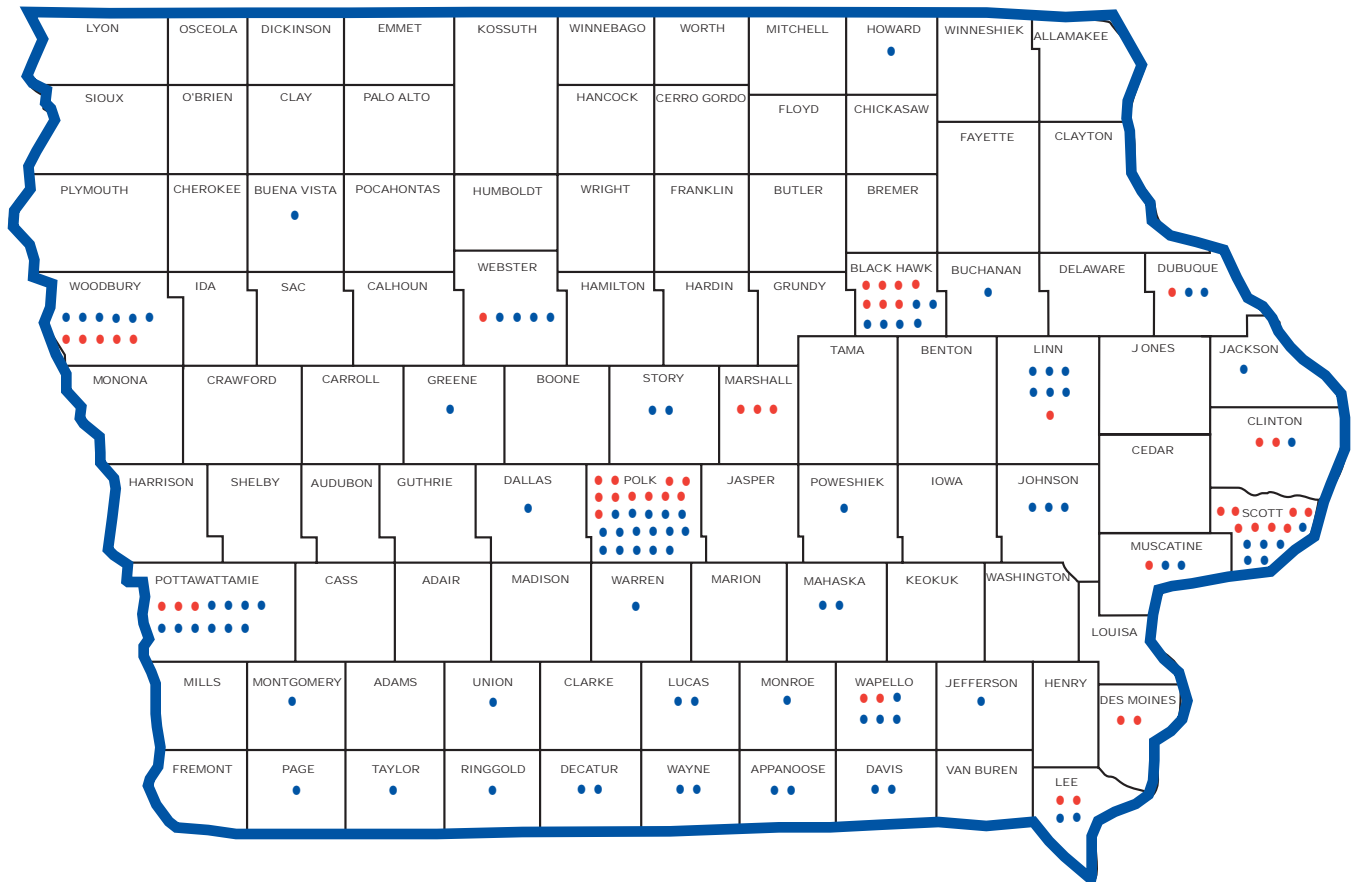


Where Kids Count, Place Matters



Trends in the Well-Being of Iowa Children, 2000–2001



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Part One

Where Kids Count, Place Matters

When it comes to the well-being of children, place matters.

Parents are the primary and most important influence on children and their well-being, but where parents live also makes a difference.

Research has shown that children who live in poorer neighborhoods (measured not only by official poverty rates, but also by other socio-economic characteristics) have tougher times growing up than children living in richer neighborhoods, regardless of their parents' background or incomes. Children in poorer neighborhoods have fewer role models for professional and middle-class careers. They see fewer pathways to economic and social success in their day-to-day lives. Their schools are likely to be poorer with more classmates struggling and dropping out, and expectations for their own educational success lowered by the very people responsible for teaching them.

Place does matter, and place can put children at risk of a variety of "rotten outcomes" that can extend into adult life. Further, removing this risk requires more than individual work with individual families. It requires community-building strategies within those neighborhoods that can create real opportunities for children to succeed, starting in many instances with opportunities for educational success. Further,

these community-building strategies are important both for improving child well-being and improving state economic development. In short, economic development and child well-being should not be separate policy agendas.

National research has shown that children living in poor, tough neighborhoods are much more likely to drop out of school, become pregnant as teens, get in trouble with the law as juveniles, and live in poverty as adults, with their own children struggling to succeed. They are much more likely to go to prison and suffer from debilitating health conditions that further limit their ability to provide support for their children. One Chicago study showed that children in the city's poorest neighborhoods (where child poverty was over 50%) were 42 times more likely to be placed into foster care than children in the city's most prosperous neighborhoods (where child poverty was under 10%).

Prior Kids Count reports largely have focused on state and county level indicators of child well-being, as most administrative data related to child well-being have been available only at the county level. The 2000 Census provides the opportunity to examine much smaller geographic areas – census tracts — in terms of a variety of indicators that are known to place children at risk. The population for most census tracts is

approximately 4,000 residents, which provides very local, neighborhood-sized information.

Identifying High Risk Census Tracts

This report analyzes census tract-level data on ten different indicators that are available from the census and are known to be factors that help determine child well-being.

These ten indicators were selected because they cover an array of educational, social and economic indicators, including those known to

have specific neighborhood-related, in addition to child- or family-related, impacts on child well-being. On neighborhood-related impacts, for instance, the percentage of adults with graduate degrees was selected as an indicator of the proportion of professional role models in the neighborhood. The percentage of families with dividend, interest or rent income was selected as an indicator of the degree of wealth in the community for investment in future growth (including investment in children's education).

While poverty rates are part of one measure, the measures were designed to be much broader than a poverty measure alone. They cover human, social, physical and economic capital at the family and neighborhood level. Census tracts were characterized by the number of indicators upon which they compared poorly with other Iowa census tracts. Of Iowa's 791 census tracts,

many (340) did not score poorly on any of the ten indicators. A fair number (305) scored poorly on only one or two of the measures, with a smaller number (97) scoring poorly on three to five measures. About six percent (49) scored poorly on a majority (six or more) of the indicators.

Table One compares the scores on the ten indicators by the number of indicators on which tracts scored poorly. Clearly, those census tracts scoring poorly on the most number

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of indicators have very different rates on each of the ten indicators than those not scoring poorly. They represent geographic areas that pose particularly high risks for children's growth and development.

The high risk census tracts (those scoring poorly on at least six indicators)

comprise only five percent of the state's population; however, they had rates that were, in some cases, three to four times higher than the rates for the non-high risk census tracts. These census tracts had three times as many households receiving public assistance, three and one-half times as many families with children living in poverty and almost four times as many teens age 16-19 who were not employed or in school. In addition, the high risk census tracts had rates that were more than twice as high as the other census tracts for single parent families and people age 25 and over without a high school diploma.

Table One
2000 Census Tract Indicators by Risk Factor

	<u>Total</u>	<u>High Risk (6-10 Risk Factors)</u>	<u>Moderate Risk (3-5 Risk Factors)</u>	<u>Low Risk (1-2 Risk Factors)</u>	<u>No Risk (0 Risk Factors)</u>
Number of Census Tracts	791	49	97	305	340
Total Population	2,926,324	143,955	327,565	1,041,882	1,412,922
Child Population	733,638	39,543	81,769	250,335	361,991
Percent Child Population	25.1%	27.5%	25.0%	24.0%	25.6%
Population Age 25 and Over with Less Than High School Diploma	13.9%	30.6%	20.0%	14.5%	10.6%
Population Age 25 and Over with Post-Graduate Degree	6.5%	2.9%	3.8%	5.6%	8.1%
Population Age 16-19 Not Employed or In School	5.0%	16.0%	7.8%	4.7%	3.3%
Households with Earnings from Employment	77.3%	72.9%	77.3%	75.4%	79.2%
Households with Earnings from Interest, Dividends or Rent	43.5%	21.2%	31.2%	44.1%	48.2%
Households Receiving Public Assistance	2.9%	8.0%	5.0%	2.7%	2.0%
Single Parent Families	24.9%	50.3%	37.7%	23.8%	20.4%
Families with Children Below Poverty	9.3%	27.7%	15.8%	9.3%	6.0%
Children Age 3-5 Enrolled in Preschool	45.5%	32.5%	37.0%	44.7%	49.6%
Owner Occupied Housing Units	72.3%	47.5%	63.5%	72.0%	77.2%

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2000 Census

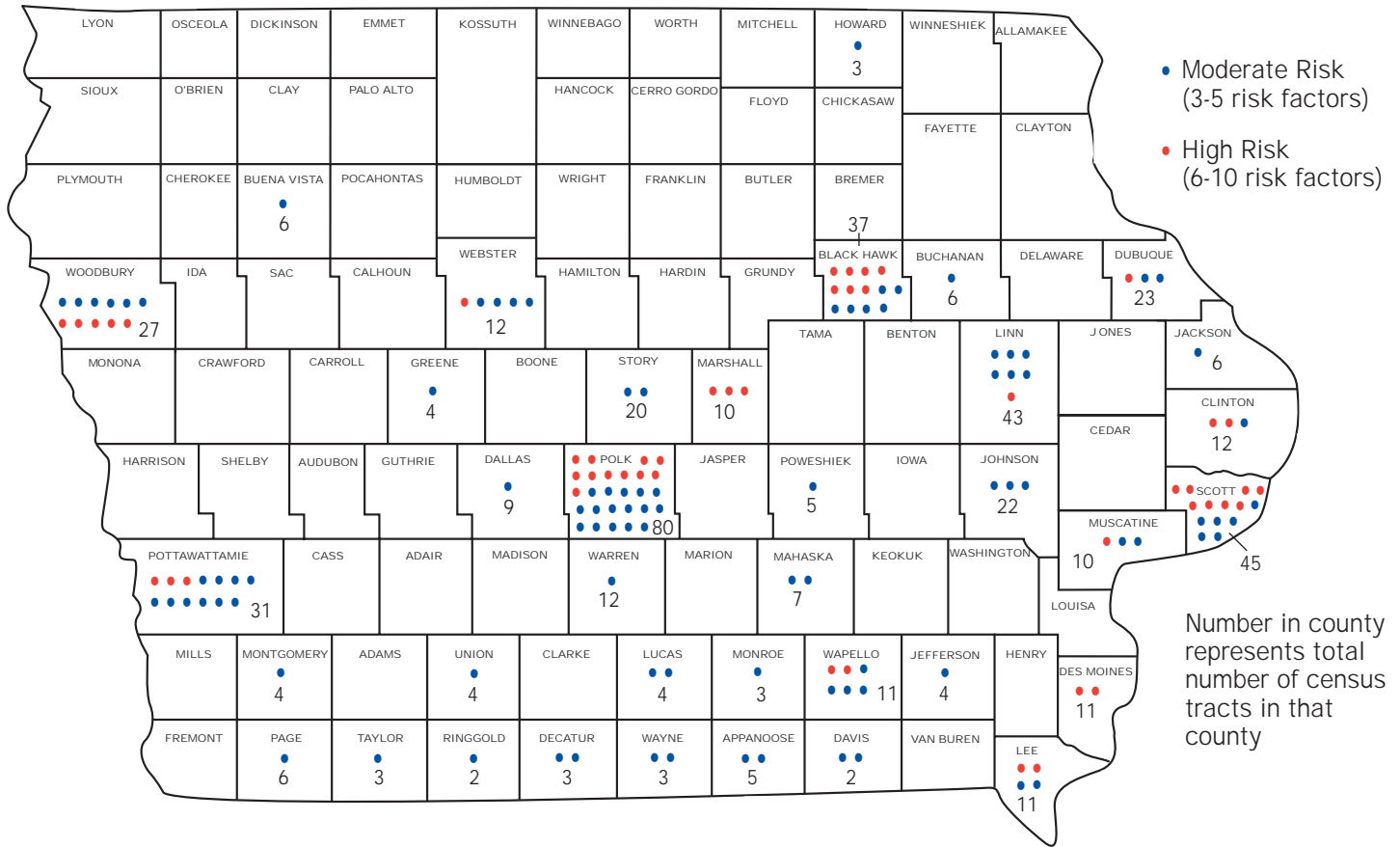
Improving child well-being in these inner-city neighborhoods is likely to be needed to dramatically improve any of the statewide indicators of child well-being that Iowa Kids Count reports upon and this is likely to require community-building, education enhancement, and economic development strategies as much, if not more, than human services, which traditionally has been the way government has sought to address poor child outcomes.

The Location of High Risk Census Tracts in Iowa

Focusing attention on these census tracts requires pinpointing their actual location. Map One provides a general representation of the location of the high risk and moderate risk census tracts in Iowa. Since many of the tracts are located within cities and constitute very small geographic areas, they would not show up on an overall map of Iowa as more than tiny dots. Therefore,

Map One

2000 High Risk and Moderate Risk Census Tracts



the map does not show the specific location of the census tracts, but rather, shows them as dots in each county.

The map shows that most of the high risk census tracts are located within Iowa's larger counties and, actually, within the cities within those counties. In fact, three Iowa cities (Des Moines, Davenport and Waterloo), which represent 12.5% of the state's population, have 53.0% of Iowa's population that lives within these high risk census tracts. While constituting a small percentage of the state's overall population, they account for a much larger share of Iowa's poor child outcomes. These represent inner-city neighborhoods where children face the greatest challenge to well-being, growth and development.

While the high risk census tracts

are highly concentrated in inner-city neighborhoods, the moderate risk census tracts show a somewhat different pattern. In addition to a concentration in Iowa's largest cities and counties, there also are a significant number in the very rural, southern two tiers of counties in the state.

Place and Race

As last year's Iowa Kids Count report showed, Iowa is becoming more diverse, with children leading the way. While Iowa still is predominantly white, non-Hispanic, one in nine children in Iowa (11.2%) are either non-white, or Hispanic, or both. Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of all children who were either non-white or Hispanic nearly doubled, from 5.8% to 11.2%.

Table Two shows the distribution of Iowa's population both by the num-

Table Two
2000 Iowa Population by Risk Factor

	Total	High Risk (6-10 Risk Factors)	Moderate Risk (3-5 Risk Factors)	Low Risk (1-2 Risk Factors)	No Risk (0 Risk Factors)
Number of Census Tracts	791	49	97	305	340
Total Population	2,926,324	143,955	327,565	1,041,882	1,412,922
Percent	100.0%	4.9%	11.2%	35.6%	48.3%
White Non-Hispanic	2,710,344	95,063	282,877	980,002	1,352,402
Percent	100.0%	3.5%	10.4%	36.2%	49.9%
African American	61,853	22,309	13,364	14,146	12,034
Percent	100.0%	36.1%	21.6%	22.9%	19.5%
American Indian/Alaska Native	8,989	1,559	1,573	3,240	2,617
Percent	100.0%	17.3%	17.5%	36.0%	29.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	37,644	4,781	7,284	12,341	13,238
Percent	100.0%	12.7%	19.3%	32.8%	35.2%
Other*	107,494	20,243	22,467	32,153	32,631
Percent	100.0%	18.8%	20.9%	29.9%	30.4%
Hispanic (may be of any race)	82,473	17,184	18,003	24,057	23,229
Percent	100.0%	20.8%	21.8%	29.2%	28.2%

*Other includes white Hispanics, other races not listed above and people who chose two or more races.

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2000 Census

ber of census tract risk factors and by race/ethnicity. While Iowa has become more diverse, people of color are disproportionately concentrated in high risk census tracts. In fact, while only 3.5% of Iowa's white, non-Hispanic population lives in high risk census tracts, 36.1% of African American and 20.8% of Hispanic people (Iowa's two largest minority populations) do. Focusing attention on these neighborhoods also means focusing attention on addressing disparities in child well-being across race and ethnicity.

Clearly, however, the issues facing the southern two tiers of Iowa counties are different with respect to race. As the breakouts show, children in the moderate risk rural county census tracts are predominantly white, non-Hispanic.

Trends – 1990 to 2000

In order to provide trend data, a similar analysis of census tracts was conducted for 1990. While there were changes in a few census tract boundaries and there were changes in the overall statewide rates on the ten indicators, the same methods were used to determine which census tracts were at high risk. Table Three provides a comparison between 1990 and 2000 on the statewide scores on the ten indicators. As Table Three shows, there were improvements between 1990 and 2000 on seven of the indicators and declines on three.

The high risk census tracts showed the same improvements and declines on the indicators as did the state. Unfortunately, however, the gap between the high risk census tracts and the state did not close.

Table Three
1990 – 2000 State of Iowa Indicator Rates

	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>Improvement / Decline</u>
Population Age 25 and Over with Less Than High School Diploma	19.9%	13.9%	Improvement
Population Age 25 and Over with Post-Graduate Degree	5.2%	6.5%	Improvement
Population Age 16-19 Not Employed or In School	6.2%	5.0%	Improvement
Households with Earnings from Employment	74.7%	77.3%	Improvement
Households with Earnings from Interest, Dividends or Rent	48.3%	43.5%	Decline
Households Receiving Public Assistance	5.8%	2.9%	Improvement
Single Parent Families	19.7%	24.9%	Decline
Families with Children Below Poverty	12.6%	9.3%	Improvement
Children Age 3-5 Enrolled in Preschool	48.5%	45.5%	Decline
Owner Occupied Housing Units	70.0%	72.3%	Improvement

Source: United States Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Census

Map Two shows the location of the high risk and moderate risk census tracts in 1990. Map One and Two are very similar, particularly around the high risk census tracts. More than 75% (37 of 49) of the census tracts that were determined to be at high risk in 2000 also were at high risk in 1990.

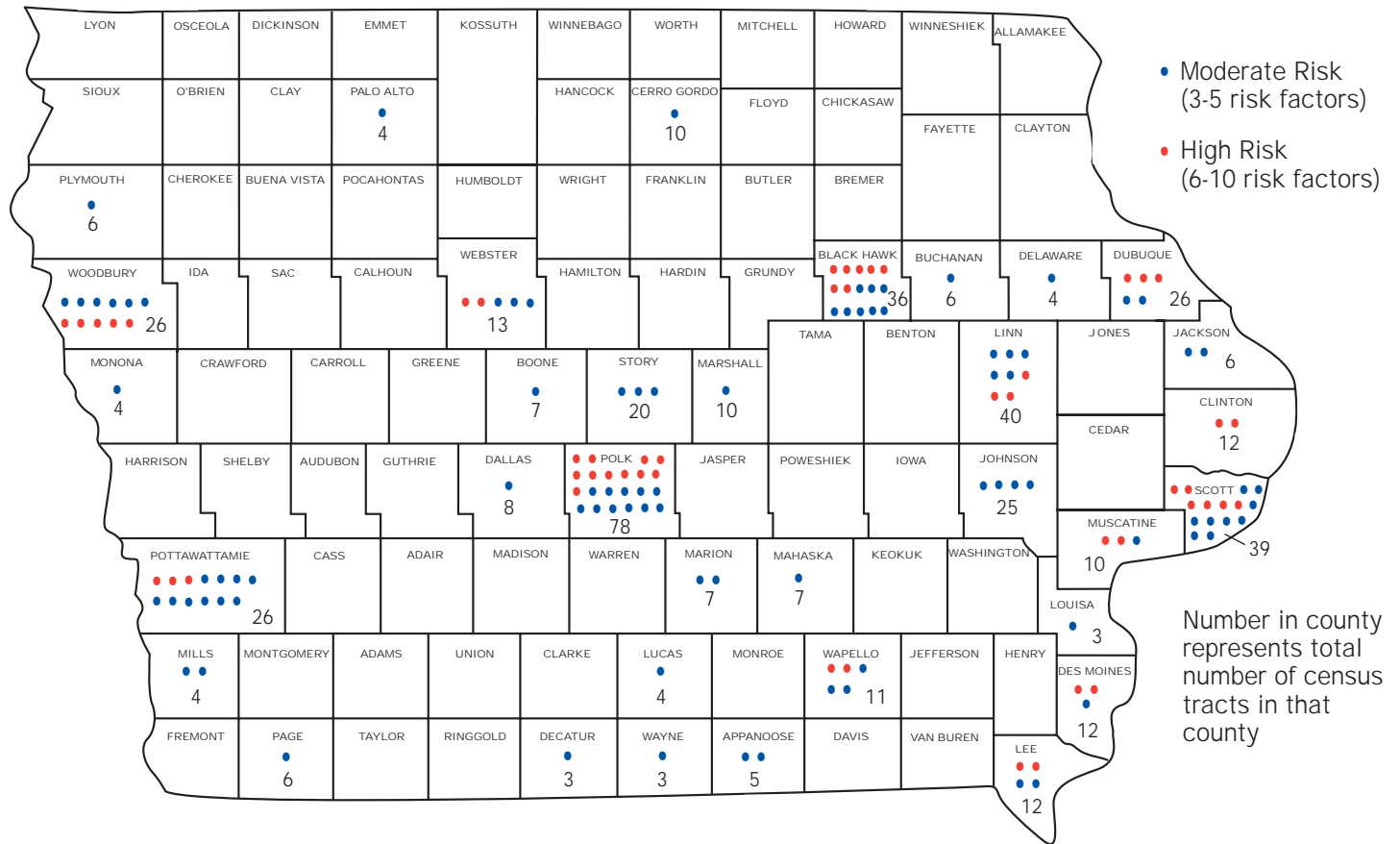
The most noticeable change between 1990 and 2000 was in Marshall County. Marshall, with a total of 10 census tracts, went from having no high risk census tracts in 1990 to having three in 2000. These three census tracts had an increase in Hispanic population of 1,717% during the decade. These census tracts also showed a 21% increase in people age 25 and over with less than a high school diploma, an 88%

increase in teens age 16-19 not employed or in school, a 26% increase in single parent families, a 22% increase in family poverty and a 64% decrease in 3-5 year olds enrolled in preschool.

Polk County and the southern two tiers of counties in Iowa also showed some negative change. Polk increased from 11 to 16 moderate risk census tracts between 1990 and 2000, while the southern two tiers of counties increased from 14 to 23 moderate risk census tracts. On the other hand, there were improvements in Dubuque and Linn counties, which both decreased from three high risk census tracts in 1990 to one in 2000.

At the same time, the racial and

Map Two 1990 High Risk and Moderate Risk Census Tracts



ethnic composition of high risk census tracts changed, with even higher overall percentages of African American, Hispanic and minority populations in these neighborhoods. While Iowa's minority population grew between 1990 and 2000, much of the growth occurred within census tracts that already were at high risk.

Conclusion

Place matters, and children are most vulnerable when they live in poor, high risk areas. In developing strategies to improve child well-being, attention must be given to the special challenges that living in these areas produce. Substantially improving statewide indicators of child well-being used in the Kids Count report will require a concerted focus upon improving results within these neighborhoods. This will require community-building and economic development strategies as

well as human service approaches. It will require special attention to educational enhancements within schools serving these neighborhoods.

Such strategies are needed, not only to improve child well-being overall, but to reduce disparities in child well-being that currently exist in Iowa by race and ethnicity. This also is intimately linked to Iowa's overall growth and well-being.

Iowa will continue to grow in the 21st Century only by becoming more diverse and providing increased opportunities for all children to develop into productive adults. It is in Iowa's overall economic interest to focus attention on community building and development within Iowa's poorest, most at-risk neighborhoods as a key element to improving the well-being of Iowa's future workforce.

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For Further Information

The information and data contained in this publication also are available on the Child and Family Policy Center's website. The address is: <http://www.cfpciowa.org>.

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