

children's defense fund

Leave No Child Behind®



To make sure every child has the opportunity to succeed, the Children's Defense Fund provides programs and champions policies that meet the needs of the whole child. We advocate for better policies and educate policymakers and the public about the most pressing challenges for America's children. We run programs that improve children's lives, with a focus on poor children and children of color. And we train and equip young people, faith communities, political leaders, and community organizations to advocate for children across the country.

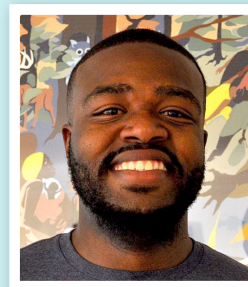
Our Impact

Changing the Odds for Children: To succeed, children need stable homes, quality health care, ample nutritious food, good schools, safe neighborhoods, and access to resources and opportunities that enable them to reach their potential. But for too many of our children, these basic building blocks for success are out of reach. That's why we fight on all these fronts to make sure every child in America has what they need to thrive. We work with Congress and the federal government to advocate for federal policies that improve children's lives. We also advocate at the state level, pushing for policy reforms through our six state offices that collectively represent nearly 40 percent of all children living in poverty in America.



Creating Opportunity through Education: The *CDF Freedom Schools* program serves more than 12,000 children across the country every year, empowering them to excel today and make a difference tomorrow. *CDF Freedom Schools* provide summer and afterschool reading and cultural enrichment programming to students in grades K–12 in communities where quality academic opportunities are often limited, too expensive, or non-existent. Since its inception in 1995, *CDF Freedom Schools* has served over 150,000 elementary and secondary school students, helping to curb summer learning loss with documented, statistically significant success. Children attending *CDF Freedom Schools* during the summer achieve an average of 8+ months of reading gains in just six weeks; in 2018, children who had been reading below grade level at the start of the program improved by the equivalent of 1.3 school years.

DAVID WILLIAMS has been involved with CDF Freedom Schools® for 20 years, and he's not slowing down any time soon. David first walked into a *CDF Freedom Schools* classroom at the age of five. The program changed his life and convinced him he could make a difference in his hometown of Bennettsville, SC by becoming a role model for other children. So when David went to college, he signed up to serve as a Servant Leader Intern for the same *CDF Freedom Schools* program that nurtured and educated him as a child. He went on to become the site coordinator and eventually an Ella Baker Trainer, helping to prepare thousands of new Servant Leader Interns to lead *CDF Freedom Schools* classrooms. David says, "I found my voice in *CDF Freedom Schools*. I found my 'why.'" Every day, the Children's Defense Fund is helping young people like David find their "why" and become champions for children.



"Making our nation and world fit for our children and grandchildren is a task for marathoners—not sprinters or dabblers or showboaters who are here today and gone tomorrow. Transforming change is a complex, long-term and never-ending struggle that must be pursued with urgency and persistence."

— CDF Founder
Marian Wright Edelman

A national evaluation conducted in 2016 showed that Black children and poor children experience the greatest improvement in reading levels at *CDF Freedom Schools*. In addition to fostering reading skills and a love of learning, the *CDF Freedom Schools* model teaches children that they are powerful and can make a difference in their family, in their community, and in the world.

Developing a New Generation of Child Advocates:

The Children's Defense Fund is building the next generation of child advocates. *CDF Freedom Schools* are staffed by Servant Leader Interns, primarily college students of color, who learn as part of their training about the challenges faced by the children they serve. They then work with their *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars to develop and implement social action projects that teach both generations that they are powerful and can make a difference. CDF Beat the Odds® program honors and supports exceptional high school students who excel academically and give back to their communities despite experiencing tremendous obstacles and difficult environments. CDF's Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry brings seminary students, religious leaders, and social justice activists together to explore how to serve as effective voices for children in their communities. And the Child Defender Fellowship allows emerging leaders and community activists to learn how to use the principles of nonviolent organizing to spur community-led change to improve the lives of children.

For more than 40 years, the Children's Defense Fund has been fiercely independent and unwavering in our defense against any attack on children. We continue to work every day, at every level and on behalf of every child to improve their lives right now and for generations to come.