

A Blueprint for a Stronger America

Four key policy approaches that will help the next generation succeed in school and life

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites membership organizations, including law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, and business executives, that promote solutions ensuring that our next generation of Americans will be successful, productive members of society.

Our 8,500+ members know that one of the most effective ways to strengthen our nation is to provide young people with a foundation for success from their earliest years. Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Mission: Readiness, and ReadyNation members advocate for evidence-based policies and programs, at the national and state levels, that put children on the path to success. From birth through high school, children need strong parents and effective programs, including the approaches listed below, to grow up to reach their potential and contribute to our nation.

When our country fails to invest effectively in its children, there is a steep price. Educational deficits, crime, substance abuse, and health issues (particularly obesity) prevent 71 percent of American youth from qualifying for military service.¹ Failure to graduate from high school can also hamper opportunities to enter and excel in the workforce² and can be associated with crime.³



Four Policy Approaches That Work



Make **high-quality early care and education** available to kids from birth to age 5 from families with low incomes.



Offer **voluntary parent coaching** to parents of young children from high-risk communities through home visiting.



Provide effective **after school programs**.



Ensure **good nutrition** for all children.

Early childhood education (ECE): Children who participate in high-quality ECE are more likely to enter kindergarten ready to learn,⁴ succeed in school,⁵ and avoid future crime.⁶ ECE programs that emphasize healthy eating and physical activity can also help reduce children's risk of obesity.⁷

Home visiting: Research shows that evidence-based home visiting programs have a range of benefits for children and families, including: reductions in child abuse, improved health, and enhanced academic outcomes.⁸

Afterschool programs: Juvenile crime peaks in the hours immediately after school, from 2 to 6 PM.⁹ High-quality afterschool programs can help students steer clear of crime and develop their academic and social skills. Afterschool programs can also lead to

healthier habits, including decreases in substance use and increased opportunities for physical activity.¹⁰

Good nutrition: Ensuring that all children have consistent access to fresh and nutritious food, and sufficient physical activity, is critical for kids to grow up healthy and prepared for any career they choose. Federal nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program, WIC, and SNAP, are essential to families accessing fresh and nutritious foods, as well as providing important nutrition education.

Investing in children pays off: Investing now in what works not only builds a stronger nation; cost-benefit analyses indicate it saves money.¹¹ Our nation must invest in what works.

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Endnotes

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