**The Case for Child Impact Statements in Federal Policymaking**

**THE CHALLENGE**

The American people expect government policy to [advance the best interests of children](https://firstfocus.org/blog/voters-have-spoken-and-they-support-children). Yet, the data shows that U.S. policy lacks the high-level coordination, well-defined indicators, and evaluations mechanisms to advance children’s safety, health, and development. Both [domestically](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Report-Card-16-Worlds-of-Influence-child-wellbeing.pdf) and [globally](https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/covid-19-biggest-global-crisis-children-our-75-year-history-unicef), children suffer from poverty, violence, exploitation, and limited access to healthcare, nutrition, and education. Without clear mechanisms and indicators to evaluate government policy for its impact on children, U.S. policy continues to leave children behind, with children of marginalized populations bearing the heaviest weight due to systemic inequities and discrimination.

**THE OPPORTUNITY**

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

Child impact statements would further many of the objectives of the federal government. First, they would advance equity by focusing on issues and structures that disproportionately affect children from marginalized communities and analyzing impact based on key demographics. They would improve the efficacy of government programs, as developing clear indicators through which to assess government policies would allow the government to track progress and avoid duplication and overlap. It would also facilitate inter-agency coordination, as factors of child well-being are inter-disciplinary and impact every government agency.

**THE STRATEGY**

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

* establishing a cross-agency priority on improving child well-being;
* developing shared benchmarks to assess impact, based on factors of the [“best interest of the child” standard](https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/General-Comment-CRC-14-Right-to-have-best-interests-taken-as-primary-consideration-art-3-para-1-2013-eng.pdf);
* Compiled and disaggregated data to assess impact;
* clear leadership within and across agencies focused on children to promote buy in and provide technical support; and
* accountability to the public and stakeholders, including children.

**RESOURCES**

For more on child impact statements, read [**here.**](https://firstfocus.org/resources/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-child-impact-statements)

Examples of template child impact statements can be found [**here**](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/6698.pdf#page=40) and [**here**](https://kidsimpact865312240.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/cia-dtarter-guide-final.pdf)**.**

**SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR CHILD IMPACT STATEMENTS**

* What is the purpose or objective of the proposal?
* What are the positive and negative impacts of the proposal on the following aspects of child well-being?
  + Safety and security
  + Mental and physical health
  + Relationships and attachments with a parent, legal guardian, sibling, or extended family
  + Education
  + Healthy development
  + Liberty
  + Identity (including race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and immigration status)
* Are any of the following groups of children more affected by the proposal than others, either positively or negatively? If yes, how?
  + Children of certain racial or ethnic backgrounds
  + Girls
  + LGBTQ+ children
  + Children with disabilities
  + Children of Immigrants
* If the proposal negatively impacts any aspects of child well-being, what steps could be taken to mitigate those negative impacts?
  + If steps should not be taken to mitigate negative impacts on children, explain why this proposal is preferable to any alternative that would not adversely impact children.
* If the proposal does not impact children, explain why.
* Have you consulted with impacted communities and stakeholders, including children and youth, in developing the proposal?