sup>24</sup>

Births among Hispanic and black teens have dropped by almost half since 2006, according to an analysis published by CDC in April 2016.<sup>25</sup> This mirrors a substantial national decline: births to all American teenagers have dropped more than 40 percent within the last decade.<sup>26</sup> While dramatic declines among Hispanic and black teens (51 percent and 44 percent declines, respectively) have helped reduce gaps, birth rates remain twice as high for these teens nationally

compared to white teens, and more than three times as high in some states.<sup>27</sup> American Indian/Alaska Native teen birth rates are one and a half times higher than the white teen birth rate.<sup>28</sup> Approximately 20 percent of adolescent births are repeat births among older parenting teens.<sup>29</sup> Girls of color are overrepresented in foster care and adolescent girls in foster care are more than twice as likely to become pregnant than those not in foster care.<sup>30</sup>

Most teen pregnancies are unintended and occur when teens do not use birth control or use it inconsistently or incorrectly.<sup>31</sup> Research shows that maintenance-free contraceptive methods (e.g. long-acting reversible contraceptives) may be particularly useful in preventing teen pregnancy.

Preventing teen pregnancy also improves birth outcomes. The national rate of preterm birth declined 8 percent between 2007 and 2014.<sup>32</sup> A CDC analysis published found that some of that decline is attributable to successful teen pregnancy prevention.<sup>33</sup> While rates of preterm birth declined for women of all ages between those years, the declines in births to teens and women ages 20 to 24 had the biggest impact on the overall decline.<sup>34</sup>

Opportunity may be less for teen parents and their children.<sup>35</sup> Only half of all teen mothers receive a high school diploma by age 22 and, in the aggregate, the children of teen mothers are less likely to complete school and are more likely to have higher rates of health problems and unemployment.<sup>36</sup> They are also more likely to become teen parents themselves.<sup>37</sup>

Research by the Brookings Institution shows that, when teens delay birth, the average family income of their offspring increases—and the longer a teen birth is delayed, the larger the average family income of the offspring.<sup>38</sup> The combination of delaying births and increasing education creates the most significant gains in children's own income.<sup>39</sup> The Administration has worked to end unplanned teen pregnancy and thus increase both educational and economic opportunity by sustaining reduced rates of teen pregnancy and building on success through expanded access to knowledge about birth control and preventive health services.

The HHS Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) leads the national, evidence-based [Teen Pregnancy Prevention \(TPP\) Program](#) which targets social and health issues which may interfere with a young person making a successful transition to healthy, productive adulthood. In addition to evaluating new strategies and approaches, the TPP Program supports the implementation of evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs that have been shown, in at least one program evaluation, to have a positive effect on preventing teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, or sexual risk behaviors.

- In July 2016, the OAH [released findings](#) from the first five years of its Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, finding that the TPP Program has reached nearly half a million youth in 39 states and the District of Columbia, established over 3,800 community partnerships, and trained more than 6,100 program facilitators.<sup>40</sup> OAH has also made a substantial contribution to the field of evidence-based programming using rigorous evaluation methods to conduct [41 independent, rigorous evaluations](#), 90 percent of which were randomized controlled trials. Two types of TPP grants were rigorously evaluated: (1) Replications of evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs were implemented in different settings and/or with different populations than were originally shown to be effective. Four were found effective in changing behavior in these

additional, new settings and populations, and many more reported changes in participant's knowledge, attitudes, and intentions to avoid risky behaviors.

(2) New and innovative approaches to preventing teen pregnancy were also evaluated. Eight new programs had an impact on behaviors that prevent teen pregnancy and meet criteria to be considered an HHS evidence-based program.

These findings were also published in a [special supplement in the American Journal of Public Health](#).

- In 2016, OAH's work in evidence-based programming was referenced by a number of reports and articles including a General Accounting Office report, [Tiered Evidence Grant: Opportunities Exist to Share Lessons from Early Implementation and Inform Future Efforts](#), Results for America's [Invest in What Works Fact Sheet: Federal Evidence-Based Innovation Programs](#), and the Social Innovation Research Center's [Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program Findings Show Benefits, Challenges of Evidence-Based Programming](#).
- Moving forward, OAH is using the results to make continuous improvements to the program and is on track to reach an additional 1.2 million youth during the next five years (FY 2015-2019) through the 84 new grant programs that were awarded in July 2015. This next cycle of the TPP Program is focused on holistic, community-wide strategies for teen pregnancy prevention in communities in which teen pregnancy rates remain high and where there are significant disparities.
- To continue to enhance the support available for OAH grantees, in July 2016, OAH awarded \$2.9 million to five organizations to provide capacity building assistance (CBA) to OAH-funded TPP grantees in five key priority areas: (1) program implementation, (2) community mobilization and sustainability, (3) ensuring safe and supportive environments, (4) establishing and maintaining linkages and referrals to youth-friendly health care services, and (5) communications and dissemination. Each grant is funded annually for a five-year project period. The five funded organizations will coordinate and collaborate with each other and with OAH to provide the 84 OAH-funded TPP grantees with capacity building assistance and support to continue to reduce rates of teen pregnancy and eliminate existing disparities in communities throughout the country.
- In June 2016, HHS hosted the second HHS TPP Grantee Conference, [Connecting the Dots: Collaborating to Achieve Lasting Impacts for Youth](#). The event provided onsite training, technical assistance, and networking for HHS grantees working to prevent teen pregnancy and promote adolescent sexual health. More than 950 representatives from over 300 federal grantee organizations attended.
- In 2016, OAH established partnerships to share TPP Program evaluation findings and information with various national organizations including the Brookings Institute, Results for America, the Arnold Foundation, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, the Healthy Teen Network, the National Council of La Raza, the National Council of State Legislators, and the National Rural Health Association.
- OAH also implements the [Pregnancy Assistance Fund \(PAF\)](#), which was established by the Affordable Care Act, to develop and implement programs to improve the health, educational, and social outcomes for expectant and parenting teens, women, fathers, and their families. Currently, 17 states and 3 Tribal entities implement projects to strengthen pregnant and parenting teens and young adult's access to and completion of education,

and improve child and maternal health outcomes. In 2016, OAH released an implementation report, “*Launching Programs to Support Expectant and Parenting Youth.*” This is a systematic description of the PAF program’s efforts to support expectant and parenting youth, detailing grantees’ program plans and components, strategies, and implementation designs. In December 2016, OAH will release a new funding opportunity announcement for competitive grant funding for FY 2017-2019.

- In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) awarded about \$1.9 million to support three organizations in enhancing the capacity of publicly funded health centers to provide youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services: Sexual Health Initiative for Teens North Carolina (Durham, North Carolina), Mississippi First, Inc. (Coahoma, Quitman, and Tunica counties, Mississippi), and the Georgia Association for Primary Health Care (Chatham County, GA). Funded grantees work with youth-serving systems to refer and link vulnerable young people to care, including those in foster care, in the juvenile justice or probation system, or schools.<sup>41</sup>
- Recognizing the importance of technology and digital media to teens, HHS and the CDC funded a \$1 million innovation contract in FY 2016 to finalize the development of a mobile app that supports pregnancy prevention. Crush is a smartphone mobile app that contains medically accurate and comprehensive sexual health information for the prevention of teen pregnancy. The app includes interactive features and is available in a Spanish language version. Crush is designed to increase awareness and educate young women so they can make more informed decisions. The app has been developed in English and Spanish versions and an Internet-based study is currently ongoing to assess its uptake among female teens.

## #5: ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

According to the Department of Labor’s (DOL) Women’s Bureau, 57 percent of women in the United States participate in the labor force.<sup>42</sup> Of these 74 million women, 26.6 million are women of color (non-White, non-Hispanic).<sup>43</sup> As national demographic trends shift, more than half of all Americans are projected to belong to a minority group by 2044; women of color will represent an increasing share of the U.S. workforce.<sup>44</sup>

Despite driving growth, women of color face persistent challenges to full participation in the economy. Black women have consistently had the highest rate of unemployment as compared with Latina, Asian, and White, non-Hispanic women, with Black women experiencing longer periods of unemployment.<sup>45</sup> Although women, in general, face a continuing pay gap compared to their male counterparts, the gap between Black women and Hispanic women to White, non-Hispanic men is even larger. For example, the typical Hispanic women make 54 cents for every dollar paid to non-Hispanic white men, and the typical African-American women make 63 cents for every dollar paid to non-Hispanic white men. These gaps persist, despite strong earnings growth for women workers in 2015.<sup>46</sup>

Women of color are more likely to be employed in service jobs—the lowest paying occupational sector—than white, non-Hispanic women.<sup>47</sup> Women make up nearly two-thirds of all workers who are paid the federal minimum wage or less and have low rates

of wealth accumulation. Increasing the economic opportunity of women of color also will give more opportunity to their children and continue to increase opportunity for generations to come.<sup>48</sup>

As listed in the last report, the Administration has taken steps to expand economic opportunity. They include (1) making permanent key provisions of tax credits for working Americans, (2) investing in improvements to compensation, paid family leave, and paid sick leave and other policies, which support working families, (3) increasing access to federal contracting opportunities, including for minority women-owned businesses, and (4) increasing diverse participation in career and technical training, especially in areas of high growth demand. The following are action taken over the past year to advance economic opportunity, including for women and girls of color:

- In June 2016, the White House, as part of the United States of Women event, announced a new joint report from the U.S. Departments of Education (ED), and Health and Human Services (HHS) highlighting the importance of supporting the early learning workforce—nearly a totality of whom are women—not only to improve the quality of early learning programs, but also to ensure fair pay so that these women can support their own families. The report, [High-Quality Early Learning Settings Depend on a High-Quality Workforce—Low Compensation Undermines Quality](#), summarizes the research base and includes recommendations for reaching pay parity across all early learning settings.
- In September 2015, President Obama signed an [Executive Order](#) requiring federal contractors (and subcontractors) to allow their employees working on federal contracts to earn up to seven paid sick days each year. In September 2016, the Department of Labor finalized its rule implementing the order. It takes into account extensive public comments from employers, business associations, small businesses, workers, unions, and worker advocates. The [final rule](#), which goes into effect for new solicitations issued on or after January 1, 2017, gives additional paid sick leave to 1.15 million people working on federal contracts, including nearly 600,000 employees who do not currently have even a single day of paid sick leave. Workers will earn one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked on (or in connection with) a covered federal contract, up to 56 hours in a year or at any point in time.<sup>49</sup>
- In September 2015, the Small Business Administration (SBA) announced a [new rule](#) that authorizes federal agencies to award sole source contracts to women-owned small businesses eligible for the Woman-Owned Small Business Federal Grant Program or the Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Businesses. In March 2016, SBA increased opportunities for WOSBs to compete for federal contracts through the WOSB Federal Contracting Program by expanding the number of North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) industry groups associated with the program from 83 to 113. The SBA increased the industry groups as a result of a report commissioned by Administrator Maria Contreras-Sweet, which concluded that women-owned small businesses are underrepresented or substantially represented in 113 NAICS industry groups. The additional industry groups added to the WOSB program represent access to an additional \$39.9 billion in eligible federal contracts for WOSB set-asides and sole source awards. For the first time in history, the Federal Government met the 5 percent women-owned small business (WOSB) goal.<sup>50</sup> In FY15, 5.05 percent or \$17.8 billion of all federal small business eligible contracting dollars were awarded to WOSBs. The WOSB goal was established in 1994 and implemented in 1996.<sup>51</sup>

- On November 30, 2016, U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King, Jr. [announced](#) that 18 states will receive \$247.4 million for their third year funding awards under the Departments of Education and of Health and Human Services jointly-administered Preschool Development Grant program to continue their work in expanding access to high-quality preschool. King also announced the release of the [Preschool Development Grants Annual Progress Report](#) and [18 individual state reports](#), which detail how states enrolled over 28,000 children from low-income families in preschool programs meeting the high-quality standards and improving access for our country's children from low-to-moderate-income families.
- In 2016, DOL's Women's Bureau and the Employment and Training Administration awarded nearly \$2 million in grant funds to support community-based organizations in their efforts to improve outreach, recruitment, hiring, training, employment, and retention of women in apprenticeship and non-traditional occupations.
- Also in 2016, building on historic bipartisan support from Congress and leadership across a broad range of states and industry partners, DOL awarded nearly \$90 million in funding as part of the ApprenticeshipUSA initiative to further the goal of doubling and diversifying Registered Apprenticeship by 2019.
- DOL awarded approximately \$54 million in grants to help low- to middle- skilled parents access the affordable, quality child care they need to earn an education, participate in training programs and ultimately compete for better-paying jobs in emerging industries. These Strengthening Working Families Grants went to 14 partnerships across the country.

### **COMMITMENTS TO WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR**

Throughout the course of the Obama Administration, the Council on Women and Girls has worked to ensure that government policies appropriately consider challenges and persistent opportunity gaps faced by too many disadvantaged, marginalized, or underrepresented women and girls. We have made significant progress across these five objectives— ending teen pregnancy, fostering school success, inclusive STEM education, expanding pathways to economic prosperity, and meeting the needs of vulnerable and striving girls – but are aware that there is still work that needs to happen in the years to come to strengthen the voices and capacities of women and girls of color and their peers. We have also made efforts to inspire the private sector to do the same – to ensure that everyone who aspires to get ahead has a chance to succeed. As the Administration comes to an end, we are encouraged by the significant commitments that have been made by outside organization on behalf of women and girls of color and their peers:

- In November 2015, at a White House forum, the Council on Women and Girls announced an independent \$100 million, 5-year-funding commitment by Prosperity Together— a collective effort of public women’s foundations and women’s funds in community foundations to raise awareness of their role in improving the economic security of low-income women and their families— to improve economic prosperity for low-income women. To date, Prosperity Together partners committed over \$29,170,427 in Year One of their commitment, supporting 933 unique organizations across the 29 partnering members of the collaborative. Over 4,015,370 women and girls have been reached, a



significant portion of which are women and girls of color. In Minnesota, for example, 80% of program participants are women and girls of color.

- Also in November 2015, The White House announced the launch of the Collaborative to Advance Equity Through Research, an affiliation of American colleges, universities, research organizations, publishers, and public interest institutions administered by Wake Forest University. Collaborative members announced a collective commitment of \$18 million to support existing and new research efforts by and addressing the lives of women and girls of color. Since last November, this commitment has grown to more than \$75 million dollars and 55 institutions.
- In March 2016, the NoVo Foundation announced a seven-year, \$90 million commitment to support and deepen the movement for girls of color. The funds will support grassroots programming and advocacy, as well as national-level policy and culture change efforts that are girl-led, girl-driven and designed to address the systemic and institutional challenges faced by girls of color across the country. This commitment builds on the leadership of women of color who have worked for years to further this movement. As part of the process for identifying how to invest this \$90 million commitment, NoVo has organized a series of regional learning sessions across the country to hear directly from girls of color as well as advocates. The sessions are designed to engage and invite ideas from local communities on what is needed to grow the movement in a lasting and meaningful way.
- Also in March 2016, The [Smithsonian Institution](#) – the world’s largest museum and research complex –initiated a campaign to inspire women and girls of color and their peers through their signature Museum Day Live! event. Five hundred and twenty-eight museums, cultural centers, zoos, and aquariums—many of them supported by special outreach grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities—opened their doors for free in an effort to encourage all youth, including girls of color, to explore the arts and sciences and museums. It was an all-hands-on-deck effort, with Senior Administration Officials and Cabinet Secretaries participating in this special and inspirational event.
- In June 2016 at the United State of Women Summit, 8 members of Prosperity Together launched “Young Women’s Initiatives”—place-based, data-driven programs that will focus in on the local needs of young women of color. Programs have been launched by the following foundations: (1) Women's Foundation of Minnesota, (2) The Women's Foundation of California, (3) Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis, (4) Washington Area Women's Foundation , (5) Dallas Women's Foundation, (6) The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham, (7) Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts and (8) The New York Women’s Foundation.
- Also at the Summit, The Girls at the Margin Alliance launched a policy platform to support marginalized girls and girls of color. The Girls at the Margin Alliance includes more than 150 alliance members, steered by The National Crittenton Foundation, Rights4Girls, National Women’s Law Center, Georgetown Center on Policy and Inequality and Girls Inc. The Alliance was created as a flexible affiliation of organizations and individuals collaborating across systems and disciplines, at the national, regional and local levels to advance the best interest of girls who are marginalized by their communities, and often by their families and by the systems charged with their care. The policy platform has worked to propose concrete, actionable recommendations to ensure that marginalized girls and young women are met with

system responses that honor their experiences and voices, provide opportunities for them to heal, develop their strengths, ensure their safety, and support them in building thriving lives.

## SUMMARY

In our final year, we have continued to focus on these five objectives because they make up a framework that can strengthen the voices and capacities of women and girls of color and their peers. Our success in the years to come will depend in large part on ensuring that everyone who aspires to succeed has the chance to reach their full potential. With commitments from foundations, non-profit organizations and research institutions across the country, we are confident that the work to appropriately consider the challenges and persistent opportunity gaps faced by too many disadvantaged, marginalized, or underrepresented women and girls will continue.

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