

INTERNAL

This background brief describes what is meant by “Children Impact Statement” and is intended as an internal document for sharing knowledge and honing recommendations.

Children Impact Statement in Federal Policymaking

THE CHALLENGE

Americans expect government policy to advance the best interests of children. Yet, the data shows that U.S. policy lacks the high-level coordination, well-defined indicators, and evaluations mechanisms to effectively advance children’s safety, health, and development. Both domestically and internationally, young people suffer from poverty, violence, exploitation, and limited access to healthcare, nutrition, and education. Without clear mechanisms and indicators to evaluate government policy for its impact on children and youth, U.S. policy continues to leave them behind, with young people from marginalized populations bearing the heaviest weight due to systemic inequities and discrimination.

Current US efforts to address the needs of children are fragmented at best. What is needed is a robust approach that supports young people (children and youth) from early childhood, through adolescence, and into their youth.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Around the world and in the United States, government entities use child impact statements to assess the impact that regulations, policies, and programs would have on children. Similar to the environmental and gender analyses the federal government currently uses, impact statements on children and on youth would provide a systematic process to answer fundamental questions about outcomes for health, education, safety, family and community unity, economic security and mobility, development, and identity.

By disaggregating information by age stage (for example, early childhood, children, adolescents, youth) the impact statements would provide critical information and analysis to further many of the objectives of the federal government. First, they would advance equity by focusing on issues and structures that disproportionately affect children and youth from marginalized communities and analyzing impact based on key demographics. They would improve the efficacy of government programs, as developing clear indicators through which to assess government policies would allow the government to track progress and avoid duplication and overlap. They would also facilitate inter-agency coordination, as factors of child and youth well-being are inter-disciplinary and impact every government agency.

THE STRATEGY

The White House should direct agencies to conduct child and youth impact assessments for all regulations, policies, guidance, and programs that impact young people. To be most effective, these impact statements should be part of a broader agenda to advance children’s and youth’s well-being, that include measures such as:

- establish a cross-agency priority on improving child well-being;
- develop shared benchmarks to assess impact, based, for example, on factors in a “best interest of the child” standard;
- compile and disaggregate data – including by age, disability, gender, and socio-economic status – to assess impact and reach;
- provide clear leadership, authority, and budgets within and across agencies to focus on children and on youth to promote buy in and provide technical support; and
- ensure accountability to the public and stakeholders, including children and youth.

RESOURCES

For more on child impact statements, read [here](#).

Examples of template child impact statements can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR CHILD IMPACT STATEMENTS

- What is the purpose or objective of the proposal?
- In developing the proposal and implementing the plan, have you consulted with impacted communities and stakeholders, including children and youth?
- What age stage will this impact primarily: early childhood, children, adolescents, youth?
- What are the positive and negative impacts of the proposal on the following aspects of a young person's well-being?
 - Safety and security, including safeguards all forms of exploitation, sexual abuse, and violence
 - Mental and physical health
 - Relationships and attachments with a parent, legal guardian, sibling, or extended family
 - Education and vocation
 - Healthy development
 - Liberty
 - Equity
 - Identity (including race, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status)
- Are any of the following groups more affected by the proposal than others, either positively or negatively? If yes, how?
 - Children of certain racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds
 - Girls
 - Boys
 - LGBTQ+ children
 - Children with disabilities
 - Children of Immigrants
- If the proposal negatively impacts any aspects of child well-being, what steps could be taken to mitigate those negative impacts? Or, if steps should not be taken to mitigate negative impacts on children, explain why this proposal is preferable to any alternative that would not adversely impact children.
- If the proposal does not impact children, adolescents, or youth, explain why.

NOTE: This background brief was prepared by Bruce Lesley, Kathy Sacco, and Miriam Abaya (First Focus on Children) with input from Jennifer Rigg and Christa Giesecke (Global Campaign for Education-US), Alex Arriaga (Strategy for Humanity on behalf of Children's Policy and Funding Initiative at Tides Center). For more information, contact Emily Davis: EDavis@TidesCenter.org