



Investing in Children & Families: A High-Return Strategy

Indian River County – Maximizing Impact for a Brighter Future

Investments in children and family services yield significant long-term financial and societal benefits:

- Investments in early childhood programs for disadvantaged children **yielded a \$4-16\$ return** . ([Heckman Equation](#)).
- Strong evidence suggests for **every dollar invested in low-income children's health and education there is a \$5.00 return on investment**. Policies targeting children of all ages, from early education programs to college subsidies, have demonstrated substantial returns. ([Hendren & Sprung-Keyser, 2020](#)).
- Changing the path of even one at-risk youth from a life of crime and poor choices yields significant savings based on societal costs that have been estimated at **\$3.2 to \$5.5 million in present value for a 14-year old, \$390,000 to \$580,000 for a high school dropout, \$840,000 to \$1,100,000 for a career drug abuser, and \$2.7 to \$4.8 million for a career criminal** (Cohen & Piquero, 2009).
- A high school dropout costs taxpayers **over \$292,000** in lower tax revenues, higher cash and in-kind transfer costs, and incarceration costs compared to a graduate (Sum et al., 2009). ([Northeastern University Report](#)).
- Preterm births in the U.S. cost **\$26.2 billion annually**, averaging **\$51,600 per infant** ([Institute of Medicine, 2006](#)).
- Disconnected youth (ages 16-24) earn **\$31,000 less annually** and contribute **\$11,900 less** in tax revenue than their engaged peers ([Joint Economic Committee, 2023](#)).

Strategic Plan Alignment: Enhancing Quality of Life

The **Indian River County Strategic Plan** prioritizes investing in children and families to improve economic opportunity, health outcomes, and community stability.

- Enhance access to essential services in the 2024-2029 **Children Services' Needs Assessment** priorities: **Health & Well-Being, Nurturing Families & Communities, Success in School & Life**.
- **Expand outreach** to underserved populations through targeted engagement.
- Increase program effectiveness by ensuring **measurable outcomes** for funded programs.

Impact Areas & ROI

Health & Wellness

- **Maternal Health & Home Visits:** Home visiting programs for low-income pregnant mothers generate a **\$5.70 return for every \$1 invested**, leading to reduced healthcare costs and improved outcomes (RAND Study, 2005). ([Nurse Family Partnership](#)).
- **Breastfeeding Impact:** If 90% of U.S. families followed medical recommendations for breastfeeding, the nation could save **\$13 billion annually** and prevent **911 infant deaths** ([American Academy of Pediatrics, 2010](#)).
- **Obesity & Healthcare Costs:** Childhood obesity increases **annual medical costs by \$1,354 per child** ([Biener et al., 2017](#)).

Nurturing Families & Community

- **Child Maltreatment Costs:** Each nonfatal child maltreatment case results in **\$830,928 in lifetime costs**; fatal cases cost **\$16.6 million per incident** (Peterson et al., 2018). ([Science Direct, 2018](#)).
- **Education & Incarceration:** **68% of state prison inmates lack a high school diploma** ([Harlow, 2003](#)).
- **Crime Prevention:** Diverting one at-risk youth from a criminal path can save **\$3.2M - \$5.8M** in societal costs (Cohen & Piquero, 2009). ([Research Gate](#)).
- **Mentoring ROI:** For every **\$1 invested** in mentoring, there is a **\$2.72 return** ([Anton & Temple, 2007](#)).

Success in School & Life

- **Third-Grade Reading Impact:** Students not reading at grade level by 3rd grade are **4x more likely to drop out** ([Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011](#)).
- **Early Childhood Education ROI:** High-quality early education generates an ROI of **\$7 to \$12 per \$1 spent** ([Schweinhart, et al., 2005](#)).
- **Career & Technical Education:** Investing in **youth CTE programs** leads to a **220% return on investment** within five years ([ACTE, 2023](#)).
- **Disconnected Youth Impact:** Youth disconnected from school/work (ages 16-24) are **45% more likely to be unemployed, 42% less likely to own a home**, and have poorer long-term health outcomes ([Lewis & Gluskin, 2018](#)).

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