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**Renée Wilson-Simmons, Child and Adolescent Development Expert,  
Selected to Head Columbia University's National Center for Children in Poverty**  
*Center Explores the Connection between Poverty and the Health of Children*

**New York City** – Child and adolescent development expert Renée Wilson-Simmons, DrPH, has been named director of the [National Center for Children in Poverty](#) (NCCP), part of the [Mailman School of Public Health](#) at Columbia University.

“Dr. Wilson-Simmons is an extraordinary and proven leader in supporting better futures for low-income youth and their families,” says Mailman School Dean Linda P. Fried. She brings more than 20 years of high-level experience in program development, implementation, and evaluation in the fields of child and adolescent development. Her direction will carry the fine work of NCCP to a new level of policy leadership and impact.”

NCCP is a leading public policy center dedicated to promoting the economic security, health, and well-being of low-income families and children in the United States. It was founded in 1989 by former Mailman Dean Allan Rosenfield, who had a passion for addressing the public health concerns that plague the world’s most vulnerable populations.

“NCCP is well-known for its ability to connect the dots between research and policy, providing policymakers at the local, state, and national levels with evidence-based tools that are extraordinarily helpful to those concerned with slowing the epidemic of child poverty,” says Michael Sparer, PhD, chair of the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Mailman School. “NCCP is working hard to examine the connection between child poverty and child health and to make significant, lasting improvements in the future of our most vulnerable youngsters. After an extensive and exhaustive national search, I’m very happy to say that in Dr. Wilson-Simmons we have found the perfect person to lead this charge.”

Dr. Wilson-Simmons comes to Columbia University from the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) in Baltimore. She served as the senior associate for adolescent health and development, managing foundation initiatives and related grants and activities focused on reproductive health, and, most recently as associate director of the Evidence-Based Practice Group, which is identifying, developing, and scaling up evidence-based interventions for children and families involved with public social service systems.

Before serving at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Dr. Wilson-Simmons was a senior scientist at Education Development Center, a global nonprofit organization with responsibility for the development and implementation of a range of projects that address the health and safety needs of young people living in high-poverty urban areas. She was also director of the Health Promotion Program for Urban Youth at Boston City Hospital, principal investigator of the first Office of Minority Health-funded grant to develop a community-based coalition to prevent homicide in the African American community, and director of a five-year National Institutes of Health study of the long-term impact of a comprehensive adolescent health

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program on reductions in multiple-risk behaviors related to violence, substance abuse, and early and unprotected sexual activity among inner-city African American and Hispanic youths.

“Congratulations to both NCCP and Renée for such a perfect match,” said Michael Laracy, director of Policy Reform and Advocacy at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “For the past 20 years, NCCP has been a critical partner for us, and a major force in informing and shaping vital federal and state public policies affecting low-income children and families. And, I know from our years of working together, that Renée is a proven leader, manager, researcher, and advocate—one who will take the helm of NCCP and not only continue and sustain its great work but move it to new levels of excellence and influence.”

Lisa Klein, executive director of the [Birth to Five Policy Alliance](#), also one of NCCP’s funders, said, “I was thrilled to learn that Dr. Wilson-Simmons will be leading NCCP. She has deep knowledge and experience in the constellation of issues including child development, health, and mental health, that are essential for improving the lives of vulnerable young children and families.”

Dr. Wilson-Simmons earned a DrPH in maternal and child health from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; a master’s degree in urban journalism from the University of Minnesota; and a bachelor’s degree in journalism and English from Shippensburg University.

“NCCP’s mission is one not adequately addressed by any other organization,” says Dr. Wilson-Simmons. “The valuable information and tools the Center has developed to promote the healthy development of poor children and the economic security of their parents are widely used by policymakers, practitioners, and advocates across the U.S. Given America’s current economic struggle – and a continually growing body of research which shows that socioeconomic status is associated with an array of health, cognitive, and socio-emotional outcomes for children – NCCP’s work has never been more important.

“As I assume this new role, my highest priority will be to ensure that the Center remains the nation’s preeminent public policy site for children in poverty. Clearly, retaining such a position of influence requires that NCCP not only continue to highlight emerging trends and challenges and offer research-based strategies for improving practice, but also strengthen partnerships with longtime supporters and engage new stakeholders.”

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*The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is one of the nation’s leading public policy centers and is dedicated to promoting the economic security, health and well-being of America’s low-income families and children. Part of Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health, NCCP uses research to inform policy and practice with the goal of ensuring positive outcomes for the next generation.*