



## 2026 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### Cultivating A Commonwealth Where Kids & Families Flourish

Thriving children are not separate from thriving communities – they are the result of them. The conditions in which families live, work, and grow can contribute to adversity and trauma as well as their resilience. The “Economic Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Kentucky” report was developed to understand how adversity in childhood impacts Kentucky’s economy and identify strategies to build resilience and prevent the long-term effects of adversity.

**As part of the Blueprint for Kentucky’s Children and in alignment with strategies from the recent report, Bloom Kentucky is advocating for the following state policy and budget priorities to help prevent and mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):**

- **Promote family housing stability by making common sense changes to the eviction process**
  - Housing instability and eviction can have harmful impacts on child well-being and development. Families who face eviction, even if their case is dismissed, often experience long-term barriers to securing stable housing. By making common sense changes to the eviction process, Kentucky can promote family housing stability and protect children from the adverse impacts of eviction.
- **Establish common sense standards around when families can be disconnected from utilities**
  - Utility disconnection is linked to multiple adverse childhood outcomes, including increased risk of hospitalization, developmental delays, and heat-related illness or death. In times of extreme weather, common sense standards should be in place to protect the health and safety of Kentucky’s families.
- **Assess proposed legislation through child and family impact statements**
  - By requiring a data-driven assessment of how legislation affects various determinants of family well-being, Kentucky can ensure that proposed legislation considers conditions that may exacerbate ACEs, as well as promote positive childhood experiences (PCEs).
- **Invest in addressing diaper need**
  - Diapers are an essential need for babies and toddlers’ health and hygiene. When families struggle to afford diapers, parents and children suffer. Improving families’ ability to meet children’s basic needs is a critical strategy for mitigating ACEs and ensuring that all families have access to the resources they need to thrive.
- **Support positive youth development by creating mechanisms to direct social media settlement dollars toward positive childhood experiences.**
  - By investing settlement dollars in out-of-school time programming, mentoring, and other activities that foster youth well-being and connection, Kentucky can boost PCEs and support youth development and mental health.



Learn more about ACEs in Kentucky and the Bloom Kentucky initiative at [bloomky.org](https://bloomky.org).



## Kentucky should...

promote family housing stability by making common sense changes to the eviction process

### When families have access to safe, stable housing, children can grow and thrive.

An eviction record is created as soon as a landlord files a claim for eviction with the court. Even if the case is dismissed or doesn't result in an eviction, the tenant has a mark on their housing record, which can be viewed by any prospective landlord when applying for housing for years to come.

**Families with an eviction record, even if the case is dismissed, encounter long-term barriers to securing stable housing.**

Because landlords often turn away applicants with an eviction on their housing record regardless of the outcome, families regularly experience housing instability or unsafe housing.

Eviction also increases the likelihood of job loss and is associated with reduced earnings.

**Families with children are 2x more likely to face eviction than other households.**

- Sometimes minors are listed on eviction filings, causing irreversible damage to their housing record before they are even old enough to sign a lease.
- 10% of children under the age of five living in rental housing are threatened with eviction each year.
- Children in households facing eviction encounter educational disruptions, including increased absences from school.
- Evictions put kids at risk of negative health outcomes, developmental delays, and toxic stress associated with Adverse Childhood Experiences.

### Eviction Rates in Kentucky:

- Kentucky sees an average of **147 eviction** filings per day.
- **Up to 55% of filings** in Kentucky between 2022 – 2024 did not result in an eviction judgement. Yet, those households still have an eviction record which creates barriers to future housing opportunities.
- The average family facing eviction in Kentucky has **at least 1 child** in the household.



### Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Policy Solution:

Expunge dismissed eviction cases and prohibit minors from being named on eviction filings.



## Kentucky should...

establish standards to protect children and their families from utility disconnection during extreme weather

In recent years, Kentucky has experienced record-high temperatures and a rise in extreme weather with more than 18 state of emergency declarations for severe weather since 2020. Rising temperatures and fluctuating weather patterns impact the cost of utilities for families, and household energy prices have increased significantly since 2020.

***One in three households in Kentucky struggle to afford the cost of basic utilities, making it harder for families to keep up with their bills and increasing their risk of utility disconnection.***



Once disconnected, utility services are not typically restored until the debt is cleared or a payment plan is established.

Households can incur various penalties, such as disconnection fees and reconnection charges, that can make repayment difficult. These financial strains can prompt recurring utility shut-offs and even eviction.

**When families struggle to afford basic household utilities, children are at a higher risk for:**

- Hospitalizations
- Respiratory conditions, such as asthma
- Depression and anxiety
- Experiencing negative health outcomes, developmental delays, and toxic stress associated with Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Food insecurity and housing instability
- Experiencing heat-related illness or death, particularly for young children, the elderly, and those needing access to medical equipment

### Who is most impacted?

- Families with children under 5 years of age
- Low-income households
- Households of color
- Households with an individual who relies on electronic medical devices
- Individuals living in poor, inefficient housing conditions

**Kentucky can join over 40 states that already have weather-related disconnection protections in place for families.**

### Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Policy Solution:

Place common sense standards around utility disconnections to prevent households from losing service during extreme weather.



## Kentucky should...

assess the impacts on families and children when developing state policy and budgets

State policy and budget investments play a key role in shaping the systems and environments where kids grow, learn, and play.

**Child impact statements** are designed to be educational tools that strengthen decision making on policies by utilizing research and data and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of proposed legislation.

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***By requiring a data-driven assessment of how legislation affects various determinants of family well-being, Kentucky can consider how proposed legislation may increase risk for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and enhance access to positive childhood experiences (PCEs).***

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This is especially critical in Kentucky, where between 2015 and 2020, 62% of adults reported experiencing at least one ACE, and 19% reported experiencing four or more ACEs during childhood.

These adverse experiences are strongly associated with long-term health, mental health, and social challenges, costing the state hundreds of millions annually.

### ***What types of legislative impact reports are currently used by the General Assembly?***

- Fiscal impact statements examine the potential impact on the state budget
- Correctional impact statements examine the potential impact on the state's correctional system
- Local mandate statements examine the potential impact on local governments

### **Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Policy Solution:**

Define child and family impact statements and create a process for analyzing proposed state legislation to determine potential impacts on kids and families.

### **To produce child impact statements, staff in government agencies can:**

- assess domains that impact children and families, including education, health, economic security, and community factors
- use a set of agreed-upon questions and criteria
- partner with nonprofits, philanthropic groups, universities, and other experts

**Kentucky can lead the country in creating greater accountability of policymaking decisions and its impact on child and family well-being.**



## Kentucky should...

support access to clean diapers for families with babies and young children

Diapers are essential for infant and toddler health and hygiene, yet nearly half of U.S households with young children experience diaper insecurity and struggle to afford enough diapers to keep their children clean and healthy.



The cost of diapers places a considerable strain on household budgets, costing families at least \$1,000 annually for every one child in diapers, and families in Kentucky must also pay the 6% state sales tax when purchasing diapers.



When families struggle to afford diapers, parents and caregivers may have to change diapers less frequently or reuse dirty diapers. Among families with diaper need, 35% had to seek medical care for a UTI and 33% for colic.



Most child care centers require families to provide a daily supply of disposable diapers. One in four parents/caregivers with diaper need reported having to miss work in the past year because they did not have enough diapers to drop their child off at child care.

### **Increasing access to clean diapers for families is associated with:**

- Improved infant and child health
- Improved caregiver mental health
- Improved caregiver work attendance
- Increased family income
- Reduced medical expenses

### **Diaper need is associated with:**

- Increased pediatric medical visits for diaper rash and urinary tract infections (UTI)
- Parental stress and anxiety, which can contribute to poor infant and child health
- Adverse Childhood Experiences, such as maternal depression

### **Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Policy Solution:**

Support the basic needs of families by investing in addressing diaper need.

### **Kentucky can take steps to address the diaper needs of families including:**

- ✓ Follow the lead of several states like Indiana, Florida, and Texas that have eliminated the state sales tax on diapers.
- ✓ Dedicate state funds to support community-based organizations helping to address diaper need across the state.
- ✓ Increase access to clean diapers for low-income families through existing benefit programs like Medicaid and WIC.



## Kentucky should...

support positive youth development through incoming social media settlement dollars

A major multi-district litigation is currently moving forward against social media companies, consolidating hundreds of cases filed by adolescents, parents, school districts, and attorneys general across the U.S., including Kentucky's Attorney General Russell Coleman.

The central claims are that platforms, including Meta, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and others, are "defectively designed" and that the "platforms failed to warn users of the risks associated with use" and have "harmed children's mental health."

### Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Policy Solution:

Create mechanisms to direct social media settlement dollars to support youth well-being, including positive youth development programs.

#### ***Invest in Positive Experiences in Childhood and Adolescence***

- Not all social media use is harmful, however research shows that manipulative or addictive social media features negatively impact youth mental health.
- Kentucky can address the more harmful effects of social media through positive childhood experiences (PCEs).
- After-school, summer, and mentorship programming; library enrichment opportunities; outdoor education; and experiences in the arts can serve as opportunities for positive experiences and connections and provide an alternative to social media and screen time.

**By investing in positive youth development and experiences, Kentucky can ensure our young people thrive in their communities.**

#### **Making the case in Kentucky:**

- In 2024, roughly half of teens surveyed (48%) reported social media sites have a mostly negative effect on people their age, up from 32% in 2022.
- Among Kentucky children ages 3-17, 27% have autism, developmental delays, depression or anxiety, ADHD, or behavioral problems.
- In the 2022-2023 school year, 16% of children in Kentucky were diagnosed with depression or anxiety.
- Social media usage may contribute to rising rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges experienced by adolescents.