

BACKGROUND

San Francisco Leads Cities in Family Policy and Programming

Based on a national scan of best practices, San Francisco has an enviable array of successful local policy and programming for children and families already in place. Our living wage ordinances, groundbreaking children's budget, Healthy Kids insurance program, formation of a dedicated children's department, inclusionary housing policy, voter-supported partnership with public schools, and our very successful Working Families Tax Credit program place San Francisco far above par according to the National League of Cities' recently published *Strengthening America's Families: An Agenda for Municipal Leaders*. The city received an "A" on the *Kid Friendly Cities: Report Card* of health indicators, with a low teen birth rate, low percentage of children without health insurance, and low infant mortality rate. On the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Kid's Count Data Book*, the proportion of San Francisco children living in poverty dropped from 18% in 1990 to 14% in 2000, in contrast to an average poverty rate of 26% for urban areas nationwide.

Despite San Francisco being ranked "family friendly" among cities nationally, and a leader regarding family policy and programs, US Census Bureau data reflects that between 1990 and 2000 our proportion of households with children has decreased from 21% to 19%. Even more significantly, the number of children under age 6 dropped 11% in those years. California is the most child rich state in the nation, with 27% of the population under 18. In contrast, only 15% of San Francisco's population is under 18. We now hold the distinction of having the fewest children per capita of any major county in the United States, and, since families with young children are not staying in the city, we are very likely looking at an even greater decline of households with children over time.

The relative family friendliness of San Francisco and our role as a leader in progressive family policy and programming does not suggest inaction. On the contrary, it demands that we craft a response to declining child population which addresses our unique, local circumstances.

Mayor Creates Policy Council on Children, Youth and Families

Gavin Newsom formed the Policy Council on Children, Youth and Families to address the problem of families with children leaving San Francisco. The Policy Council formed in March 2005 and meets quarterly.

Policy Council Members: Gavin Newsom, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco; Margaret Brodtkin, Co-Chair, Director, Department of Children, Youth and their Families; Linda Asato, Co-Chair, Executive Director of Wu Yee Children's Services; Dr. Arlene Ackerman, Superintendent, San Francisco Unified School District; Dr. Kathleen Alioto, Dean of College Development, City College of San Francisco; Brian Cahill, Executive Director, Catholic Charities CYO; Dr. Robert Corrigan, President, San Francisco State University; Adele Corvin, Community Leader; Michael Funk, Executive Director, Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center; James Head, Director of Programs, San Francisco Foundation; Susan Hirsch, Principal, Hirsch and Associates; Claudia Jasin, Executive Director, Jamestown Community Center; Dwayne Jones, Director, Mayor's Office of Community Development; Dr. Mitch Katz, Director, Department of Public Health; N'Tanya Lee, Executive Director, Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth; Dan MacAllair, Executive Director, Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice; Dr. James McCray, Reverend, Jones Memorial United Methodist Church; Hydra Mendoza, Mayor's Education Advisor; Jeff Mori, Executive Director, Asian American Recovery Services; Cheryl Polk, Executive Director, Miriam and Peter Haas Fund; Janet Reilly, Member, Board of Directors of the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, Commissioner, Asian Art Museum; Trent Rhorer, Director, Department of Human Services; Sean Richard, Executive Director, Brothers Against Guns; Nancy Rubin, Executive Director, Edgewood Center for Children and Families; Patty Siegel, Executive Director, California Childcare Resource and Referral Network; Marion Standish, Program Director, California Endowment, Greater Bay Area Region; Lorraine Woodruff-Long, Executive Director, Parents for Public Schools; Sylvia Yee, Vice President of Programs, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund; President and CEO, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce; President, San Francisco Youth Commission.

San Francisco State University Publishes Family Policy Paper

The Policy Council asked the Public Research Institute at San Francisco State University to analyze the status of San Francisco families. Their observations, *Getting Behind the Headlines: Families Leaving San Francisco*, were presented to the Policy Council in September 2005, and released to the public today. This report:

- Analyzes changes in the household population and composition from 1990 to 2000,
- Compares San Francisco trends to other Bay Area cities, other urban areas, and the state as a whole,
- Uses data from two recent citywide surveys to examine what San Francisco parents say about living in SF,
- Suggests a framework for developing policies and practices to keep San Francisco families in the city, and
- Finally, identifies areas of additional research.

Parents and Non-parents Agree on Best Reasons to Live in San Francisco

The Public Research Institute went to local experts—parents themselves—to provide the information essential for developing strategies to fortify San Francisco families. The parental perspective on family living in San Francisco helps explain and add context to the demographic and economic data.

PR I used two recent surveys of San Francisco parents: the 2005 San Francisco City Survey, which included a random sample of 738 San Francisco parents, and the 2002 DCYF Parent Phone Survey (Parent Survey), which surveyed a sample of 404 households with children under 18. Overall, these responses conclude that families with children under 18 are no more likely to want to leave than other San Franciscans.

Improvements that make this city more family-friendly will benefit all San Franciscans.

According to the City Survey the benefits of living in San Francisco are quite aligned between parents and non-parents. Ranking number one for both groups is weather and natural beauty. Many also said they live in San Francisco because they were born here or are long-term residents. Interestingly, families with children were more likely to cite this reason than those without. Both groups also appreciate the urban lifestyle, citing the quality of life, convenience, diversity, economic opportunities, and cultural activities as top reasons to live here. The only significant difference came under the heading Things To Do, with non-parents ranking shopping and nightlife far higher than parents.

San Franciscans who want to leave cite similar drawbacks about living in the San Francisco whether they have children or not:

- Affordability, including affordable housing and general cost of living was number one in both groups
- Homelessness, dirtiness, and crime and safety concerns ranked high from both groups
- Parents say better schools would make San Francisco a better place for children, and parents in the Southeast area want safer streets.

San Francisco's diversity and tolerance, cultural activities, and parks make the city desirable for families. When asked "What is the thing or two that makes San Francisco a good place to raise children?" in the Parent Survey the city's cultural diversity was the number one response (57%). Although school quality was the number one answer for how to improve San Francisco for families, many in the Parent Survey (34%) said that educational opportunities make the city a good place to raise children.

| Things that would make SF a better place for families | 2005 City Survey | 2002 Parent Phone Survey |
|---|------------------|--------------------------|
| Better schools | 20% | 52% |
| Affordable housing/cost of living | 20% | 13% |
| Safer streets | 12% | 21% |
| More activities for children | 9% | - |

Policy Council Tackling Challenges with a Menu of Recommendations

As recommended by PRI, the Policy Council for Children, Youth, and Families will spearhead the efforts to retain San Francisco families by crafting policy recommendations for the Newsom administration to address the identified drawbacks. Each quarter over the next year the Council will address one key drawback, beginning with affordable housing in January 2006.

Between quarterly meetings, staff, community experts, and interested Policy members will gather and analyze data to recommend policy. How these issues vary by district, ethnic group and socioeconomic status will be considered. The Policy Council process will entail:

- Conducting in-depth analysis of relevant data,
- Identifying best practices and innovations from other communities,
- Assessing what is already in place and working here,
- Recommending what could be changed or added to enhance efforts, and
- Selecting specific, simple accountability measures for tracking progress over time.

This schedule will result in a comprehensive agenda to retain San Francisco families in one year.

Families Connect Events Support City Families Now

Simultaneously, the Department of Children, Youth, and their Families will undertake efforts to proactively promote the benefits of family living in San Francisco under the umbrella of Families Connect. Families Connect kicks off with Family Festival on October 22.

“It is important that we celebrate the folks that are here, says Margaret Brodtkin, director of the Department of Children, Youth and their Families. “I am proud to say that our city family is really coming together for Family Festival. Organized by the Department of Children, Youth and their Families, more than a dozen city departments plus museums, cultural institutions, and 50 community-based organizations are involved—in an unprecedented spirit of cooperation—to provide fun activities, entertainment, information, and hands-on help with ways for families to make the most of living in the city. And it’s all free. I’m really looking forward to seeing San Francisco parents, youth, and children at Yerba Buena Gardens for Family Festival on Saturday.”

Future Families Connect events include January 8 Family Appreciation Day of discount admissions to cultural attractions throughout the city; a spring Family Convention with displays of the myriad summer camps, activities, and youth jobs available to choose from; and a summer road show of family support services.