

Families and Children: The Common Wealth of Kentucky

Kentucky families are becoming older, forming at a slower rate than are nonfamily households, and becoming more diverse than ever before. The preservation of Kentucky families depends on adequate education of adult members, access to jobs that provide livable wages and benefits, and changes in family formation. When families are unsuccessful in socializing, nurturing, regulating, and providing for their members, the cost is borne by everyone. Thus, the Commonwealth has an interest in building and maintaining strong families who function successfully.

By Stephan M. Wilson
University of Kentucky

Kentucky families, like families throughout the nation, are changing.¹ Over the last two centuries, they have become smaller and more diverse, and, on average, they move more often, have more family members living into old age, enjoy better health, and have more education and wealth. Today, family life is also informed by greater equality across gender, race, and income than was true in the past. In spite of the many changes and improvements in the lives of a majority of Kentucky families, some negative aspects of earlier trends continue, and new challenges to the least advantaged of Kentucky families and children loom on the horizon.

Early Kentucky families, such as the family of Daniel and Rebecca Boone, experienced long absences from each other in their marriages and isolation from their extended families, but they had a definite notion of the meaning and composition of family. As new generations emerged, social and economic conditions brought about changes in this traditional family unit of two parents with children. Small nuclear families that included extended networks of kin with strong ties to the land and to each other evolved, characterizations that describe many rural Kentucky families even at the close of the 20th century. Unlike the gradual changes experienced by early Kentucky families, contemporary families have experienced relatively rapid and sweeping changes in family formation, roles within families, and the compositions of households, in response to social and economic conditions. In spite of the continuing importance of family, departures from traditional concepts mean that law, language, social customs, and lifestyles often do not intersect with a common understanding of “family.”

For example, the percent of children in Kentucky who live with two parents has declined from 85 percent (1960) to 73 percent (1990).² Further, Kentucky now has fewer married couples with children under age 18 at home than married couples without children living with them. In fact, the number of households with relatives residing together (family) has declined from 88 percent (1960) to 74 percent (1990). Today, nonfamily households (i.e., single or unrelated householders living together) are the fastest growing household type in Kentucky, followed by single-parent households. An adult Kentuckian is more likely to live in a “nonfamily” household than ever before.³

¹ Ilvento, T., Dyk, P., Garkovich, L., Hansen, G., & Moore, M. B. (1993). Kentucky families in transition: A special report from the University of Kentucky Population Laboratory. Lexington, KY: Author, 1.

² Ilvento, et al.

³ Ilvento, et al.

Trends Influencing Family Formation and Function

As with the nation as a whole, the formation and the function of Kentucky families is being influenced by economic and social trends. For example, fewer Kentuckians marry today than in past decades. Nationally, both marriage rates and divorce rates are declining. When and if marriage does occur, it occurs at older ages. By the 1990s, the age at first marriage had increased to 24 years for women and 26 years for men, about three years later than in the 1960s, a feature reminiscent of decades prior to the 1940s. Changing economics, the increased participation of women in the labor force, and the feminization of higher education are major influences on the delay of first marriages. In turn, these factors influence the choice to postpone and to have fewer children.

While Kentucky families share national trends, some features are unique. For example, the number of new households has been growing at a faster rate than the addition of new families to the population. Since 1960, Kentucky's population has increased by 21 percent while household growth has increased by 62 percent. The average household size has decreased by nearly one person, from 3.5 (1960) to 2.6 (1990). During the same period, nonfamily households increased from 12 percent to 26 percent of all households. A smaller, but steady increase in the proportion of households headed by single parents has also occurred. Trends unique to Kentucky compel the design of family policies and programs that are, in many cases, different from those of other states with different demographics.

As the Commonwealth moves into its third century, the variety of family structures is becoming more diverse and less familiar, and a wider range of family types is becoming more common. As a result of social and economic changes and increased diversity, families are being pressured to fulfill traditional family functions *and* adapt to new demands. Empowering families to meet both these demanding new challenges should become a primary societal concern in the years ahead.

Kentucky Families and Children

Increasingly, society is being called to redefine, support, and complement the functions of family. A wide array of pressing, family relevant issues, including child and elder care, health care, opportunities for postsecondary education, adequate housing, and youth and adult unemployment and underemployment, are gradually rising to the top of the political agenda. In addition, society is being called upon to provide family life education, prevention and treatment for domestic violence, prevention and treatment for child neglect and abuse, individual and relational counseling, and training for transition to independent living. Society also must protect those who do not live in traditional family households. This list of responsibilities is not exhaustive, but we cannot afford to neglect these and other basic concerns.

At the turn of the century, the most pressing concern in Kentucky is arguably poverty, a condition which exacerbates most of the costly societal problems we now confront. Indeed, poverty is not solely the burden of impoverished families. Instead, it influences all Kentuckians who pay taxes and share community assets, such as education and health programs. Our collective fate is inextricably bound to the well-being of individuals and families, and their abilities and willingness to contribute to the common wealth.

Today, our youngest families, particularly those with young children, are the most vulnerable and the most likely to be poor. Data from the Children's Defense Fund reveal that the purchasing power of families with young children, headed by someone under the age of 30, fell 32 percent between 1973 and 1990.⁴ Insufficient economic resources are related to family attempts to carry out protective and nurturing functions. It is, therefore, critical that policies

⁴ Children's Defense Fund. (1992). *The state of America's children yearbook 1992*. Washington, DC: Author.

empower families of all ages to attain a sufficiently high standard of living and competence to successfully nurture and educate their children.

The effect of poverty for the 27 percent of Kentucky's children who live below the poverty line goes far beyond merely limiting their choices of food, clothing, and shelter.⁵ The Kentucky KIDS COUNT Consortium (1995) estimates that about half of the children in Kentucky are members of families who live below or barely above the poverty line, and thus are unable to provide a minimal standard of living. It is not just single-parent families or families on welfare who are suffering. Many families are finding it increasingly difficult to avoid poverty or economic marginality regardless of family structure. Across America, more than 5.6 million children—over a third of all poor children—live in working poor families.⁶ Further, between 1989 and 1994, a period of overall economic strength in both the national and state economy, the number of children in working poor families increased by 30 percent.

Our understanding of poverty is obviously critical to our ability to remedy it, but assumptions about the causes of poverty often are not grounded in fact. Most children born outside of marriage, for example, are born to women over age 25. Although family poverty is related to gender issues and to single-parent households, one half of poor children live in married, two-parent households where at least one parent (usually the father) works year round.⁷ Thus, family poverty can neither be explained nor eliminated by changes in family structure alone. Creating effective policy to train and employ welfare families, for example, is currently mandated in each state by the federal government. But unless policies work to change economic circumstances for the working poor, moving more Kentucky families into that category is likely to be counterproductive. Rather than focus on perceived family anomalies, we must better prepare citizens for more self-sufficient lives and improve employment opportunities.

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What we do assuredly know is that the economic circumstances of families profoundly affect their children's lives. When children from economically disadvantaged homes enter school, they are more likely to lack basic academic skills and to be less ready to learn than their peers from more affluent families. These educational liabilities are likely to remain with children throughout their school careers. Inadequate access to resources and appropriate stimulation for young children also detracts from their physical and emotional health. It lowers future levels of educational and occupational attainment, and undercuts preparation for adulthood, including employment, parenthood, and citizenship. Lower performance in these areas leads to higher public expenditures for family and individual support, remedial and correctional services, erosion of tax bases, and becomes a threat to our "economic wealth."

Early intervention for economically disadvantaged children is a critical public and private investment that can effectively break the cycle of poverty and improve individual and societal outcomes. Children who do well in school are more likely to become economically self-sufficient adults and to be better prepared to make other contributions to family and society. As a follow-up to recent nationally recognized educational initiatives in public school, Kentucky is in a unique position to mandate policy and programs for all preschoolers, regardless of the economic situation of parents, and to provide educational, health and remedial assistance that will help ensure their readiness. If all Kentucky families were able to send their children to school ready to learn, the Commonwealth would enjoy substantial direct and indirect benefits. Fewer families and children would live in poverty and, over the long term, the enormous cost of mitigating the outcomes of poverty would be greatly diminished.

⁵ Kentucky KIDS COUNT Consortium. (1996). *County data book, 1996*. Louisville, KY: Kentucky Youth Advocates.

⁶ Kentucky KIDS COUNT Consortium. (1996).

⁷ Kentucky KIDS COUNT Consortium. (1996).

Factors Related to Family Poverty

Beyond the overrepresentation of particular gender, race, and location of family poverty, several factors help predict which families are most likely to experience poverty. For example, the persistence of teen single parenthood, particularly among young African-Americans, is a counterpoint to the increase in age at first marriage among the general population and the decrease in the number of children born to married couples in their 20s and 30s. The highest rates of poverty occur among those with the highest rates of teen and unmarried parenthood.

A strong and persistent relationship also exists between single parenthood and family poverty, whether the parent union dissolves before or after children are born and whether the parents were ever married or are divorced. Single parents and their children are more likely to experience poverty and subsequent reliance on welfare. Although many single-parent families

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are strong, a disproportionate percentage experience serious problems compared to two-parent families. In addition to its relationship to child poverty, single parenting is associated with lower educational attainment, poorer mental and physical

health, higher rates of teen pregnancy, lower rates of high school completion, and other problems that compromise child, adolescent and family well-being. Future policy must address the rate of single parenthood, as well support better outcomes for the substantial number of single parents and their children.

The age at first parenthood is a strong predictor of economic well-being for families with children. Young parents, particularly unwed mothers, are likely to have insufficient education and experience to make a successful transition to independent adult life, that does not require government transfer payments and assistance from their parents and other family members. The costs of young single parenthood are borne not only by the young parents (mothers in particular), but by their children, their parents, and all taxpaying citizens. In response, policies and programs to prevent adolescent pregnancy must be targeted at both sexes and families of origin, and involve communities, as well as schools. At present, most Kentucky programs involve adolescent girls, sometimes their children, and schools. More community involvement, better preventive education for males and females, more access and new policy directions, more accountability and eradication of child poverty (i.e., for mother and baby) are challenges for the end of this century and into the next.

Many also point to divorce rates as a contributing factor in rising inequalities. The divorce rate in Kentucky is considerably above the U.S. average, while child support collection is below the national average. Today, as has been true since 1960, custody of about 9 out of 10 children of divorce is awarded to the mother.⁸ From an economic standpoint, this automatically places children at a disadvantage. They are further disadvantaged in Kentucky, which ranks 40th in the nation in regard to economic gender equality indicators. According to the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Kentucky, the median income for women with 15 years or more of employment is only 57.1 percent of men with comparable job tenure.

African-American Kentuckians face disproportionate economic disadvantages and limited access to many kinds of opportunities, as well as prejudice. Such hardships sometimes overwhelm family resources and contribute heavily to family disruptions. In 1990, 35 percent of African-American children lived in married couple families, compared to 76 percent of other Kentucky children.⁹ African-American children were twice as likely to be poor. Because

⁸ Weitzman, L.J. (1985). *The divorce revolution*. New York: Free Press.

⁹ Ilvento, et al.

higher proportions of African-American families have moved to and are concentrated in urban areas, policy and programs dedicated to improving well-being are of special concern to municipalities. In rural areas, inclusiveness is key because smaller proportions of minorities may make their special needs less apparent to policymakers and public service personnel.

Kentucky's legal system also continues to struggle to resolve economic inequities between divorced parents. However, court-ordered collections of child support payments succeeded in only 14 percent of Kentucky cases.¹⁰ The development of a less adversarial system that fosters the involvement of noncustodial parents in their children's lives could not only yield financial benefits for children, but social and emotional ones as well. At present, legal processes too often reward the aggressive self-interest of parents with little regard for the real and comprehensive needs of children. Policy is urgently needed to place trained family professionals in the roles of mediators before coercive and invasive court interventions take place. By contrast, judges, lawyers and clinicians often presume that divorcing families are already "broken" and effectively exacerbate negative outcomes in the lives of children.

Special Populations

Step Families. The United States has the highest remarriage rate in the world. It is estimated that more than 40 percent of all marriages in the United States today are remarriages for at least one of the spouses, and most of these remarriages involve children. This has produced an estimated 2.3 million step family households. Given the growing population of step families, it is increasingly important to clarify the legal status of step parents in Kentucky. Step families generally involve three or more parents who usually do not share consensus about parental rights, responsibilities, and privileges. As a consequence, the role of step parents remains ambiguous. Parental legal rights concerning their step children are very limited, yet society expects them to function as responsible and effective parents to their step children. It is urgent that services for step families be expanded and laws be made more sensitive to and supportive of this growing family form. However, it is also crucial that policies support and balance the rights of noncustodial parents to help them remain a meaningful part of their children's social and emotional lives, as well as in their roles as financially responsible contributors.

Older Adult Families. While some groups of Kentuckians aged 65 and older have experienced improvement in overall economic well-being, the lives of other elders are increasingly economically compromised. Because of limited lifelong job and economic opportunities, many older Kentuckians live their later years at or below the poverty level.¹¹ In an ironic twist, those who have been denied education and good jobs are further denied financial equity in their old age, largely because they had less opportunity in their lives. Poverty among the elderly has negative effects on health, residential independence, well-being, and general quality of life for both individuals and their families.

Women, minorities, and those residing in central cities or the most remote rural areas are more likely to experience poverty in their later years. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, African-American elderly are more likely to live in poverty (35 percent) than are nonminority elderly (20 percent). Poverty in rural eastern Kentucky counties has risen dramatically, particularly for very old Appalachian women. In one in three rural counties in eastern Kentucky, more than 40 percent of women who are 75 years or older live in poverty. In five of these counties, very old women experienced poverty rates over 50 percent.¹²

¹⁰ Kentucky KIDS COUNT Consortium. (1992). *County data book, 1992*. Louisville, KY: Kentucky Youth Advocates.

¹¹ Report of the Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty. (1993). *Persistent poverty in America*. Urbana, IL: Author.

¹² Rowles, G., Johansson, H. (1993). Persistent elderly poverty in rural Appalachia *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 12, 349-367.

Many poor elderly are unable to pay for the necessities of independent living, medical care, prescription medicine, or long-term care. Elders who have difficulty maintaining their independence often must rely on informal supports, mainly family, to provide assistance. There are, however, consequences to younger family members, particularly younger women, in terms of the physical, emotional, and economic costs of caretaking. Further, those elders with the highest risks for poverty are most often members of families who themselves have the fewest material resources. Although services can be targeted to urban elderly poor with relative efficiency, services to isolated rural, poor elders remain of great concern. The challenge for Kentucky is to relieve the poverty of the elderly in family sensitive ways and to provide more resources and a wide variety of innovative programs for all of the elderly. As the population ages and more individuals survive longer, poverty among the elderly will demand increasing attention to prevention and relief for at-risk elderly and their families.

Rural and Urban Families. While rural and urban Kentucky families share common problems, they also face unique circumstances. For example, rural families are more likely to be married couple families with children (42.3 percent, compared to 34.6 percent of urban families) and are less likely to be single parent families (7.7 percent compared to 13.5 percent in urban areas). However, rural families are more likely to live in poverty and enjoy access to fewer and less adequate services, including education, physical and mental health systems, transportation and public assistance.

On the other hand, urban families often do not enjoy the informal services and social supports available to many rural families. Rural families tend to help each other across generations, partly because rural families are more likely to live near several households of extended family and lifelong friends and to have daily contact with them. Rural Kentuckians have a heritage of strong family bonds and residential constancy which promotes strong loyalty to a locale and to each other. Familism, in which the survival and well-being of family is placed above individual concerns, ensures that everyone will have greater access to pooled resources, including intra-family services, in times of need, but also demands greater obligations from each family member. Familism provides both an incentive and an obligation to remain tied to a place and a particular group of people, and discourages individuals from leaving their home area for potential individual gain. Residential constancy is most encouraged in geographic areas where economic opportunities are likely to be stagnant or diminishing.

Appalachian Families. Appalachian families are particularly known for familism, strong loyalties to religious and artistic orientations, and to family land. Over the last half century, many Kentucky mountain counties have experienced a massive exodus of residents in search of economic survival. Often these same counties do not have sufficiently strong or diversified economic development to support the families who stay. Appalachian families who remain often suffer economic hardships; however, families who leave suffer the consequences of being separated from the people and places they most value. Out-migrants often have higher levels of education and job skills than those who remain. Some have argued that Appalachian Kentucky is a kind of “third world within the United States”—furnishing cheap labor and raw materials for economic interests outside the region. In a situation similar to the “brain drain” faced by third world countries, Appalachian families and children will face increasing problems if the pool of human and material resources in their home communities continues to be depleted.¹³

¹³ Wilson, S.M. (1994). Rural and Appalachian youth and their families. In P.C. McKenry, S.M. Gavazzi (Eds.), *Vision 2010: Families & adolescents* (pp. 38-44). Minneapolis, MN: National Council on Family Relations.

Kentucky Families and Child Care

Gaps in adequate care for the children of working parents present a significant public policy challenge. In 1991, 67 percent of U.S. mothers with children under 18 and 53 percent of women with an infant younger than one year old were in the labor force,¹⁴ creating an estimated overall demand for child care for 11.6 million children. Nationally, an estimated five million child care slots were available for children in licensed centers and regulated family day care homes in 1991. Thus, 6.6 million children were in unlicensed or in nonregulated care. And, even if child care is available to parents, it is not always affordable. In Kentucky, subsidy programs for child care services have been so limited that the Department of Social Services has been forced to stop adding names to the 10,000 children already on its child care waiting list.

Further, even if parents can find child care and can afford to pay for it, the quality of available child care is often an issue of concern. Child care fees in the South, including Kentucky, are the lowest in the United States, with the average fees for center, regulated family day care and nonregulated family day care being \$1.29 per hour, \$1.32 per hour, and \$0.89 per hour respectively. These low fees index the low wages for child care providers and indicate the basis for the general lack of professionalization and career commitment among child care workers. The average annual salary for a preschool teacher nationally is approximately \$11,500. Teachers with a college degree have opportunities for more lucrative employment, which contributes to the high turnover rate (about 40 percent per year) in child care settings. However, the well-being of infants and preschoolers is being advanced most in child care settings with the same professional teachers and well-trained child care workers. Quality programming is also related to group size and child/staff ratios, but Kentucky's current regulations do not meet recommended standards for either. Ironically, recent polling suggests that the Kentucky general public believes lower child/staff ratios should be set and subsidized by the state.¹⁵

The inadequacies of today's system are likely to worsen in the absence of concerted attention and expanded investment. About 60 percent of all Kentucky mothers of children younger than six are in the workforce, a trend expected to continue into the next century. More than 154,000 Kentucky children under the age of six already have mothers in the workforce. While the consequences of welfare reform are not yet known, it is likely to flood an already strained child care system with demands for affordable, available, and high quality care for our most vulnerable citizens that will permit mothers to work. Scholars and practitioners agree that young children require the best-educated caregivers and lowest ratio of staff to children because of their many developmental needs. If child care workers, professional staff, and adequate building environments are to be provided for the growing needs of Kentucky preschool children, funding initiatives, worker education, and the establishment of child care facilities must be undertaken immediately.

Promoting Prosperous Families

One mechanism for dealing with economic disadvantage is to empower those who are in poverty to break free. Empowerment occurs when opportunities are created for the display of competence, and families develop the ability to meet their own needs and aspirations in ways that promote control over their own family functioning. Fairly typically, families experiencing chronic poverty do not have control over their lives because of minimal levels of education, lack of adequate employment, fear of risk taking, and having too many children at

¹⁴ Children's Defense Fund. (1992). *The state of America's children yearbook 1992*. Washington, DC: Author.

¹⁵ Townley, K., Wilson, S.M. (1996). *Child care providers and the general public's attitude regarding government involvement in child care*. Unpublished poll. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Research Center for Families and Children.

relatively young ages. Empowerment of families, as a way to promote prosperity, may be best accomplished by making resources available for adequate education, job training and employment. In spite of the obvious costs of these efforts, failure to provide needed resources has a “pay-now-or-pay-later” consequence. Families in poverty are more likely to have children who have poor school performance, who experience chaos in many parts of their adult lives, increased risk for disrupted schooling and inadequate job attainment, early pregnancy, family instability, difficulties with the law, dependency on public assistance, and disappointing personal relationships.

If family prosperity, in all meanings of the word, is to occur, public programs and private efforts must inspire new visions of family empowerment and full participation in citizenship. Such efforts must furnish appropriate means for establishing stable family life, developing parenting skills, involvement in their own and their children’s education, community participation, successful employment, and a sense of control and self-direction. Education and training of disadvantaged individuals and families are not enough to strengthen families or to

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improve the quality of life in Kentucky households. For many families, quality of life includes wanting and needing to remain in their current communities. Essential elements of creating prosperity in Kentucky families are the attraction or creation of value-added businesses that offer livable wages, the use of natural and human resources from the area (e.g., value added industry such as furniture manufacturing rather than exporting

logs), and the creation, implementation, and wide dissemination of professional family life education programs, as well as family support services that make employment possible, such as elder care, child care, and family friendly work environments. Families prosper when they are given adequate access to appropriate resources, and are encouraged to meet their own needs in a competent and independent manner.

Examination of disadvantaged families in Kentucky leads to the conclusion that poverty underlies most problems, and that the root cause of most poverty is attributable to problems in economic and educational access, and family functioning. Given the facts reviewed in this chapter, it is unrealistic to think that taking away welfare, or forcing people to work at minimum wages will create prosperity for disadvantaged Kentucky families. Although welfare reform may be an opportunity for the Commonwealth to set policy and funding goals which can empower families who now depend on public programs, a larger and more troubling need for adequate policy and funding is the plight of the working poor.

The trends and emerging realities outlined in this chapter are likely to continue into the early decades of the next century. There is no “quick fix.” Constructive, courageous, and informed, public policy decisions will be required to move disadvantaged families toward empowerment and self-sufficiency.

Future of Kentucky Families

In the coming decades the proportion of nontraditional family structures will continue to increase in Kentucky, and these different family forms will require specific kinds of public attention. The “traditional family” with an intact first marriage for both spouses, a working father and a stay-at-home mother, and several young children is rapidly becoming a phenomenon of the past. Today, only a very small minority of American households include such families. The changing profile of families requires that long-range strategies to assist

Kentucky families first acknowledge and then plan public policy which accurately reflects who we are and who we are becoming.

It is also likely that the proportion of children in the population and the number of children per family will continue to decline, while the number of couples who choose to remain child-free will likely continue to increase. The number of households without children and without relatives is also likely to continue increasing. Among nonfamily households, many will continue to provide family-like functions for each other, without protection of benefits such as health insurance, death benefits, tax breaks, inheritance, and family leave. Policy planners must carefully consider how legal protection may contribute to further erosion of unique family prerogatives against how such protection may relieve the state from responsibilities for public assistance for health, education, housing, welfare, etc.

Family viability, the capacity of families to remain together and to be able to support themselves in place over time, must become a focus for policymakers. Such a measure is sensitive to education, availability of quality jobs, health, crime, marriage and divorce, migration, birth and mortality, cost of living, public assistance, and the proportion of nonmarried households. Given the rural and Appalachian ties to the land and to particular small communities that characterize so many Kentucky families, family viability is an important consideration for the creation of family and child supportive policies.

Areas of Need for Research

Although it is important to conduct targeted research that examines family issues such as domestic violence, transitions to self-sufficiency and special needs families, it is crucial that family research not be simply about “problems.” It must also contribute to understanding family strengths, diversity, normative processes, and success. Policy must move beyond trying to address deficiencies. Prevention and intervention have their place, but family policy must be proactive and promote family well-being. Such policy requires thorough, honest, and well-balanced understanding of Kentucky families as they really are. Research is needed:

- To establish effective means of lifting and keeping people out of poverty
- On the efficacy and costs of programs and how these support goals such as family empowerment
- On the long-term costs of providing and of not providing family supports (i.e., to these families and to the state)
- About internal family processes, as well as the interface between families and society
- About the dynamics and means of family success

Such research can provide the basis for more successful programs for all families and children to promote individual and family dignity and ultimately to decrease human and fiscal costs.

Areas of Need for Public Policy

Given the intricate and often myriad influences on families and the multiple demands on diverse families, the formulation of family policy is complicated and difficult. However, many opportunities exist to promote healthy families and children by addressing well understood and well documented problems and possibilities. While additional research is needed, clear and compelling areas for public policy initiatives related to Kentucky families and children include:

- Prevention efforts for prenatal care, early childhood health, development, and enrichment for families with children who are at most risk

- More effective child support payment systems, as well as mechanisms to keep noncustodial parents socially and emotionally involved in the lives of their children
- Programs which decrease the likelihood of family homelessness
- Programs which decrease separation, divorce, or post divorce conflict
- Aggressive programs to discourage teens from becoming parents
- Programs for teens that include effective family life education, pregnancy prevention, educational advancement, and career development
- Programs for teen parents, including family life education, educational continuation, and career planning
- Family life education by qualified professionals, including premarital education and counseling, marriage enrichment, parent education, intergenerational family relations, sexuality education, marriage and family therapy, and divorce mediation
- Support services to ease transitions and increase marriage and family survival rates
- Welfare reforms that emphasize family empowerment, support, preservation, and independence
- Access to resources that assist families to stay together in place
- Policy impact statements that evaluate how policies may influence family viability
- Programs and research that emphasize family strengths
- Family policies that build on the strengths and the uniqueness of diverse Kentucky families, ethnicities, structures, and values