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What's the Plan?

By Elizabeth Gaines and Thaddeus Ferber

Pop civics quiz: Which of the following elements describe the United States' approach to child and youth policy?

- A. A Comprehensive National Strategic Plan:** U.S. policy is guided by a “Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People,” which is “intended to be a high level framework, expressed in terms of a common vision, underlying principles, with a focus on high level outcomes for children and young people and effective measures and indicators of progress.”
- B. A High-Level Coordinating Body of Decision Makers:** U.S. policy is overseen by a high-level governmental body charged with “driving the strategy forward across departments and closely monitoring progress” and ensuring “a coordinated approach across government departments, and the wider public sector, to the development of policies which impact the lives of children and young people.”
- C. Stakeholder Engagement and Input:** U.S. policy is developed based on feedback from a range of stakeholders through formal engagement mechanisms including an interdepartmental group, a nonprofit organizations forum, a parents group, a practitioners group, a researchers group, and a specific mandate to “ensure that children and young people are involved every step of the way, that their voices are heard and their views and opinions given due weight.”
- D. All of the Above**

Want a hint? “All of the Above” is how countries as far flung as New Zealand and Namibia, and stretching the alphabet from Australia to Zambia, approach their child and youth policies. And they are supported in these efforts by international organizations, such as the Commonwealth Youth Ministers,¹ the European Youth Forum,² and the United Nations,³ which have called for countries to create comprehensive interagency youth policies and action plans to coordinate efforts across sectors.

Likewise, “All of the Above” is how a growing number of states throughout the United States approach their child and youth policies. In 20 states across the

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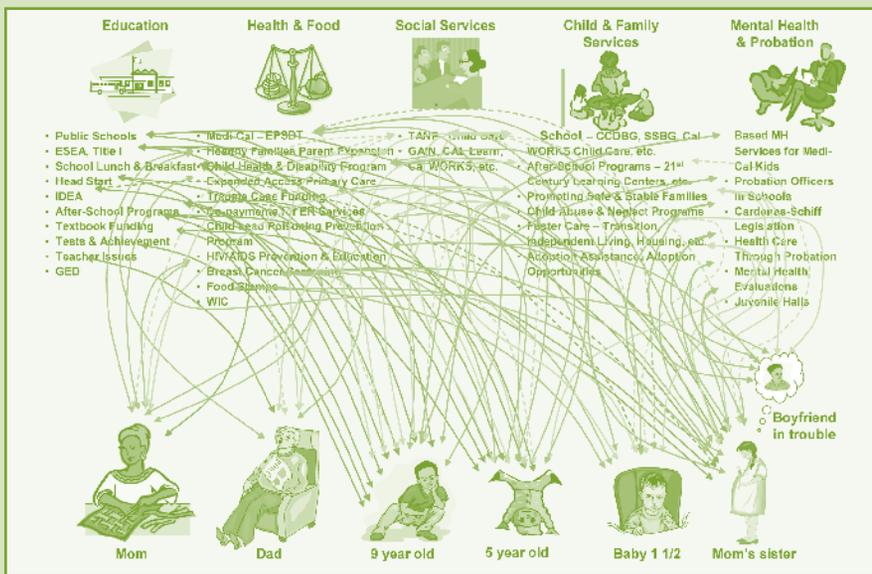
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country, cross-agency coordinating bodies (often referred to as children's cabinets, commissions, or councils) are systematically changing the fragmented and ineffective way states typically do business for children and youth. Children's cabinets and councils (which vary in structure from state to state) typically are made up of heads of government agencies with child- and youth-serving programs, who meet on a regular basis with the collective goal of coordinating services, developing a common set of outcomes, and collaboratively deciding upon and implementing plans to foster the well-being of young people. A growing number of these children's cabinets are developing comprehensive statewide strategic plans for children and youth and are engaging a range of stakeholders in the development and implementation of the plan.

So the answer to the pop quiz should be D, right? Wrong. It was a trick question. The answer is actually E, none of the above. The United States doesn't have an overarching strategic plan for children and youth. It doesn't have an overarching coordinating body such as a children's cabinet to oversee implementation of a strategic plan. And it doesn't have formal mechanisms for stakeholders (especially youth) to provide ongoing and consistent input into the strategic plan.

Figure 1
Child and Youth Services in Los Angeles



In the absence of these three essential elements of a robust, coordinated child and youth policy approach, we are left with a severely fractured system. In 2003, the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth identified 339 isolated, unaligned federal programs to serve young people. These programs are run by no fewer than 12 separate federal departments. The task force concluded that “the complexity of the problems

faced by disadvantaged youth is matched only by the complexity of the traditional federal response to those problems. Both are confusing, complicated, and costly.⁴

As a result – despite the best of intentions and the most capable educators, healthcare providers, and social service providers – the federal government is providing fragmented support when we need comprehensive solutions. This fragmentation is transferred down to the state and local level. Figure 1 depicts the actual fragmented array of programs administered by Los Angeles County.⁵ One child finds educational services but not the mentoring needed to make sense of his lessons. Another receives lifesaving medical care but misses out on the supplemental assistance she needs to prevent further complications. Other children find foster care but not healthcare, shelter without education, counseling yet no daily adult supervision. These cases are tragically repeated, in every corner of the country, millions of times over.

As we will describe below, strategic plans for children and youth, high-level policy coordinating bodies, and formal mechanisms for stakeholder engagement with the strategic plan are powerful antidotes to a severely fractured system. We will show how using examples from one country and two states: Northern Ireland (the source of the quotes in the pop quiz),⁶ Ohio, and Massachusetts. We chose to explore the policies in these three locations not because they are necessarily the most advanced in every area, but instead because they are moving forward on all three of these elements at once. Thus, we hope to provide insight into how strategic plans, coordinating bodies, and stakeholder engagement work in tandem to form the foundation of an effective national approach to child and youth policy.

Child and Youth Strategic Plans

Effective child and youth policy starts with a vision and outcomes framework. Each of our featured locations (Northern Ireland, Ohio, and Massachusetts) built its coordination efforts on top of a unifying framework because, as Northern Ireland expressed it, a child and youth strategy needs to be grounded by a “high level framework, expressed in terms of a common vision, underlying principles, with a focus on high level outcomes for children and young people and effective measures and indicators of progress.”⁷

The best vision statements are broad and all encompassing, focusing on all children and youth, and setting a positive and aspirational tone. Effective outcomes frameworks correspond to that broad vision and further delineate a specific set of results to be achieved, ideally covering the full range of ages (preferably birth to 24 years) and the full range of developmental realms (e.g., educational, vocational, social, emotional, physical, civic, and cultural).

Once a vision and outcomes framework was in place, each of our featured locations created an action plan. The best action plans are carefully linked to the vision and outcomes framework; include specific deliverables, timelines, and

parties responsible; are widely publicized; are developed based on a careful review of data; and integrate efforts across departmental lines.

For example, Northern Ireland established a clear action plan that is published along with progress reports every two years. All actions are “linked to the outcomes framework.” Departments are “required to provide timescales for the completion of actions and identify delivery leads and partners.”⁸ Ohio organized its framework around four functional priorities (cross-system alignment, flexible funding, integrated data sharing, and capacity building) that are better accomplished together than apart. If an individual agency can accomplish a goal on its own, it is not a goal for the children’s cabinet to take on. There are very few goals for children and youth that fit neatly into governmental silos.

Once an action plan is under way, leaders need to monitor short-term progress to determine where midcourse corrections are needed. That is where short-term indicators of child and youth well-being come in.

Northern Ireland chose a set of indicators that “linked to the outcomes framework, with each indicator corresponding to one or more outcome areas,” and uses these indicators to “monitor and track the progress of actions” and “to measure the success of the ten year strategy.”⁹ Based on this data, the action plan is reviewed on an annual basis and is updated as necessary. Likewise, Ohio Family and Children First developed a set of indicators to correspond to each of the 11 outcomes areas, and Massachusetts developed a set of indicators that represent success in each area of its outcomes framework, have strong communication power, and balance negative indicators (behaviors the planners hope young people will avoid) with positive ones (behaviors the plan seeks to promote).

Taken together, a clear vision and outcomes framework and corresponding indicators, strategies, and action steps form the elements of a strategic plan to reduce fragmentation and improve alignment.

Coordinating Bodies

Ultimately, strategic plans are only as powerful as the people who implement them. The creation of a strategic plan is a critical step, but if it is the last step, it will have been an empty exercise. There must be a coordinated effort to implement and oversee the strategic plan. And because effective strategic plans for children and youth by definition involve a number of different departments, some sort of interagency coordinating body is needed to oversee the implementation.

Toward this end, Northern Ireland created a Minister for Children and Young People and a Ministerial Sub-Committee for Children and Young People charged with “driving the strategy forward across departments and closely monitoring progress” and ensuring “a coordinated approach across government departments, and the wider public sector, to the development of policies which impact the lives

of children and young people.” It has also deftly acknowledged the inevitable turf issues that will arise with existing ministers by stating up front that the minister “will not detract from, or be a substitute for other Ministers, who will maintain ultimate responsibility for their respective policy areas.”¹⁰

In the United States, state-level children’s cabinets and councils are the closest equivalent. As the National Governors Association reported, “a strong and effective Children’s Cabinet can improve coordination and efficiency across state departments and local levels of government; mobilize resources around the governor’s priorities for children; facilitate a holistic approach to serving children; and strengthen partnerships with the non profit and private sectors.”¹¹

The Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council was codified by the state in 1993 and is currently housed in the governor’s office. The first lady serves as chair and is an active participant, and the members of the council are 11 department heads. As a coordinating body, the Ohio Children and Family First Cabinet Council plays a critical role in the well-being of Ohio’s children by “aligning services, resources, initiatives, policies/rules, and planning requirements across departments.”¹²

Similarly, Governor Deval Patrick established a Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet in Massachusetts in 2008 to streamline state efforts to improve services for children, youth, and families. The Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet is made up of the heads of each of the executive offices of state government that serve children. In 2009, the Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet endorsed the “Success for Life” strategic plan and has since begun to outline the specific roles the members of the Cabinet can fill in the implementation of that plan.

Stakeholder Engagement

In much the same way that a strategic plan is only as good as the people who implement it, a governmental initiative is only as strong as the populace that backs it. Neither strategic plans nor policy coordinating bodies will have much sticking power if they are not backed by a range of stakeholders both inside and outside government. This is especially true because long-range strategic plans (some of which project out ten years or more) will transcend administrations and will require several years of continuous effort. Without strong buy-in and support from career staff and leaders outside government, the plan will not be able to survive political transitions.

Even more importantly, government itself is limited in what role it can play in supporting children and youth. A true strategic plan will incorporate not only actions to be taken by government officials but also actions to be taken by those outside government. As Northern Ireland’s Strategy for Children and Young People states, an effective strategy is “not solely about what government . . . can do for children and young people . . . Nor is it about what statutory authorities,

voluntary and community sectors, the private sector and groups, which offer universal and targeted services to children and young people, can do. It is about what we can do together, in partnership, to improve the life chances of all our children and young people.”¹³

Northern Ireland conducted stakeholder engagement through an interdepartmental group (representing all Northern Ireland departments, the Northern Ireland Court Service and the Northern Ireland Office), a Non-Governmental Organisation's Forum, a Parent's Advisory Group, and a Research and Information Group. The chairs of each of these groups then form the Strategy Planning and Review Group, which is mandated to “advise on the draft Children and Young People's Action Plan, which will identify the actions which will be taken across government to deliver on our strategic aims.”¹⁴

In the United States, a number of state children's cabinets use similar approaches to stakeholder engagement. Ohio Family and Children First, for example, has built its system from the bottom up, through 88 local county councils, providing a broad base for local stakeholder engagement. Ohio Family and Children First also places an emphasis on family engagement in particular. As Ohio Family and Children First puts it, the cabinet and the local councils “have a unique role to recruit and support parents to be active contributing members on county FCF [Family and Children First] councils; be involved in key decision-making efforts; and serve as an advocate for children, families, and communities.”¹⁵

Massachusetts also used a stakeholder-driven approach to developing a strategic plan. During an intensive six-month process, the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and the Massachusetts Executive Office for Health and Human Services brought together more than 100 stakeholders to form the Massachusetts Action Planning team. This “cross sector, cross discipline, cross agency team held a series of ground breaking conversations to define and advance a set of shared goals and strategies capable of lifting all children, youth and families toward self-sufficiency and success for life.” Public- and private-sector stakeholders worked together to forge shared accountability for the plan, and the strategies and action steps represent their concerns and their responsibilities. The general public was even given an opportunity to weigh in on the plan, and more than 500 citizens were surveyed on the outcomes, indicators, and contributing factors.

Youth Voice

There is one stakeholder group that warrants particular attention and discussion in this context: young people themselves. As the recipients of the services and supports being provided, they are uniquely positioned to provide insights that are critical to the success of any strategic plan. Yet they are rarely brought to the table. Exemplary efforts counteract this trend by structuring genuine opportunities for youth voices to be heard and incorporated into the planning process.

Northern Ireland, for example, has a specific mandate to “ensure that children and young people are involved every step of the way, that their voices are heard and their views and opinions given due weight,”¹⁷ and to “ensure that children and young people are routinely involved in the public decision-making process” by being “proactive in obtaining the views of children on matters of significance to them.”¹⁸ They did so by developing “mechanisms that facilitate engagement in a way that is natural and achieves the cultural change we are seeking to effect,”¹⁹ including the following:

- **Young People’s Advisory Forum**, consisting of 48 young people ages 12 to 18. The forum is a representative sample of all categories of children and young people.
- **Participation Network**, to offer training and consultancy support to the statutory sector in order to engage directly with children and youth; develop and promote standards of good practice in relation to child and youth participation; and develop a bank of resource materials, information, and a Web site in relation to their participation.
- **Participation Hub**, established by the Northern Ireland Youth Forum, to deliver a coherent approach to the participation of children and young people, integrate existing and emerging participation structures, and ensure that children and young people have the capacity to engage.
- **Northern Ireland Network for Youth**, established to strengthen the direct voice of young people in all relevant aspects of government provision.
- **District Youth Networks**, to strengthen the role of district councils in youth provision.

The sheer number of youth engagement mechanisms in place in a tiny country like Northern Ireland stands in stark contrast to the United States, which does not have a single official youth engagement mechanism in place at the federal level. There are, however, a number of similar mechanisms in place at the state level. At least 12 states²⁰ and hundreds of localities²¹ have established youth councils through which policy makers are afforded access to the unique insights of young people.

The Massachusetts Youth Council, for instance, created by the governor in 2008, consists of a diverse group of 28 young people who directly advise him and encourage and motivate the engagement of youth in the policymaking process across the state. These young people were involved in shaping the Success for Life plan. They also found creative ways to involve larger numbers of their peers in giving feedback and advice.

Less Effective Approaches to Coordination

We have posited in this paper that developing a national child and youth strategy, establishing a high-level policy coordinating body to oversee it, and engaging stakeholders in shaping and implementing the plan is the most effective way to coordinate child and youth policy. There are, however, other approaches to improving coordination as well. Over the years, across federal, state, and local levels, we have observed a number of well-intentioned alternative efforts to address fragmentation. While some coordinating is always better than no coordination, in isolation these kinds of efforts are ultimately insufficient. These types of coordination include the following:

- **Single-Topic Coordination:** This is perhaps the most prevalent form of coordination, which is not surprising because the logic that drives this response is so compelling. It does not take long for a political leader who is passionate about an issue to realize that fully addressing that one issue will require a coordinated interagency response. It is common, therefore, to find several different coordinating bodies related to child and youth issues at any given time, in any administration, at any level (local, state, or national). This approach falls short in two areas. First, a similar set of staff often find themselves rushing between multiple coordinating bodies addressing similar populations from different vantage points, leading to the ironic need to coordinate the coordinating bodies. Second, single-topic coordination by definition not only fails to address the fragmentation in all the other areas of child and youth policy – it perpetuates it.
- **Time-Limited Coordination:** Sometimes a coordinating body is set up for a fixed amount of time, for example, to complete a report. In those instances, we have often observed an unfortunate situation in which the coordinating body issues a powerful set of recommendations but then dissolves, leaving no clear entity in place to complete the child and youth strategy, oversee governmental efforts to implement the strategy, and continue the stakeholder engagement. Knowing what needs to be done but not having a standing body tasked with accomplishing it is as frustrating as it is fruitless.
- **Personal Network Coordination:** Interagency coordination is often undertaken by a few key high-ranking officials with close working relationships. “Of course I believe in coordination: I talk to Sally and Tom all the time” is the type of refrain common in this type of coordination. Indeed, a tremendous amount of effective coordination comes from just these types of personal connections. They are particularly useful in institutions that have slim bureaucracies (one should never underestimate, for example, how much coordination can be achieved by strong personal ties between, say, chiefs of staff of several key legislative committees). The bigger the bureaucracy one is overseeing, however, the harder it is

to coordinate through personal relationships alone. The sheer scale of federal executive branch institutions limits the ability of even the most competent of political appointees to scratch the surface of what could and should be coordinated. Personal network coordination tends to be a very effective way to coordinate a few signature initiatives but cannot by itself align the hundreds of federal programs serving children and youth. Furthermore, coordination based on personal networks is very difficult to sustain. As soon as a key political appointee steps down or changes roles, the coordination gains that he or she achieved are quickly lost.

- **Ad Hoc Coordination:** When specific interagency problems surface, they are handled on a one-off basis. “We are happy to coordinate – tell me specific places where agencies are stepping on each other’s toes and we’ll fix it” is a common refrain in this type of coordination. As with the other types of coordination, this type is also well intentioned and very valuable, especially for putting out individual fires that flare up between agencies. But although it fixes isolated problems, it does not fully leverage what is possible. Effective coordination aligns efforts toward common goals articulated in a national strategy, making the best possible use of scarce resources. Ad hoc coordination addresses isolated areas of dysfunction but does not create a national vision or path to move efforts toward optimal functionality.
- **Career Staff Coordination:** Some of the most positive coordination efforts over time have occurred at the career staff level – and for good reason. With a common core of individuals who transcend individual administrations, career staff have more time to work together in constructive ways. Career staff-led coordination efforts often focus on critical interagency information sharing and on addressing tasks that career staff have the authority to perform themselves, such as developing common definitions on requests for proposals. But career staff do not have the authority to reorient departmental efforts toward common goals articulated in the strategy. This requires buy-in and support from political leaders who have the authority to realign policy priorities and funding streams toward common ends.

Once again, all these types of coordination are almost always well intentioned and very often somewhat helpful. But they are not game changers. At the end of the day, fragmentation is a systemic problem, created and perpetuated by the way our government systems are structured. Addressing the problem therefore requires a systemic solution – a solution that we can achieve by creating a national child and youth strategy, a governmental body charged with overseeing it, and mechanisms for stakeholders to actively engage in its creation and implementation.

A Path Forward for the United States

There are three primary reasons to be optimistic that progress like what has been achieved in Northern Ireland, Ohio, and Massachusetts is possible at the federal level.

First, the problems of federal fragmentation are no secret, and the need for improved coordination is well documented. For example, in 1996, the General Accounting Office reported that “the federal system for providing services to at-risk and delinquent youth clearly creates the potential for program overlap.”²² Likewise, in 2007, the Congressional Research Service found that “the federal government has not adopted a single overarching federal policy or legislative vehicle that addresses the challenges vulnerable youth experience in adolescence or while making the transition to adulthood. Rather, federal youth policy today has evolved from myriad programs established in the early 20th century and expanded in the years following the 1964 announcement of the War on Poverty . . . Despite the range of federal services and activities to assist disadvantaged youth, many of these programs have not developed into a coherent system of support. This is due in part to the administration of programs within several agencies and the lack of mechanisms to coordinate their activities.”²³

Second, there is a rich history of attempts at coordination in both Republican and Democratic administrations, and in both the legislative and executive branches. In 1994, the Clinton administration created the President’s Crime Prevention Council, chaired by Vice President Al Gore and consisting of the secretaries of numerous federal departments, with the goal of coordinating federal crime prevention programs and encouraging community-based crime prevention efforts. This effort quickly took on the broader mandate of coordinating wide range child and youth policies.

In 2002, President George W. Bush created the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth through executive memorandum to “develop a framework for Federal youth policy that encompasses a comprehensive Federal response, under existing authorities and programs, to the problems facing America’s youth, with a focus on enhanced agency accountability and effectiveness.”²⁴ Though this task force was disbanded in 2003 upon completion of its report, in his 2005 State of the Union address, President Bush announced the Helping America’s Youth initiative, led by the first lady, which created an interagency working group.

In 2006, Congress passed the bipartisan Tom Osborne Federal Youth Coordination Act (P.L. 109-365), authorizing the creation of the Federal Youth Development Council, which was to consist of the secretaries of numerous federal departments and be charged with developing and implementing a strategic plan. Regrettably, funding was never appropriated so the council was never formed. In 2008, President Bush signed an executive order establishing the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, charged with engaging key government and private or nonprofit organizations that can play a role in improving the coordination and effectiveness of programs serving and engaging youth.

Under the Obama administration, the Interagency Working Group has committed to “developing an overarching strategic plan for federal youth policy”²⁵ and has announced that the “strategic planning process will provide an opportunity for stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels to provide input into the overall federal strategic plan for youth policy.”²⁶ Currently, Congress is considering a number of bills that would provide critical pieces of a strategic plan, including legislation to collect data on child well-being,²⁷ create a children’s budget,²⁸ and establish a National Commission on Children.²⁹

Finally, the Obama administration places a high value on coordination. Senior political appointees leading departments are in regular and close communication with each other. The White House has created interagency task forces on children’s issues (such as the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity). And the Domestic Policy Council has quickly established itself in this administration as the go-to place for overseeing interagency coordination efforts related to children and youth, and could well be a logical home for oversight of the development and implementation of a national child and youth strategy.

The administration has also demonstrated the high value it places on stakeholder engagement. The president’s memorandum of January 21, 2009, entitled “Transparency and Open Government,” for example, established not only a commitment to transparency, but also to stakeholder engagement: “Executive departments and agencies should offer Americans increased opportunities to participate in policymaking and to provide their Government with the benefits of their collective expertise and information.”

The combination of the well-documented need for coordination, the strong bipartisan history of coordination efforts, and the present administration’s support for coordination tells us that the seeds are all in place to grow a national child and youth strategy, implemented by a federal coordinating body and backed by authentic stakeholder engagement.

Conclusion

Not all youth and parents will be aware of the existence of national youth strategies, coordinating bodies, and engagement mechanisms. But they all feel the positive impact when these key elements exist, are high quality, and are well utilized. Disjointed policies confuse rather than reinforce. Negative policies frustrate rather than inspire. And strategies that sit on shelves and coordinating bodies that sit on the sidelines do little to help. But a well-conceived strategic plan, developed with authentic stakeholder engagement and implemented by a high-level coordinating body, would have profound effects. That would be, in the truest sense of the words, a game changer.

Notes:

- ¹The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 countries that support each other and work together toward shared goals in democracy and development. The Commonwealth's youth ministers called on all member countries to develop effective and specific national youth policies and action plans to "promote a framework for action for all agencies and organizations interested in the needs and contributions of young women and men." *Youth Policy 2000 Toolkit* (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996).
- ²An independent, democratic, youth-led platform, representing 99 national youth councils and international youth organizations from across Europe, adopted a resolution on achieving the development of a European youth policy "where coherent and co-ordinated efforts across different policy and administration sectors are ensured through integrated actions." *Meeting Young People's Needs: A European Youth Forum Approach to Youth Policy*. Adopted by the General Assembly, 9-11 November 2006, Vilnius (Lithuania).
- ³The United Nations' Third World Youth Forum committed to "ensuring that national youth policy formulation, implementation and follow-up processes are, at appropriate level, accorded commitment from the highest political level, including the provision of adequate levels of resources," and recommended "the formulation in all states of youth policies by the year 2005, which are cross-sectoral, comprehensive and formulated with long-term vision coupled with Action Plans." World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held at Lisbon from 8-12 August 1998.
- ⁴*White House Task Force For Disadvantaged Youth Final Report*. (Washington DC: White House Task Force For Disadvantaged Youth, 2003).
- ⁵M. Dunkle, *Understanding Systems That Affect Families: A Look at How 40+ Programs Might Touch One Los Angeles Family*. Washington DC: The George Washington University & the LA County Children's Planning Council, 2010.
- ⁶The quotes were taken from Northern Ireland's Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016* (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006), <http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>.
- ⁷Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016* (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006), <http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>.
- ⁸Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016* (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006), <http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>.
- ⁹Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016* (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006), <http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>.

- ¹⁰ Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016* (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006), <http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>.
- ¹¹ A. Segal and L. Grossman, *A Governor's Guide to Children's Cabinets* (Washington, DC: NGA Center for Best Practices, 2004).
- ¹² Ohio Family and Children First, *Report for the Sunset Review Commission* (Columbus, OH: Ohio Family and Children First, 2009).
- ¹³ Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016* (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006), <http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>.
- ¹⁴ Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016* (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006), <http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>.
- ¹⁵ Ohio Family and Children First, *Report for the Sunset Review Commission* (Columbus, OH: Ohio Family and Children First, 2009).
- ¹⁶ Massachusetts Action Planning Team, *Success for Life: A Call for Collaborative Action on Behalf of Massachusetts Youth* (Boston: United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, 2009).
- ¹⁷ Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016* (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006), <http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016* (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006), <http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>.
- ¹⁹ Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016* (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006), <http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>.
- ²⁰ S. Martin, K. Pittman, T. Ferber, and A. McMahon, *Building Effective Youth Councils: A Practical Guide to Engaging Youth in Policy Making* (Washington, DC: Forum for Youth Investment, 2007).
- ²¹ We are not aware of any comprehensive listing of local youth councils, but the National League of Cities Web site lists more than one hundred.
- ²² General Accounting Office, *At-Risk and Delinquent Youth: Multiple Federal Programs Raise Efficiency Questions* (Washington, DC: General Accounting Office, 1996).

- ²³ Congressional Research Service, *Vulnerable Youth: Background and Policies* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007).
- ²⁴ *White House Task Force For Disadvantaged Youth Final Report*. (Washington, DC: White House Task Force For Disadvantaged Youth, 2003).
- ²⁵ Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, <http://findyouthinfo.gov/strategicPlan.shtml>.
- ²⁶ Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, <http://findyouthinfo.gov/strategicPlan.shtml>.
- ²⁷ State Child Well-Being Research Act of 2009 (H.R. 2558 / S. 1151), which would greatly expand the data available on child well-being that is statistically reliable for every state.
- ²⁸ Children's Budget Act (H.R. 3772 / S. 3108), which would amend section 31 U.S.C. 1105 of the United States Code to require the inclusion of a children's budget as part of the president's annual budget request.
- ²⁹ Proposed by Senator Chris Dodd at the State of the American Child Hearing, to "regularly and closely examine the needs of American families and identify solutions." <http://dodd.senate.gov/?q=node/5656/print>.