



NCSL Early Learning Fellows
Major General Gary Dylewski, USAF, Retired
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Who We Are

- Founded in 2009, Mission: Readiness now consists of 750 retired admirals and generals focused on promoting research-based policy solutions that mitigate major barriers to enlistment.
- Members work to ensure that children stay in school, in shape, and out of trouble, so that they are prepared to succeed in the military or at whatever career they choose.
- Our members engage with lawmakers at the state and federal level to advocate for high-quality early childhood programs.
- Our landmark reports have garnered national attention on the recruiting crisis and the importance of preparing children for success.



The Problem

- Today, **71% of young Americans between the ages of 17-24 are ineligible for military service**, primarily due to poor education, obesity, and a serious history of crime or drug abuse.
- **Across the nation, 1 out of 5 high school students will not graduate on time**
 - Many of these students do not graduate at all -- and it is very difficult to join the military without a high school degree.
 - Even among young adults who finish high school, almost 1 in 4 who seek to enlist cannot score highly enough on the military's exam for math, literacy and problem solving to be able to join.
- **Nearly 1 in 3 young Americans is too overweight to join the military**
- **Forty percent of young adults cannot join due to a record of crime or drug abuse**



The Problem

Underinvestment in Early Learning/Child Care

- Without a stable environment and responsive caregivers, infants can experience toxic stress, which can lead to long-term deficits.
- Many families have trouble finding child care, and when they do it is often low quality.
- Due to inadequate funding, the most effective programs still reach only a fraction of the children who would benefit the most.
- The average cost of child care is now more than the average cost of in-state college tuition.



The Problem

- Vitally important early brain development has not been matched with adequate investments in quality child care resulting in problems with access, affordability and quality.
- Policymakers are understandably concerned about the cost of such programs and proceed with caution at a time when budget cuts are the norm.
- However, failing to invest in children when they are very young always means a higher cost to society down the road. A child who drops out of school, uses drugs and becomes a career criminal costs society, on average, \$2.5 million over the course of his/her lifetime.



The Solutions

High-Quality Early Learning

- Long-running research studies show that high-quality early learning delivers real, measurable results in improving outcomes for kids.
- Builds a solid foundation for the next generation to develop in mind, body and character so they can succeed in any career path, including military service.
- Prepares children to start school with critical early math and pre-reading skills.
- Improves student performance and boosts graduation rates.



The Solutions

High-Quality Early Child Care

- A growing body of research now shows that early childhood care and education programs – if they are high quality – can deliver solid results.
- High-quality child care benefits the current workforce through increased stability and productivity while preparing the future workforce.
- There is even new evidence showing how early care and education programs can help reduce America's high rate of childhood obesity.
- High quality child care is a key ingredient in preparing children to become successful adults who could serve in the military if they choose that path. Today's kids are tomorrow's military leaders, engineers, medical professionals, teachers, and business leaders.



The Solutions

Voluntary Home Visiting Programs

- Voluntary home visiting programs pair a nurse, social worker or other professional with parents from pregnancy through the first few years of a child's life.



The Solutions

Voluntary Home Visiting Programs

- Home visiting programs provide new and expectant parents with information, support, and referrals to community resources and services, promoting good maternal and child health, home safety, food security, and positive parenting.
- Dozens of home visiting models exist in the US including two of the largest, the Nurse Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers.
- In 2017, more than 300,000 families received evidence-based home visiting services during more than 3.5 million home visits.
- Legislators can play an important role in establishing effective home visiting policy in their states, including legislation to ensure investments in evidence-based home visiting models. Legislation can also address home visiting as a critical component in states' comprehensive early childhood.



Conclusion

- We all share responsibility to make sure that our kids are well-educated and healthy, and Mission: Readiness will continue to have a strong presence in the discussion.
- There is also a role for policymakers to play by increasing investments in early care and education programs to ensure that tomorrow's leaders have the right start in life.



Council for a Strong America



**If you have any questions, please
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