



The Annie E. Casey Foundation  
**CHILDREN AND FAMILY FELLOWSHIP**



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*The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of UPS, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information, visit the Foundation's website at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).*

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# CHILDREN AND FAMILY FELLOWSHIP



# An Investment in the Future

Helping low-income communities become places that support and strengthen families is a complex challenge that requires bold, imaginative, effective action. A key challenge is building and sustaining strong, effective leadership within—and partnerships among—families, communities, the nonprofit sector, and the public systems that share accountability for achieving better results for children and their families. The Annie E. Casey Foundation believes that essential steps toward improving outcomes for families and communities include fostering the capacity of individuals, organizations, and systems to respond more effectively to the needs of vulnerable children and families; working collaboratively with a diverse set of stakeholders; focusing on results; using data to make decisions and track progress; and involving families in decisions about their lives.

Acting on this conviction, the Casey Foundation developed the Children and Family Fellowship, a 20-month executive leadership program for accomplished professionals. The Fellowship explicitly strives to increase the pool of diverse, visionary leaders with the confidence and competence to create supports and systems that help families make positive choices and to lead and sustain major system reforms and community change initiatives that benefit large numbers of children and families.

The Children and Family Fellowship is one of the Casey Foundation's efforts to build and develop the leadership potential of individuals at the helm of public and nonprofit organizations working to improve outcomes for children. The Foundation also provides other opportunities for neighborhood residents, communities, organizations, and systems to build their respective leadership capacity in addressing the needs of vulnerable children and families. Some parallel efforts include support to nonprofit organizations to build their capacity for sustainability, leadership development within systems and communities to accelerate the achievement of results, and neighborhood resident leadership development to enable families to actively participate in achieving results that matter most to them. A complement to our existing programs and funding strategies, the Fellowship represents an important investment in the future of the human services field—and in the futures of our most vulnerable children.





## Grant Jones

2000

Grant Jones is the founding executive director of the Center for African American Health, a community-based organization serving the Denver metro area that seeks to reduce serious health disparities among African Americans. The Center partners with a wide variety of organizations to provide culturally appropriate disease prevention and disease management programs to thousands of African Americans each year. It also acts as a voice for African Americans in the public policy arena to promote system reforms that improve access to health care and the quality of care. Jones' innovative work with the Center, which caps a career of distinguished service in the nonprofit sector, has earned him a number of prestigious awards, many of which followed on the heels of the Fellowship. *"The Fellowship was a powerful experience for me,"* he says. *"It provided leadership skill enhancement, a powerful network of colleagues, access to resources, and an opportunity for renewal. Through the Fellowship, I was able to think bigger and more strategically about social change."*

### Seeking Talented Professionals, Aspiring and Achieving Leaders

The Fellowship seeks people who are committed to helping low-income families succeed in their roles as parents, members of communities, and productive participants in the workforce and economy. We seek people who are committed to achieving better outcomes for children, families, and communities. We seek talented, accomplished, and ambitious professionals from across the country who want to strengthen public and nonprofit systems in ways that make them more reliable, equitable, effective, and efficient. We seek people who strive for excellence, who want to accelerate their professional and personal development, and who want to amplify their impact and make a greater difference.

### A Life-Changing Opportunity

The Fellowship is an intensive program designed to increase the capacity of leaders to improve outcomes for America's vulnerable families. Through 20 months of Fellowship activities, participants broaden their vision, increase their base of knowledge, and expand and refine their skills. Fellows develop new and strengthen their existing networks and accumulate the experience they need to lead major change efforts. A unique opportunity for reflection, exploration, and learning, the Fellowship fosters career-enhancing growth and provides lifelong connections to the Foundation and its networks.

### High Expectations

At the end of this rich experience, Fellows travel a career path of increasing impact and influence. The Casey Foundation makes a significant investment in its Fellows, and has ambitious expectations for them as they go forward. We expect Fellows to be in significant leadership positions where they can effectively lead system reforms or community change that improve the life circumstances and prospects of vulnerable children and families living in low-income communities.



## Fellowship Goals

The Children and Family Fellowship experience is designed to:

- ***Broaden Vision***

Fellows gain insight into the possibilities for improving outcomes for fragile families and disinvested neighborhoods and can envision the pathways needed to reach those goals.

- ***Expand Knowledge***

Fellows learn about innovative programs, policies, practices, and powerful strategies that are strengthening communities and families.

- ***Enhance Leadership Capacity***

Fellows hone their technical skills, expand their ability to think strategically, and increase their self-awareness—all critical aspects of successful leadership.

- ***Enlarge Networks***

Fellows gain exposure to people, programs, and ideas that challenge their thinking and assumptions. This network building also helps Fellows develop relationships that will be important resources as they progress through their careers.

- ***Increase Confidence***

Fellows build the self-assurance and boldness needed to take on challenging career paths and lead significant change initiatives.



Norman Yee, former president and now second-term board member of the San Francisco Board of Education, has steadfastly focused on closing the achievement gap between the district's students and their suburban counterparts. Three goals Yee has championed include creating a seamless pre-K to 12th grade system, providing opportunities for all children to learn at least two languages starting at an early age, and pushing for the district to have a parent and community engagement plan. *"These three elements, if done right, can narrow the achievement gap our students face,"* notes Yee. Team-building skills he gained in the Fellowship, Yee says, have helped bring cohesiveness to an often fractious board and *"mitigate the interests of competing groups to their satisfaction and to the satisfaction of their constituents, in a way that there is added value."* The Fellowship also helped him to ask the right questions and be open to new solutions. *"If you need to recharge and figure things out, the Fellowship and Network can be a big help,"* he says.

## The Fellowship Experience

The 20-month Fellowship program brings together leaders from varied professional backgrounds, geographic regions, and racial and ethnic groups. This diverse group of Fellows becomes a powerful "learning community" that serves as both catalyst and support throughout this intensive experience. At the same time, the Fellowship is structured to serve the complex and individual learning needs of each Fellow. Change is the hallmark of the Fellowship—personal and professional change, change in perspective and vision, and changes of scenery as Fellows travel to ten seminars at the Casey Foundation and around the country. While balancing the demands of their current positions, Fellows participate in a series of leadership opportunities, including executive seminars, site visits to observe innovations in the field, and work on custom-crafted projects to provide real-time application and learning.

### Group Seminars

The cornerstone of the Fellowship experience is a series of ten four-day seminars that employ a dynamic, experiential learning approach. Co-designed by Foundation staff, Fellows, and New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, the seminar series builds on the Fellows' experience and expertise. The seminars are based on the core proposition that effective leaders understand the dynamics of a shared power world and that real change requires productive partnerships involving families, communities, and the faith, for-profit, public, and nonprofit sectors.

The seminar series will enhance the Fellows' leadership capacity in four major arenas:

- leadership for the benefit of children, families, and communities;
- leadership for the development of their organization;
- leadership to transform the systems the leader works within; and
- their personal and professional development.

Each seminar explores real-time organizational challenges in the context of site visits. Fellows visit organizations and agencies where innovation is helping to solve complex problems and where effective approaches are producing measurable results for children and families. Each seminar offers a concrete set of tools to aid Fellows in the realization of effective systems change, including results accountability, reducing racial disparities, interest-based negotiation, responsibility charting, and the campaign approach to systems reform. The seminars provide an opportunity for reflective practice, peer learning, and networking.



## Brenda Donald

1995

As Secretary of the Maryland Department of Human Resources, Brenda Donald oversees 7,000 employees providing critical services to children and families. Last year, the agency served 638,000 people. *“If it hadn’t been for the Fellowship, I doubt if I’d be doing this work,”* notes Donald, who served as a deputy mayor in the District of Columbia prior to this position. *“I was on the city management track and my career path was clearly to be a city manager.”* As a Fellow, Donald heard Casey President and CEO Doug Nelson stress that even a well-endowed foundation committed to better child outcomes couldn’t effect large-scale change without reforms in systems that spend billions of dollars and reach millions of children. What was most life-changing was *“the exposure to people in leadership positions in large systems and how I realized I could bring my own experience to that.”* Today, Donald uses the Network as a talent bank to fill critical positions. *“Whenever there is a job where I need to hire smart, committed people, I go to the Network.”*



### Individual Learning Plans

At the beginning of the program, Fellows construct an individual learning plan that serves as the “road map” for their Fellowship experience. The plan asks each Fellow to frame a personal theory of change, that is, a vision of how change occurs for children, families, and communities and the leadership roles they aspire to play in creating that change. The plan evolves throughout the Fellowship and serves as a powerful reflective tool. It focuses each Fellow on the results they want to achieve, establishes personal learning and professional development goals, and describes a set of Fellowship experiences strategically designed to meet those goals. Fellows will have access to professional coaches and Fellowship faculty to support their journey.

### Individual Learning Activities

To complement the seminars and other group activities, Fellows pursue individual experiences that address the specific needs and goals set out in





## Dennis Campa

1997

It's only natural that Dennis Campa brings a Casey-influenced perspective to his job as director of the City of San Antonio's Department of Community Initiatives, where he oversees a budget of \$181 million. Formerly a neighborhood initiatives officer for the City of Austin, he landed his current job after meeting the San Antonio City Manager at a Fellowship workshop in 1997.

*"The Fellowship has been a transformative experience for me, certainly professionally, but the change is even greater on a personal level,"* Campa notes. *"I went in wanting to learn more about content. I came out even more passionate, with more drive and vision, and more reflective about my own practice as a leader."* The relationships he maintains with other Fellows have deepened and enriched his work, Campa says. *"As a result, I have the opportunity to do even greater work and make greater contributions. As a part of this network, I've been able to work with my colleagues to develop community-building models that are helping to shape the national conversation."*

their learning plans. These activities include special projects, conference participation, directed readings, and much more. Fellows are connected to content-relevant Casey staff and Casey Fellows Alumni with whom they negotiate learning activities such as a site visit to an innovative program or participation at a conference.

### Fellowship Project

Throughout the 20-month period, Fellows work on a current challenge—an opportunity they identify for themselves or for an organization of their choosing—to have a greater impact on improving outcomes for vulnerable children and families. This project helps them focus their exploration, directly and immediately apply ideas and tools discussed throughout the seminars, and document their learning and growth. The Foundation provides technical assistance to be applied toward the Fellow's individual or organizational project.



## Daniel J. Cardinali

2007

During his Casey Fellowship, Daniel J. Cardinali, president of Communities in Schools (CIS), received heartening news. Data from a third-party evaluation revealed CIS was the only dropout prevention organization in the United States with scientific evidence demonstrating that it lowers dropout rates and increases the rate of young people graduating from high school with four-year degrees. CIS, a network of 200 local nonprofits and state organizations, focuses on closing the achievement gap and eliminating the causes for kids dropping out of school. *“The Fellowship pushed me to think about how to leverage our results in a systemic way, and what our responsibility was vis-à-vis the larger education system,”* reflects Cardinali. CIS was instrumental in developing the Keeping Parents and Communities Engaged Act introduced by the late Senator Edward Kennedy in the summer of 2009, which would expand family and community involvement in schools and address high dropout rates among at-risk children. *“The Fellowship helped me see results not as an end in themselves but as a means of promoting change,”* notes Cardinali.



### The Casey Fellows Alumni Network

All Fellows become part of the growing network of influential Casey Fellows across the country. The Casey Fellows Network provides opportunities for professional collaboration and supports Fellow-to-Fellow relationships that maximize the impact of the Fellowship experience. The Network meets semi-annually and conducts ongoing professional development activities. It also provides resources to support Fellows, including grants and technical assistance resources. The Network supports collaborative activities among Fellows and encourages them to take advantage of the wealth of knowledge and expertise among Fellows, leverage Casey resources in their own work, and offer ongoing consultation and leadership to the Fellowship program and the Foundation.

## Selection Criteria

The Children and Family Fellowship seeks highly qualified individuals who have made a difference in the lives of disadvantaged children and families, the communities in which they live, or the systems that serve them. The candidates we are looking for have a minimum of ten years of diverse professional experiences, characterized by increasing levels of responsibility in the field of children and families (for example, directors, deputies, program managers, department heads, and executives). They have a strong record of achievement and career advancement and have set their sights on even higher levels of impact and influence.

### A Leadership Profile

Strong candidates demonstrate a variety of leadership qualities and show evidence of even greater leadership potential. They have a vision for change. They are capable of promoting collaboration and cooperation across disciplines and among diverse groups, and of managing and institutionalizing change. They are able to innovate, take and manage risks, listen and learn, inspire others, and persevere, often against great odds. They have significant influence within their organizations and have the opportunity to immediately apply the concepts learned through the Fellowship within their organizations. The Fellowship seeks people who can translate their beliefs into action, think strategically, get things done, and measure the difference they are making for children and families.

### Ambitious Career Goals

The Fellowship wants leaders who are ready for significant professional challenges and expanded leadership roles—in major community-building initiatives

and in public systems. They should not simply aspire to the next rung on the organizational ladder. They have ambitious career goals and want increasing responsibility for leading systems and community change efforts that improve outcomes for large numbers of disadvantaged children and families.

### At a Pivotal Point in Careers

The Casey Fellowship is not for everyone. We seek the right people, but also people at the right moment in their careers. Fellows must be prepared to participate in the program—committing the time and energy to take full advantage of the Fellowship opportunity while balancing the demands of their current positions.



## Yolie Flores Aguilar

1993

Yolie Flores Aguilar is championing student-centered reforms that challenge the status quo as vice president of the Board of Education for the Los Angeles Unified School District. It is the second largest district in the nation with one of the most diverse, economically challenged, and predominantly non-native English speaking populations. The Fellowship *“helped push me to pursue change not just around the edges, but through systemic reform,”* notes Aguilar, who recently spearheaded a successful public school choice resolution that is opening up 250 schools to competition from charter operators and others. A first-generation Mexican American and the first in her family to go to college, Aguilar has dedicated her career to ensuring that all kids grow up with opportunities they need to lead fulfilling lives. Her approach reflects lessons from the Fellowship, including *“the importance of developing natural allies but also managing groups resistant to change.”* As in the national health care debate, it means *“countering the misperception, misinformation, and fear out there, because you can’t move the change agenda without bringing people along.”*



## Janet Carter

2003

Janet Carter is executive director of Team-Up for Youth, a California-based intermediary organization that creates quality after-school sports programs for young people in low-income communities to improve their chances of success in school and in life. Team-Up for Youth builds the capacity of after-school programs to offer sports programs and trains college students as volunteer coaches, mentors, and role models to help increase participants' chances of graduating from high school, continuing their education, and being physically and emotionally healthy. Carter brings to this work lessons she learned in a 15-year stint as vice president of the Family Violence Prevention Fund, a national organization dedicated to ending violence against women and children. As chair of the Fellowship Network, she has access to inspiring leaders from different sectors who share knowledge and spread the word about what works. *"The Fellowship changed the trajectory of my leadership," says Carter, "how I viewed it, and what I was able to accomplish by giving me the skills and the network to broaden the impact of my work."*



## Successful Candidates Are Committed to:

### **Strengthening the role and control families have in deciding their futures**

Candidates recognize that their role is to support families in realizing the aspirations they have for themselves and their children. They believe that children do well when their families do well. Candidates recognize that services and supports to families are most effective when the family is a full partner in decisions made about the family. Candidates believe that when families have the needed resources and capacity they will act on their own behalf in ways that support and strengthen the family.

### **Improving the life circumstances of America's most vulnerable children and families**

Candidates have demonstrated a commitment to assisting underserved communities, reducing racial disparities, and managing a diverse workforce. They reflect the diversity of client and employee populations and understand how race, ethnicity, class, gender, and language affect service delivery, policy, practice, advocacy, and leadership decisions.

### **Achieving results, holding accountability, and using data to improve systems**

Candidates embrace the use of data to improve programs, services, and the systems in which they operate. They are interested in employing evidence-based



practice. They recognize that collaborative leadership and partnerships are essential to achieving results. They are committed to producing results that can be monitored and measured.

### **Leading in the context of a “shared power world”**

Candidates engage partners in the community, public agencies, and other sectors to achieve measurable results for children and families. They are committed to including families in decision-making. They understand that in today’s shared power world a leader must look beyond traditional realms and engage multiple viewpoints and stakeholders in action to improve outcomes.

### **Striving for organizational excellence**

Candidates are capable of leading and institutionalizing change. They can apply the learning and tools acquired in the Fellowship to their own organizations and to the communities and systems in which they work. They strive for high performance for themselves and for their organizations.

### **Investing in professional and personal growth**

Successful candidates are committed to investing in their professional and personal development. They are interested in learning about themselves and understanding others. They are reflective about their leadership and interpersonal styles, and willing to make changes that help them become more effective leaders.

## **Selection Process**

The Casey Foundation solicits nominations for the Children and Family Fellowship from a prestigious, national network of organizations and individuals who lead many of the most dynamic systems, institutions, and programs in America today. Their wide spheres of influence throughout the public, nonprofit, and private sectors uniquely position them to identify the talented leaders sought by the Children and Family Fellowship.

Once nominated, candidates are invited to complete a Fellowship application. The Fellowship Selection Committee, comprised of a diverse team of Casey staff, Fellowship alumni, and partners in the Foundation’s work, reviews all applications and recommends candidates for further consideration. Special attention will be given to candidates with significant ties to the places,

*The Fellowship aims to support, strengthen, and nurture leaders representative of the communities and people who are served by public and nonprofit systems. We seek Fellows from varied personal, racial, ethnic, and professional backgrounds.*

organizations, and areas of interest in which the Foundation invests. Personal recommendations are then sought and reviewed. The Committee selects a small number of finalists who are invited to the Casey Foundation for an interview. The Committee may also visit the finalists in their workplaces to learn more about their home organizations.

Final selection of Children and Family Fellows is announced following the interviews.

## Foundation Support

The Casey Foundation funds the cost of tuition of the Children and Family Fellowship as well as all program-related expenses, including:

- Travel to and from Fellowship activities
- Meals
- Lodging
- Materials

The Foundation may also cover additional expenses a Fellow incurs due to his or her participation in the Fellowship.

In addition, the Foundation provides resources to support the Fellow's individual and/or organizational learning.





For more information:  
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