



STATE POLICY UPDATE: NOVEMBER 2015

THIS REPORT BROUGHT TO YOU BY

[Ounce of Prevention Fund national policy team](#)

Overview: This update asks states to look forward to the upcoming 2016 state legislative session and share policy priorities, political challenges and opportunities. It also provides an updated snapshot of what has recently happened in each state during the 2015 legislative sessions as of October 2015.

You can find previous editions of the State Policy Update here. <http://bit.ly/1HuMmKF>

The Ounce of Prevention Fund gives children in poverty the best chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest quality care and education from birth to age 5. The Ounce national policy team partners with and supports early childhood leaders in states as they advance a comprehensive agenda for at-risk children and families. We do this by providing individualized strategy and policy consultation and resources; facilitating peer-to-peer learning and networking across states; and supporting Educare schools and the Educare Learning Network in the development of their policy and advocacy work.

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KEY

Budget Changes

-  Pending or Proposed Increase/Restoration
-  Funds Held Level
-  Pending or Proposed Budget Cut
-  Budget Cut
-  Budget Proposal Did Not Pass

Policy Changes

-  Policy Change
-  Pending Policy Change
-  Policy Change Did Not Pass

OVERVIEW

In 2015 numerous states across the country made major policy changes and investments that advanced access to high-quality early learning programs.

- Over the past two years **California** restored and reinvested \$600 million of the \$1 billion lost in early care and education state funding during the recession. Almost \$50 million went to additional preschool slots alone.
- **Colorado** instituted key reforms in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), including decoupling parents' work schedules from the hours children are authorized for child care assistance, 12-month authorization, and enhanced safety rules, coupled with almost a \$7 million increase to support these changes, as well as, increases to subsidies and provider rates. The changes and investments to CCCAP put the state on good footing to implement changes mandated by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Reauthorization Act of 2014.
- **Michigan's** FY16 budget includes an array of new investments totaling \$31.5 million to enhance third grade reading literacy, including \$2.5 million for parent coaching through home visits, \$17.5 million for expanded learning through after-school and summer programming in kindergarten through third grade, \$2.6 million for early assessments including a kindergarten entry assessment, and \$1 million for a pilot parent education program.
- **Oregon** approved over \$100 million in multiple new investments vital to improving and expanding early learning opportunities in the state, including significant expansion of high-quality preschool programs to be implemented through a mixed delivery system.
- Finally, **Washington** signed into law *The Early Start Act*, a bipartisan omnibus bill that encompasses a variety of incentives, supports, and accountability measures including a shift toward public subsidies only supporting high-quality early care and education providers. During the next biennium, the state increased investments for early care and education by \$159 million with \$92 million directed toward implementation of *The Early Start Act*.

Meanwhile, states still faced significant challenges this year, with advocates battling harmful policy changes and budget cuts, such as in **Illinois** the state has instituted very restrictive changes in eligibility policies to the Child Care Assistance Program through emergency rule.

Looking forward to 2016, the 22 states surveyed for the ***State Policy Update: November 2015*** highlighted a number of common goals and opportunities for advancing high-quality early learning in addition to challenges states will face. Some of the most common pressing priorities for 2016 include:

- **CCDBG Reauthorization.** Given the pending deadline to submit the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan, almost every state highlighted major changes to child care assistance programs resulting from CCDBG as a major component of its legislative and advocacy agenda—and as an opportunity for leveraging beneficial changes to the early learning system as a whole. Conversely, a majority of states identify as one of

their key challenges for 2016 the implementation of CCDBG changes without additional federal funding to avoid cutting services to children.

- **Preschool Expansion.** Building on another federal program, several states are working to expand access to high-quality preschool programs through implementation of Preschool Development/Expansion Grant awards. States like California, Michigan and Oregon, which recently invested millions of state funds in preschool programs, need to monitor the rollout, whereas others like Massachusetts are still moving toward comprehensive preschool expansion legislation.
- **Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health.** There has been a groundswell of support and acknowledgement of the importance of a child's social-emotional development at every level and a number of states have highlighted it as priority. Colorado, Illinois, and Wisconsin aim to improve access to early childhood mental health consultation systems and models and the Maine Children's Growth Council (MCGC) is analyzing the prevalence of suspension and expulsion in the state. Through this analysis MCGC is also developing recommendations to strengthen professional development offerings and a range of other supports to early childhood professionals, parenting education, and strategies to strengthen collaboration between community-based early childhood programs and public schools to promote healthy social emotional development of young children from birth to age eight.
- **Home Visiting Financing.** A number of states are investigating the use of Medicaid funds to support evidence-based home visiting models including California, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Oregon.

States have the opportunity to make advancements in these and other pressing areas with the invaluable support of state and local level early care and education champions, growing support from the local business community, and the prospect of 2015 and 2016 state elections and leadership change at multiple levels. Nevertheless, unstable state budgets and slowly recovering state economies remain as huge obstacles for the field. Sustaining adequate revenue to support these vital investments is problematic as states like Arizona and Kansas face declining tobacco tax funds, Colorado battles tax limitations, Illinois recovers from a sunset on its temporary income tax increase and Nebraska voters and legislators support property tax decreases. Additionally, other states note the increasing pressure to fund other state priorities, especially where state budgets are affected by the pending sunset of federal grant programs like the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC).

In addition to advocating for birth-to-three priorities, a number of states and local areas are working toward connecting early childhood programs and services to K-12 education. Examples include the P-3 Leadership Cadre that the Colorado Department of Education established to provide opportunities for school leadership teams to learn from national and state experts and one another about effective P-3 systems, and a partnership between the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), the Atlanta Public Schools, and others to develop a comprehensive strategic plan to ensure children enter elementary school prepared for success, including improved alignment of resources, standards, curricula, and professional development throughout the local early childhood system. Many states and communities are also participating in the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

ARIZONA

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Engage in policy development related to the recently reauthorized Child Care Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG).
- Implement a geospatial data system and its subsequent public rollout.
- Develop a coordinated data system for home visiting partners in the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program.
- Develop recommendations for continuous improvement of the Quality Rating Improvement System model, including financing.
- Develop a statewide common referral form and data system for early identification of developmental delays.
- Ongoing development of the Kindergarten Developmental Inventory, Arizona's Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Continue to develop public-private partnerships.
- Create a more robust early childhood system coalition regionally and nationally to support early childhood development and health.

State Budget Updates

- Cut \$11 million out of the Department of Child Safety (DCS) budget, although there is a backlog in investigation of child abuse and neglect cases.
- Reduced the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program cash assistance lifetime benefit cap from 24 months to 12 months.
- Zeroed out state general fund dollars for the child care subsidy.
- Swept housing-assistance funds and youth treatment funds.
- Cut \$146 million from K-12 schools and charter schools.
- ✕ Budget cut health care payment rates to doctors, hospitals and ambulances, but included a provision for governor's discretion. Governor's office chose to not implement rate reductions at this time.

Recent Policy Changes

- P** **Department of Child Safety:** HB 2098 strengthens confidentiality provisions and allows DCS to use electronic notifications. Requires DCS to explore the

capacity of private entities to help the state address the backlog of inactive cases of child abuse and neglect.

Tuition Waiver for Former Foster Youths: HB 2022 fixes a glitch in the Tuition Waiver Pilot Program for former foster youths that was shutting out students who transferred from community colleges to state universities. Now more foster youth alumni have an opportunity at a college education because they can qualify for a tuition waiver up to age 23.

Public Disclosure of Child Abuse and Neglect Cases: HB 2166 clarifies and expands the information DCS must provide to the public in cases of fatalities or near fatalities due to child abuse, abandonment or neglect. Specifically, the information to be released includes prior reports and services concerning the child, a member of the child's family or the person suspected of the child fatality or near fatality. Prior to this change, information was released only when there was prior DCS involvement with a direct history between that same child and that same alleged perpetrator.

Affordable Care Act, State Agency Restrictions: HB 2643 prohibits all state agencies from using personnel or financial resources to enforce, administer or cooperate with provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As introduced, it would have affected grants administered through the ACA, such as MIECHV. By working with the Senate, the governor's office and other state agencies secured an amendment to exempt grants administered through the ACA.

Teledentistry Services: SB 1282 allows the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, Arizona's Medicaid agency, to implement mobile off-site teledentistry services for enrolled members who are younger than 21.

Policy Opportunities

- Increased public and state policymaker awareness of First Things First and how it serves as the foundation for the early childhood system in Arizona.
- Continuing to explore public-private partnerships as one of the keys to the long-term sustainability of First Things First.

Policy Challenges

- Retention of tobacco tax revenues dedicated to the early childhood system.
- Increased demand on limited resources given state cuts in other programs that also impact the birth-to-five demographic.
- Concern over the increased public discourse on the need for additional funding in the K-12 system and the ability to include early childhood issues as a component in this discussion.

Contact Information

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CALIFORNIA

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Focus on access, affordability and quality of early learning programs with a particular emphasis on infants and toddlers in all three priority areas.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Continue to engage state agencies and policymakers on the new Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) requirements and the significant implementation challenges many of the provisions present for California.
- Build early care and education (ECE) infrastructure components and systems to support quality. The adoption of several one-time investments in the fiscal year 2016 state budget, in addition to several proposals considered by the legislature, lay the foundation for next year's policy priorities. These include:
 - A one-time Infant-Toddler QRIS grant to coordinate Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) efforts, State Preschool QRIS block grant consortia, and First 5 California IMPACT (Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive) program participants to increase quality for infant-toddler child care environments. County-level consortia will use this funding for professional development, training, technical assistance and other resources to support infant-toddler care providers within local QRIS systems.
 - Enhancing the statewide consumer education database and website to include required information such as additional public information to assist consumers with child care searches and accessing additional public benefits.
 - Continuing to build from the budget approval that moved inspection of child care facilities from the previous frequency of every five years to three years, with the goal of moving toward annual inspections.
- Launched First 5 IMPACT, the largest state investment in local continuous quality improvement infrastructure, to increase the number of high-quality early learning and care settings across California and support and engage families in early learning processes. First 5 IMPACT builds on the RTT-ELC Framework and First 5 California's current and historical program investments in order to build and strengthen a network of local QRIS systems that better coordinate, implement and evaluate early learning programs. First 5 IMPACT also creates pathways for counties/regions to enter the initiative at various stages based on local readiness via supports for quality improvements and systems.

State Budget Updates

The ECE advocacy community worked closely with the Legislative Women's Caucus and California State Assembly Democrats to secure over \$300 million in the FY2016 budget. Over the past two years, \$600 million in early childhood funding has been restored and reinvested of the \$1 billion lost in ECE funding during five years of the recession.

Access—Increased spaces in existing preschool and early learning programs

- \$53 million for 6,800 new Alternative Payment Program (vouchers for low-income, working families).
- \$46.3 million for 9,530 additional preschool spaces:
 - \$34.3 million for 7,030 full-day preschool slots, of which: 5,830 are designated for Local Education Agencies funded with Proposition 98 education funds for K-12 schools and community colleges, and 1,200 are for nonprofits funded with a combination of education and state General Fund.
 - \$12.1 million for 2,500 part-day preschool slots with a priority for children with exceptional needs.
- \$30 million for the Early Education Program for Infants and Toddlers with Exceptional Needs.
- \$2.4 million augmentation to the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant to provide access for 260 additional infants and toddlers in 11 northern rural counties.



Affordability—Increase to reimbursement rates to support providers across settings

- \$61 million to increase the Standard Reimbursement Rate by 5%.
- \$44 million to increase the Regional Market Reimbursement Rate by 4.5%.
- \$6 million to increase the part-day California State Preschool Program (CSPP) rate by 1% to support parent engagement and teacher preparation.
- \$19 million to provide a 1.02% COLA to early care and education programs that are not part of the California CalWORKs program.
- \$18 million to increase license-exempt rates to 65% of the family child care home rate from the current rate of 60%.



Quality—One-time investments to support quality improvement efforts

- \$24.2 million for QRIS grants to improve quality in programs serving infants and toddlers.
- \$300,000 to resource and referral agencies to improve data collection efficiency (funded with 2015–2016 federal CCDBG funds).



The Assembly's final budget included proposals to support one-time professional development resources to ECE professionals, as well as the quality and sustainability of Community College ECE programs and early learning laboratory schools, but they were not included in the final signed budget.



A proposal that any increased Alternative Payment Program slots be prioritized for infants and toddlers was not approved.



A request that the state require annual inspections of child care facilities was not included in the final budget. Assembly Bill (AB) 74 included this change but was vetoed by the governor.



Recent Policy Changes

Full-Day Pre-K Funding Change: The budget bill amends the education code to specify that all funding for the full-day state preschool program appropriated to Local Education Agencies is part of the K-12 and community college Proposition 98 education funding. Between 2011 and 2014, only part-day preschool was funded inside the Proposition 98 guarantee while “wraparound care” that was layered onto part-day preschool was funded through the General Fund. This policy change shifts \$145 million for current wraparound care dollars to Proposition 98 education funds.

Transitional Kindergarten (TK): The budget clarified the education policy and statute that districts may enroll 4-year-olds in TK programs at the start of the school year as long as the student turns 5 years old within the school year. Districts will need to use local funding to pay for the “Expanded TK” before students turn 5 and then draw down Average Daily Attendance (ADA) state funding after their fifth birthdays.

CCDBG Reauthorization: In acknowledgment of the forthcoming new CCDBG requirements and the need for a multiyear strategy, the 2015–2016 state budget includes:

- \$2.9 million in carryover federal quality improvement funds to be directed toward CCDBG compliance.
- \$300,000 in new funding toward a consumer education website and database of child care providers with links to family resources that provides timely and individualized information to parents.
- A requirement for the Department of Social Services to conduct inspections once every three years for child care facilities, which is a step toward meeting the annual inspection provision. New licensing staff to address the backlog of cases and expanded training and technical assistance were also funded.

Preschool Expansion Grant: Senate Bill (SB) 101 was signed into law to clarify implementation of the state’s adopted budget. One piece of the bill broadens the definition of an underserved area for the purposes of the state Preschool Expansion Grant process to include areas where the ratio of publicly subsidized child care and development program services to the relative need for these services is low, as well as areas where the overall number of eligible children without access to these services is high as determined by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Early Care Licensing: AB 762 extends the Toddler Component licensing option from 30 months to 36 months to enable child care providers to more effectively align their toddler programs with their infant and preschool programs.

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Transitional Kindergarten (TK): AB 47 would codify in statute the legislature's commitment to give all eligible children who do not have access to TK, the state preschool program before they enter kindergarten if their parents wish to enroll them. This bill builds on last budget year's commitment from the governor and legislature to expand the state preschool program for all low-income 4-year-olds. Governor Jerry Brown vetoed this bill, stating that this issue should be discussed as part of the budget process.
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Child Care Annual Inspections: AB 74, a bill sponsored by the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network to conduct annual inspections of child care centers and family child care homes, was passed by the legislature but vetoed by the governor because of the cost.
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CalWORKs Maximum Family Restriction: SB 23 would rescind the Maximum Family Grant rule in the Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program by prohibiting the denial of aid or an increase in the maximum aid payment for a child born into the family of a CalWORKs recipient. The budget deal initially contained a repeal of the Maximum Family Grant; however, it was stripped out during the negotiation process. SB 23 will likely be reconsidered in 2016 and is currently on the Assembly Floor Inactive File.

Policy Opportunities

- The Speaker of the Assembly could be cultivated as a champion of child care.
- Elections and potential ballot initiatives in 2016.
- Strong relationships with legislators and champions built over time.

Policy Challenges

- Lack of new funding to implement the CCDBG requirements by the federal deadlines should no new federal funding be made available to states.
- Lack of funding to expand access to and quality of infant-toddler care to meet high demand.
- Dedicating resources to fund the true cost of quality services, starting with the drastically low provider reimbursement rates.

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COLORADO

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Complete the implementation of reforms to the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) as informed by the 2014 state legislation and the recently reauthorized Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), and expand access to quality child care with new investments in CCCAP.
- Build state capacity to expand preschool and full-day kindergarten, with a particular focus on sustainability of funding.
- Work to ensure a healthy start for all of Colorado's children, with a particular focus on mental health and social-emotional development.
- Promote policy change and increased funding to support families with young children, including supports for informal caregivers.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Increasing access to behavioral health supports in primary care settings.
- Improving the healthy eating and active living offerings in early learning settings.
- Improving access to developmental screening and referral systems and early childhood mental health consultation models to support the healthy development of young children.
- Expanding access to resources for families experiencing the income cliff in the state child care subsidy program.
- Addressing obstacles for accessing child care for vulnerable children and families, including those in foster care, families experiencing homelessness and children of teen parents.
- Tracking data on and decreasing the utilization of suspension and expulsion in early learning settings.
- Addressing Colorado's fiscal and constitutional constraints to increasing access to quality early learning, including child care and preschool.
- Assisting with the development of a final rules package for the CCCAP reforms and ensuring effective and efficient implementation.

State Budget Updates

- ⊕ \$6.7 million increase to the child care subsidy program, including new investments for policy changes, income cliff effect mitigation and provider rate increases.
- ⊕ \$338,200 to establish a new microloan program to increase access to child care in rural and underserved areas.
- ⊕ \$250,000 for grants to improve the health, safety and quality of Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care and, ultimately, increase the supply of licensed, family child care in underserved communities.

- 
 \$750,000 to improve the coordination and provision of family support services, including those primarily offered through Colorado’s Family Resource Centers.
- 
 \$306 million increase in K-12 spending, including targeted resources for at-risk children.
- 
 \$1.2 million targeted to increasing access to immunizations through local public health offices and modifications to Colorado’s immunization information system that will help families and providers ensure children are up to date on their vaccinations.
- 
 \$3.7 million investment in early intervention services to address rapidly growing caseload demands.
- 
 30-day grace period for the Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) Enrollment would have allowed families to be enrolled immediately and have a grace period to pay the enrollment fee.

Recent Policy Changes

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Pay for Success (PFS): House Bill (HB) 15-1317 established a PFS financing program in Colorado. The authorizing legislation permits the state to enter into PFS contracts to open the door to new investments in early childhood and prevention-oriented health services for vulnerable children and families.

Student Assessment: HB 15-1323 was a final bipartisan compromise that protected school readiness assessments and early literacy requirements and streamlined the system to reduce the burden on educators and programs. The legislature initially introduced 11 bills related to student assessments, some of which would have eliminated or weakened Colorado’s seven-year effort to implement school readiness assessments for all students entering kindergarten programs. School readiness assessments allow educators and families to monitor a child’s learning and developmental process across domains and are a valuable tool to inform instruction and policy change and investment strategies.
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Child Care Schedule Decoupling: The state adopted administrative rules and state agency business practices that decouple children’s schedules from their parents’ schedules for those enrolled in the child care subsidy program, ensuring that approved hours for child care are not linked to parents’ employment, education or training schedules.
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Child Care 12 Month Authorization: The state adopted administrative rules ensuring at least 12-month authorizations (in addition to at least 12-month eligibility periods).

- Child Care Safety Rules:** The state adopted safe sleep and emergency preparedness rules for all child care facilities that require significant changes to address issues around infant mortality and childhood safety.
- Child Care Income Eligibility:** Adopted annualized income for eligibility determinations for access to Medicaid (rather than the use of the prior month's income).
- Child Care Center Regulation:** New drafted state rules for child care centers focus on improving health, safety, nutrition, anti-obesity strategies and social-emotional development of children. The rules will be the subject of public hearings and should be adopted later this calendar year.
- Child Care Health and Safety:** SB15-070 proposed eliminating all regulations governing all family child care homes in Colorado and some child care centers serving fewer than 10 children but was defeated during the session. This includes regulations requiring criminal background checks, training requirements, sex-offender-registry requirements, and child abuse and neglect record checks.

Policy Opportunities

- The collaborative work of the CCCAP Task Force has created a new effective model for comprehensive reform that engages all stakeholders in the process.
- Recent reforms to major federal funding sources, including CCDBG and proposed revisions to Head Start standards, provided opportunities for collaborative and progressive conversations focused on policy and regulatory changes to the early childhood system.
- Increased interest in mental health across sectors and interest groups will provide opportunities for policy and regulatory change in the next year.
- Though the split party legislature does present challenges, it also ensures that any policy or budget decisions must have strong bipartisan support in order to pass.
- Several large-scale efforts to create shared messaging campaigns around parent engagement and toxic stress are in development, which will create a stronger and more unified voice for early childhood statewide.

Policy Challenges

- The state is facing budgetary constraints going into the next legislative year, particularly because of provisions of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR), which limits the amount of revenue the state can take in, as well as a state constitutional amendment mandating increases in K-12 spending every year.
- Partisan disagreements in the state legislature in combination with the 2016 elections are starting to overshadow a historical bipartisan commitment to addressing the needs of young children.

- In order to ensure effective and efficient implementation of recent large-scale reforms to Colorado’s early childhood system, the state will need to foster more collaborative work between stakeholder groups, including state and local government, county administrators, nonprofits and advocacy organizations.
- Deep commitment to local control presents challenges to develop greater statewide consistency in policies and implementation.

Contact Information

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FLORIDA

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Increase early learning program funding to ensure children's access to programs that support low-income working families and children's readiness for and success in school:
 - \$85 million increase in School Readiness Program recurring funds to address deficiencies in current payment rates and implement performance funding based on early learning educational standards associated with positive learning outcomes.
 - Restore the Base Student Allocation for Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program to the prerecession level of \$2,677, aligned to quality benchmarks to improve kindergarten readiness and later school success.
 - \$10 million to increase T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to support practitioners in the attainment of the Child Development Associate credential.
 - \$1 million to develop a professional development registry to define career pathways tied to credentials, certifications and qualifications, as well as to track training and provide quality assurance.
 - \$4 million to expand the Help Me Grow Network to reach additional Florida communities with enhanced referrals and resources to assist families with connecting at-risk children with the services they need.
 - \$3 million to continue targeted professional development for early learning practitioners.
- Amend the early learning statute for School Readiness to meet Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization requirements regarding:
 - Health and Safety: Include explicit standards for the health, safety and well-being of children in all publicly funded programs.
 - Eligibility: Revise requirements regarding eligibility redetermination, job seeking, and stepped-down assistance.
 - Quality Child Care: Create a statewide registry for professional development and increase the number of qualified teachers.
- Support the Office of Early Learning rulemaking authority to:
 - Develop a tiered-payment structure for early learning with education-based performance standards (including professional development, CLASS and a curriculum-based assessment) to enhance the private business model of early learning and ensure accountability of public funds.
 - Allow early learning coalitions to establish differential-rate contracts with high-quality early learning programs in high-poverty areas to increase family access to quality early learning programs.

- Expand eligibility for Florida KidCare, the state’s children’s health insurance program, by removing the five-year wait for children of lawfully residing immigrants.
- Improve outcomes for infants and toddlers in child welfare through baby court and linkage with early childhood systems.
- Expand eligibility for Early Steps and maximize the impact of early intervention for children with developmental delays or other disabilities.
- Promote a medical home and health care for all children, and the use of mental health services, especially for maternal/paternal depression and infant mental health.
- Support economic policies that promote self-sufficient parents through access to job training and education, the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other tax credits.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Implement a “First 1000 Days” communications plan and strategy to increase public awareness about the need for cross-system alignment of social services for comprehensive systems of care for young children and families.
- Coordinate the work and develop shared resources that result in more effective public policy efforts among early childhood advocates and stakeholders.

State Budget Updates

-  Additional \$5 million in recurring funding for the School Readiness program (to increase the number of children served).
-  \$13 million increase in Early Steps program (early screening and intervention services).
-  \$1.5 million increase to the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program.
-  \$2.5 million increase for Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPPY).
-  \$10.5 million funded for the Early Learning Performance Funding Project.
-  \$3.9 million increase for Healthy Families (home visiting).
-  Cut Health Start (pre-natal services) by \$807,000 and vetoed \$497,500 in Nurse-Family Partnership funds.
-  The per-student amount for VPK stayed the same (\$2,437 per child), but the total VPK budget decreased by \$6.8 million because of a projected decrease in enrollment (decline in the number of 4-year-olds in 2015–16).
-  Proposed \$30 million for the School Readiness program.

- ✘ Requested \$4 million (a \$2 million increase) for Help Me Grow (parent information and referral) but funded at \$1.8 million.
- ✘ Proposed increase in VPK per-student funding to \$3,000 per child.

Recent Policy Changes

- ✘ **Health and Safety:** Due to the untimely adjournment of the 2015 Florida legislative session, the Early Learning Health and Safety policy bill died.

Policy Opportunities

- Federal CCDBG reauthorization requirements present an opportunity to address health, safety, quality and continuity of care by amending Florida early learning statutes.
- The Florida Chamber of Commerce has launched a Business Alliance for Early Learning that is engaging the state's business leaders in discussions on the critical importance of early childhood development.
- The "First 1000 Days" initiative brings together home visiting, early learning, child welfare, early intervention, family support and other entities focused on the prenatal, infant and toddler years. The Florida Children and Youth Cabinet has adopted this as a focus area.

Policy Challenges

- There is a lack of consistent standards for monitoring the health and safety of children for licensed and non-licensed facilities that receive public funds.
- Florida law has not established minimum expectations for program delivery for publicly funded child care programs.
- Low provider payment rates and low salary scales for early learning teachers result in limited professional development opportunities.
- Florida accountability requirements have been poorly conceived and will likely lead to poor feedback. Additionally, as currently implemented, the requirements have imposed onerous burdens on providers and created an unfunded mandate.
- Close to \$100 million was cut from early childhood programs over the past decade.

Contact Information

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GEORGIA

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Advocate for passage of recommendations of governor's subcommittee on early education funding, which are expected to include:
 - Additional lottery funds for Georgia Pre-K to be used for reducing class size and increasing teacher pay;
 - Increased state funds for child care subsidies to be used for enhanced tiered reimbursement rates for Quality Rated Centers.
 - A package of refundable tax credits for parents, providers and teachers tied to child care quality; and
 - State funds for a public awareness campaign.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Continue partnership with the Harvard Center on the Developing Child to explore new strategies to address social-emotional development and learning.
- Manage the creation and implementation of the public awareness campaign for Quality Rated that will be launched in spring 2016.
- Continue convening a work group on child care affordability.
- Work with the Department of Early Care and Learning as it begins planning to implement Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization changes.
- Work as part of the leadership of Georgia's grade level reading campaign.
- Monitor the development and implementation of the state's kindergarten readiness assessment.

State Budget Updates



Increase in budget to restore two planning days for teachers, which raised the salaries by approximately 1%. There was also an increase in funding for a teacher salary increase, but assistant- and lead-teacher salaries remain low.



Increase in funding to expand the Pre-K Summer Transition Program.

Recent Policy Changes



Education Reform Commission: The governor convened an Education Reform Commission with a special early education subcommittee. The recommendations of the commission will be released in December 2015.



Child Welfare: Legislation passed that enacts some of the recommendations from the governor's Child Welfare Reform Council. The bill allows the governor to appoint and have direct oversight of the director of the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), establishes the DFCS State Advisory

Board, addresses interagency sharing of data for the protection of children and creates a central child abuse registry.

P Kinship Care: A study committee has been created on grandparents raising grandchildren and kinship care.

P Medical Marijuana: Haleigh's Hope Act permits any patient or caregiver who resides in Georgia to possess or have under his or her control 20 fluid ounces or less of low THC oil, which can be used for those diagnosed with cancer, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, seizure disorders, multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, mitochondrial disease, fibromyalgia, Parkinson's disease or sickle cell disease.

P Background Checks and Funding Sources: Governor Nathan Deal signed HB 401, a Department of Early Care and Learning "Clean Up Bill" that clarifies definitions, sets standards for fingerprint record checks as they pertain to support centers and changes in ownership, and allows the agency to solicit and accept funds from outside sources.

Policy Opportunities

- The Georgia Department of Public Health Commissioner will convene a work group, the Brain Trust, which is exploring advocacy, policy, public awareness and research activities to ensure healthy development of children from birth-to-five.
- The Georgia Department of Education's new Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Caitlin McMunn Dooley, comes from Georgia State University's College of Education & Human Development. Her expertise in literacy and early childhood has already led her to begin developing a literacy plan for the department that relies on a P-3 approach.
- The governor's subcommittee on early education funding provides a policy platform for funding and advocacy.
- Creative funding of subsidy grants to quality centers in the Early Education Enterprise Zones may provide models for funding in the rest of the state.
- A new economic impact study on ECE provides strong data for advocates.

Policy Challenges

- As college costs rise, the state lottery, which funds Georgia Pre-K and the Hope Scholarship for college, will face increasing demands, and legislators may feel that they have to make decisions between funding the two.
- Child care subsidies are not adequately funded and therefore there is a freeze on new applications in certain areas of the state due to funding shortfalls, and the current subsidy rates are far below market rates across the state.

Contact Information

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ILLINOIS

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Creation of the state plan to implement new Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization changes.
- Continue efforts to build a unified data system as part of the state's Longitudinal Data System, including this year's successful test project of creating an unduplicated count of children enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and Preschool for All (PFA).
- Continued focus on ensuring that early childhood programs and services are designed and implemented to support the highest-need children and families. Specific efforts include establishing new eligibility and enrollment guidelines for the Preschool Expansion Grant and consideration of new strategies to ensure that the state's Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) can be better leveraged to support high-need children.
- Development and implementation of a statewide system of mental health consultation and supports embedded across the early childhood system.
- Continued development of a home visiting managed care pilot, as well as a state Medicaid plan amendment addressing Medicaid reimbursement for home visiting services.

State Budget Updates

A bipartisan fiscal year 2015 midyear budget agreement was enacted that:

-  Resolved a major funding shortfall in CCAP, as well as in Early Intervention (EI) and a number of other state services.
-  Enacted largely across-the-board 2.25% cuts to many programs, including the ECBG and home visiting programs.

The governor's FY2016 proposed budget contained:

-  \$25 million increase to the ECBG, a portion of the amount proposed to the federal government in Illinois' Preschool Expansion Grant application;
-  Level funding for home visiting programs in the Department of Human Services; and
-  Significant program changes and cuts to CCAP and EI. For CCAP, these included freezing intake for children older than 6, eliminating subsidies for child care provided by relative caregivers and increasing family copayments. For EI, the changes included restricting eligibility by increasing the disability threshold from 30% demonstrated delay in a child's development to 50%.

The General Assembly passed a “spending framework” that is based on about \$3 billion more in revenue than what is available to the state. It includes:

- ✘ \$25 million increase in the ECBG.
- ✘ Funding at sufficient levels for CCAP and EI to avoid the proposed policy changes; however, only EI eligibility is protected in statute, and therefore there are policy changes the governor can make without legislative approval.
- ✘ Funding for the Department of Human Services-funded home visiting programs at slightly reduced final fiscal year 2015 levels, which could be a concern with Maternal, Infants, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Maintenance of Effort requirements, depending on implementation.

The governor subsequently vetoed every bill making up the “spending framework” with the exception of a bill providing P-12 funding (however, he also vetoed the bill providing operating funds for the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), which administers the funds in the bill he approved). Currently there is no final FY2016 state budget, as the governor has said he will not agree to the additional revenue needed until other reforms he’s proposed are enacted, despite the fact that the new fiscal year began July 1. Most services are still functioning at some level, however, there have been some layoffs, scaled-back operations and a tremendous amount of uncertainty about when providers might be paid and how much contracts will be.

- ✘ The P-12 funding bill that was approved included a portion of a \$25.3 million restoration of cuts to the ECBG (\$4.5 million of the increase was in the vetoed ISBE operational budget). Infant-toddler programs will be restored to their last peak funding level in FY2011 and receive a COLA. Preschool programs will be restored nearly to their FY2011 levels. Birth-to-three programs were prioritized for the additional funds because of a statutorily required increase to those programs when overall early childhood appropriations are increased.

Because of court order, some state funding is flowing to child care homes and centers, EI and certain home visiting programs. Legislation enacted has also allowed for federal dollars to flow, allowing payments to many service providers where there is a mix of General Revenue Fund (GRF) and federal dollars. However, because other funds aren’t flowing, and access is severely restricted to child care assistance, many early care and education providers are struggling to stay open, and others are employing other cost-saving measures like hiring freezes, restricted hours and services and reduced professional development opportunities.

Recent Policy Changes

- P **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP):** The governor announced the following changes to CCAP in response to the current budget stalemate:

- Highly restricted eligibility requirements, which have closed eligibility to 90% of potential applicants,
- Increase in family copayments,
- Instituting criminal background checks for relative caregivers (child-abuse checks already in place), and
- Requiring compliance with child support in order to receive CCAP.

Those changes went into effect July 1 and are having a negative impact on the early learning system. Most problematic is the restriction of eligibility to four priority categories: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, teen parents, children with special needs and families below 50% of the federal poverty level. Other new applicants are being denied. Families in the system as of July 1 remain eligible under the previous rules, however, if they fall out of the system for more than 30 days, they will be treated as new applicants and subject to the new restriction. This is particularly problematic as programs struggle to enroll new children to replace those transitioning to kindergarten. In the first two weeks of this change, more than 2,000 families were denied services and had to end employment and abandon higher education plans. It is estimated that as many as 90% of the caseloads are not eligible under the new restrictions, effectively shutting down any intake into CCAP. It is also clear that the changes are having a chilling impact on clients' decisions to even apply, with application numbers already below 2015 levels.



Child Care Health and Safety: Beginning in 2016, all licensed child care providers that care for children under age 6 will be required to have proof that each employee has received one dose of the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) vaccine, and two doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine or show proof of immunity to MMR.



Child Care Reauthorization Implementation: The state is working on its plan to implement CCDBG changes.



Preschool Expansion: Eighteen communities across the state are preparing to open classrooms funded through the Preschool Expansion Grant; four classrooms opened last spring.



QRIS: Illinois' QRIS system, ExceleRate, is going to be rolled out to family child care in spring 2016.



Home Visiting: A proposal for home visitor Medicaid certification training is with the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services.



Health: The state is beginning implementation on a comprehensive set of health recommendations that includes the roles that early care and education providers can play in promoting and supporting health among children in their care. Illinois Department of Public Health prioritized the relationship between health and early childhood providers in its Title V plan

and is partnering with early childhood advocates on implementation strategies.



Bilingual: The Illinois State Board of Education moved to delay until July 1, 2016, requirements that some Preschool for All teachers hold a Bilingual/ESL Endorsement in addition to the already required teacher's license with an Early Childhood Endorsement.

Policy Opportunities

- Leveraging federal funding opportunities for program expansion and statewide system building efforts.
- Groundswell of public and legislative support for programs under attack, such as CCAP and EI.
- Planning for recompetition of the state's ECBG for FY2017 and FY2018 and opportunities to influence for improvements.
- Continuing allied effort among human services providers and others for shared need for new state revenue.
- Preparing for implementation of regional hubs to support communities to better coordinate across systems and to more effectively leverage resources for families with children from birth through age five to receive the services and supports they need to be successful in school and in life.

Policy Challenges

- Partisan entrenchment in the General Assembly and with the governor.
- The state budget impasse.
- Budget situation creating bifurcation within early childhood between education-funded and human services-funded programs; for many years, efforts had been undertaken to move the system forward in a complementary way.
- Obstacles to sustainability of the Early Learning Council and system changes being designed and implemented under federal grants.

Contact Information

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IOWA

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Restore funding to Early Childhood Iowa.
- Expand Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP) to additional low-income children.
- Strengthen the child care subsidy by increasing eligibility to at least 160 percent of poverty and raising reimbursement rates.
- Incorporate additional provisions within managed and accountable care activities under Medicaid to promote comprehensive, preventive services that respond to social as well as biomedical determinants of health.
- Promote achieving school readiness for all children and closing disparities and inequities as a priority for the Iowa General Assembly.

State Budget Updates

-  General Assembly enacted an increase in the child care subsidy eligibility to 150% of poverty, but the governor vetoed it. This additional funding provided remained in the final budget and is being examined for its use in responding to new requirements under federal CCDBG requirements.
-  General Assembly expanded 1st Five to 22 additional counties through increased appropriations (awaiting governor's signature).
-  General Assembly did not establish structure for redirecting SVPP ending balances for use in expanding preschool in other districts, but this is being pursued for next session.

Recent Policy Changes

-  **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES):** The General Assembly established a working group to further review the impact of ACEs in Iowa and to propose policies that can prevent or mitigate the impact of such experiences. This working group is now meeting and has one subcommittee working on responses to mental health issues and trauma, primarily for older children, and one subcommittee working on wellness and preventing or mitigating the impact of trauma/stress, with greater emphasis on young children and their families.

Policy Opportunities

- There is growing recognition of the importance of early childhood to lifelong health and development (educational, social-emotional/behavioral/mental and social) and the potential to construct a more powerful agenda promote this.

- The state has a very strong home visiting component, and the ability to develop community solutions through Early Childhood Iowa lends itself to making investments in strengthening families from a protective factors framework.
- Iowa is a leader in developing health practitioners as first responders to social determinants of health through 1st Five and other efforts.

Policy Challenges

- The governor's thrust and priorities (similar to many General Assembly members) revolves around cutting the size of government and providing additional tax breaks and other incentives for economic development. As a result, most health, human service, poverty reduction, social justice, and early childhood advocates are in a defensive mode and not able to move actively for needed new investments.
- The current limited capacity of the collective groups advocating for young children and their families results in a small lobbying presence and reduced ability for community networking, coalition building and grassroots mobilization needed to provide some political power and accountability.
- Infant and toddler investments are minimal, and there is division in the field on the most effective approach for supporting families.

Contact Information

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- Sheila Hansen, Director, Every Child Counts-Advocacy Initiative of CFPC, shansen@cfpciowa.org.

KANSAS

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Strengthen child care rules and regulations and improve Child Care Assistance (CCA) policy.
- Modify the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program's policies and procedures to advance revisions to the recently passed HOPE Act.
- Protect funding for early childhood programs financed through the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) and retain the state's portion of tobacco settlement dollars for funding children's programs.
- Protect the state's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Improve access to and quality of child care for all children through the opportunity created by the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), focusing on strategies such as convening stakeholders, the development and dissemination of a child care workforce study, regulatory change and strategic communications.
- Strengthen 12-month continuous eligibility and graduated phase-out of child care assistance.
- Advance revisions to the recently passed HOPE Act which limited eligibility for child care assistance.
- Identify new public and/or private revenue sources to fill an anticipated long-term funding gap for early childhood programs beginning in fiscal year 2018, in light of the depletion of the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund, as well as declining tobacco settlement payments.
- Build on recently implemented model of grassroots advocacy in Kansas, called regional field organizers, to mobilize support for early childhood investments.

State Budget Updates



\$51.2 million approved in funding for early care and education programs from the CIF, which fully funds programs at existing levels. The governor had recommended reducing funding through the CIF to \$49.1 million.



\$14.5 million was swept from the KEY Fund in the current fiscal year, and \$17.7 million in fiscal years 2016 and 2017. The sweeps result in a \$141,000 ending balance in the KEY Fund. In total, the legislature has swept almost \$200 million from the fund. If the money had been invested consistently as promised, the earnings would have resulted in at least \$365 million in available resources for early childhood programs.



An approved budget amendment stipulates if payment to Kansas from the tobacco settlement is less than expected, the state will be required to backfill funding from the State General Fund to programs supported by the CIF.



A legislative committee agreed to eliminate all CIF funding for Kansas Parents as Teachers. After strong pushback from early childhood and education advocates, the committee reversed this decision.



For the third time in four years, legislation was introduced to significantly reduce the state's EITC from 17% to 8% of the federal EITC and make it nonrefundable. The bill was never considered in a hearing, and changes weakening the EITC were left out of the legislature's final tax package after advocate education efforts. Over 282,000 Kansas children live in families that benefit from the EITC.

Recent Policy Changes



The Hope Act: Legislation codified administrative policy that had been in place, creating significant reforms to the TANF program, the CCA program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and took effect July 1, 2015. The law reduces lifetime eligibility for TANF to 36 months, establishes progressive sanctions to TANF and CCA for failure to comply with child support requirements, and establishes work requirements for parents receiving CCA without TANF.



School Funding Formula: After multiple court cases regarding the adequacy of state funding to schools, the legislature repealed the existing finance formula for K-12 education and established block grants to districts for the biennial budget, with the intention of creating a new finance formula in the near future. The block grants were rejected by a three-judge panel, and a temporary stay of the block grants was put into place while the case awaits review by the Kansas Supreme Court.

Policy Opportunities

- The requirements of CCDBG reauthorization for the state plan and updating regulations provide a valuable opportunity to improve child care and early learning quality and access. Despite the absence of the lead state agency, other stakeholders—ranging from home- and center-based providers to higher education instructors, as well as representatives of Head Start and the state education department—have demonstrated enthusiastic engagement. Additionally, Kansas leads in a few key areas of CCDBG reauthorization that present challenges to other states: Currently nearly all child care providers in the state are licensed and inspected, and providers receive thorough preservice training. This allows the state to focus on other opportunities, such as reversing a downward trend in child care subsidies and better aligning various aspects of the early education system.

- Republican Senator Jim Denning introduced a key early childhood proviso during the state budget negotiations. Should payment from the tobacco settlement (the primary funding source for the KEY Fund) be less than expected, the proviso stipulates that the state will backfill those dollars from the State General Fund. The proviso was championed by Senator Denning and supported during floor debate by Republican Senator Ty Masterson, chair of the Senate Ways & Means Committee. With their support, the proviso passed unanimously in the Senate.
- Investment in early childhood has a growing support from and action by business leaders. This support is important and valuable in the current political environment as state leaders champion policies with the goal of recruiting and supporting businesses in Kansas.

Policy Challenges

- Following unprecedented tax policy changes in 2012 and 2013, the state faces a historic reduction in revenue, making all special revenue funds vulnerable, including those dedicated to young children. Kansas' annual tobacco settlement payment—revenue dedicated to programs for young children in Kansas—will decrease in FY2018. Because the KEY Fund has been nearly depleted, the state will not likely have the resources needed to maintain vital investments in young children at that time.
- The current political environment in Kansas is such that key state agencies have not demonstrated a willingness to partner with child advocates or to seek stakeholder engagement in revising the state's child care rules and regulations in preparation for submitting Kansas' revised state plan in March 2016 as part of CCDBG reauthorization. Despite repeated attempts at engagement, advocates' invitations to partner with and/or include key agency staff members have been declined.
- The current economic climate in Kansas does not encourage public investments in programs that support young children or vulnerable families. Early childhood advocates are challenged in efforts to influence policymakers about the value of these programs to the future of our state.

Contact Information

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LOUISIANA

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Implement new policies for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) that would double the amount of public funding paid per child, reduce parent copays and change the eligibility requirements to ensure continuity of care for children.
- Implement contracting for at least a portion of CCAP slots in blocks to facilitate an adequate supply of high-quality care.
- Establish a Louisiana Early Childhood Business Roundtable to engage the business community in supporting early care and education in the state.
- Build support for increased investments that expand access to high-quality early care and education for vulnerable young children in Louisiana with the new governor, new and incumbent legislators, and new Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) members who will take office in January 2016.
- Collaborate with the state Department of Education and the BESE in the development of a report defining specific funding mechanisms and a specific plan for implementation of a substantial increase in funding for early care and education.
- Continue to build support for increased funding for Louisiana’s preschool program and the CCAP.
- Monitor the “Learning Year” implementation of Louisiana’s new Accountability System and Enrollment System now mandated for all publicly funded early care and education programs statewide, and advocate for needed changes to be made prior to the 2016–17 school year.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Explore strategies to engage the business community in supporting early care and education by showing the impact of lack of child care on workforce development and productivity. For example, highlighting the impact of lack of affordable child care on completion rates of parents in the Louisiana Community and Technical College System.
- Identify effective means of engaging parents statewide in advocacy for increased funding for early care and education.

State Budget Updates



Louisiana was awarded \$32 million over four years for pre-k expansion from the federal Preschool Development Grant after the governor overcame his opposition to apply.



The School Readiness Tax Credits remained whole and unchanged despite a \$1.6 billion state budget deficit and major cuts to other refundable tax credits.



The LA 4 Pre-K budget remained whole at \$75.6 million, although the amount of state general funds was decreased and shifted to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds.



There was no restoration of previous cuts that have resulted in a 60% reduction in the CCAP over the past several years.

Recent Policy Changes



Child Care Health and Safety: New child care center licensing regulations for Louisiana incorporate many positive changes to improve the health and safety of children in care, including:

- Ending corporal punishment in child care (Louisiana was one of only three states that allowed corporal punishment in child care centers),
- Restoring minimum qualifications for directors,
- Maintaining quality control on continuing education hours required for teachers,
- Limiting screen time for children for the first time, and
- Requiring specified minimum timeframes for physical activity for the first time.



Workforce Development: Regulations passed creating a Birth to Kindergarten certification, creating an Ancillary Teaching Certificate (requiring at a minimum a CDA) and mandating that after June 30, 2019, all lead teachers in publicly-funded early learning centers must have at least an Ancillary Teaching Certificate. Scholarships will be provided for teachers to obtain CDA credentials.



Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CC): A waiver was obtained from the Departments of Education and Children and Family Services of many of the state's restrictive child care assistance policies for the child care slots that will be part of EHS-CC Partnership grants.



Rating and Enrollment System: Regulations passed creating a new rating system and coordinated enrollment system that will be mandatory for all publicly funded early care and education programs for children ages birth through age four. Legislation was passed to ensure that 2015–2016 will be a “Learning Year” with no financial consequences to programs based on their ratings.



Early Learning and Care Funding: The Louisiana Department of Education developed An Early Care and Education Funding Model and BESE submitted it to the legislature, defining the need for \$80 million to improve and expand the state's pre-k and child care assistance programs. A House Concurrent Resolution passed the legislature requesting that the board identify specific potential funding sources and develop a plan to meet this need and to submit

it no later than 60 days prior to the convening of the 2015 regular legislative session.

Policy Opportunities

- A new gubernatorial administration, new legislature, new BESE members and likely a new state superintendent will take office in January 2016.
- Demonstrated popularity of public preschool and growing understanding of early childhood care and education. A recent poll found three-fourths of Louisiana residents favor state funding for universal preschool, and a majority support taxes to pay for it.
- New accountability and coordinated enrollment systems being implemented that unify school-based preschool and community based Head Start/Early Head Start and child care programs.

Policy Challenges

- Extremely serious budget obstacles, including an anticipated deficit in the current fiscal year of over \$300 million, requiring midyear budget cuts and a projected deficit for the next fiscal year of \$700 million to \$1 billion.
- Very conservative state with high child poverty and traditionally little spending on children younger than 5.
- A new gubernatorial administration, new legislature, new state board of education and likely a new state superintendent will take office in January 2016.

Contact Information

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MAINE

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Work with the Maine Children’s Growth Council to collect data and advance policies that promote the social-emotional development of young children from birth through age eight, reduce expulsions in early care and education settings and kindergarten classrooms, and support parents to develop nurturing relationships with their children.
- Build support and advocate for policies that improve the quality of care and education for young children and support low-income families through the development of Maine’s Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) state plan, which must address policy changes resulting from the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization of 2014.
- Promote the expansion of high-quality public preschool in Maine and educate state legislators and congressional delegation on the need to continue support for state funding and for the Preschool Development/Expansion Grants.
- Continue efforts to promote state-funded Head Start, Maine Families/home visiting, child care and public preschool as critical elements in Maine’s early childhood system.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Explore professional development for elementary school principals/child care directors to educate and inform them of opportunities to improve results for children through implementation of social-emotional development curriculum for young children.
- Monitor possible changes to the school funding formula regarding impacts to low-income children and preschool programs.

State Budget Updates

-  The state legislature approved \$575,000 in new money for state-funded Head Start and overrode a line-item veto by the governor that attempted to remove \$200,000 from state-funded Head Start. This new funding will also serve as a match to draw down additional federal child care funds.
-  The budget improves the CCDF program by making child care voucher payments retroactive to the date a parent applies for a subsidy.
-  The legislature delayed until July 2018 funding \$4 million in start-up funds for public preschool that was to begin July 2015. Start-up grants are required to offset the need for school districts to use local or other funds (e.g., Title I) to open or expand public preschool classrooms before school-aid-formula funds can be drawn down. These funds address the primary obstacle to

public preschool expansion in Maine, covering first-year program start-up costs.

Recent Policy Changes

- P** **Public Preschool Program Rules:** Rules for public preschool in Maine, [Chapter 124: Basic Approval Standards: Public Preschool Programs](#), were adopted on December 28, 2014, by the Maine Department of Education. The program rules ensure quality programming and provide a structure for planning and growth of public preschool programs in Maine.
- P** **Early Learning and Development Standards:** The state Departments of Education and Health and Human Services updated and adopted [Maine's Early Learning and Development Standards](#) in March 2015. The document serves as a guide for all early childhood educators' efforts to improve professional practice and programs for young children until kindergarten entry. These standards promote greater collaboration and consistency across systems by aligning with and creating a continuum of practice from birth through grade 3.
- P** **Child Care:** [Maine's Child Care Subsidy Program Rules](#) were updated in April 2015. The new rules include changes relating to parents with a disability, contracted care, maternity/paternity leave and rights to a hearing.
- P** **Maine Parentage Act:** Legislation was enacted to strengthen state child care licensing around issues of investigation of possible abuse or neglect in an "out of home" setting. The new Maine Parentage Act stresses preserving existing bonded relationships for children and recognizes that a person with a genetic relationship to a child may not always displace an existing parent on the basis of genetics alone. In order to preserve an existing parent-child relationship, courts may declare that a child has more than two parents.

Policy Opportunities

- Federal requirements for new state child care plan due in March 2016 offer the possibility of improving quality and access for children.
- Convergence of interest at state and national levels on issues relating to early learning program expansion and promoting healthy social-emotional development.
- The opening of 47 new preschool classrooms this fall, 33 as a result of the Preschool Expansion Grant, provides an opportunity to engage with new school districts and administrators on the importance of high-quality early education.
- Administration's interest in possible changes that could streamline access to child care subsidy.

Policy Challenges

- Animosity between Governor Paul LePage and the legislature may be an impediment to any major legislative action. The legislature's Government Oversight Committee is investigating the governor and his staff and the Speaker of the House has filed a civil suit against the governor.
- The governor has refused to nominate any candidates to fill dozens of empty positions on state boards and commissions.
- Lack of a federal budget and the uncertainty it brings to programs such as Head Start and child care.

Contact Information

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MASSACHUSETTS

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Ensure passage of comprehensive preschool expansion legislation, *An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education* (H.462, S.267), or a similar omnibus bill should one emerge from the Joint Committee on Education.
- Promote and leverage implementation of the Preschool Expansion Grant by highlighting collaboration between state agencies and local communities, as well as collaboration among the mixed delivery system (public schools and community-based providers) at the local level.
- Continue to promote high-quality early education and keep it on the agenda for Governor Charlie Baker, the legislature and its leadership, and Boston Mayor Marty Walsh and other local leaders.
- Continue local birth-to-eight policy work, with an emphasis on birth-to-five system building and strategic planning. Provide technical assistance via the Massachusetts Third Grade Reading Proficiency Learning Network and an additional three to five small-to-midsize cities. Use lessons learned to inform state policy, including the need for flexible pre-k dollars at the community level. Plan to highlight best practices by topic at statewide convenings.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Continue to partner with the Building on What Works coalition on strategies and events promoting issues that cut across the birth-to-college education continuum.
- Continue partnership with the Put MA Kids First coalition, seeking greater state investments in the birth-to-eight continuum, including early educator compensation and professional development, and reducing the state's child care subsidy waitlist.

State Budget Updates

 State revenue shortfalls led to two rounds of mid-year FY2015 budget cuts in November and February. Cuts totaled \$6.5 million to the Department of Early Education and Care, including Head Start supplemental funding, child care access, community family engagement grants and a new pre-k expansion pilot grant. An additional \$5.4 million was cut from the state's full-day kindergarten quality grant program.

 Gov. Baker vetoed \$17.59 million in funding for full-day kindergarten grants, reducing the account to \$1 million, but the legislature overrode the action with mobilized support from the field. The grants were previously cut by \$5 million in February as part of midyear "9C" budget cuts—an executive power

available to the governor of Massachusetts—so the final FY2016 amount represents a decrease from what was funded at the start FY2015.

The FY2016 budget provides a third year of Income Eligible waitlist reduction funding at \$12 million to serve children birth through school age on the state’s early education and care subsidy waiting list. Gov. Baker vetoed \$2 million from this account, but the legislature overrode the veto after the early education field successfully mobilized. For the past three years, the new contribution to IE waitlist reduction gets annualized into the total funding. This \$12 million represents a smaller contribution than in the past: FY2015 started at \$15 million but was reduced to \$14.6 million as part of 9C.



A rate reserve of \$5 million for early education and care workforce salaries, benefits and professional development.



New \$500,000 in funding for Commonwealth Preschool Partnerships to provide high-quality preschool for 3-year-olds in high-need communities. Gov. Baker vetoed this program but the legislature overrode the veto with early care and education advocacy support.



New innovation fund for competitive grants to communities to implement early learning programs birth to age five, extended learning time in K-12 or school redesign. A modified version of the proposal was included in Gov. Baker’s FY2016 budget but not House or Senate budgets.



Recent Policy Changes



Education Finance Formula: The Foundation Budget Review Commission, established in the FY2015 budget language, released its initial report in June, recommending to the legislature changes for special education funding and health care costs. During a six-month extension period, the commission will examine additional topics, including full-day preschool.



Pre-K Expansion: Several bills were filed for the 2015–16 legislative session, including *An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education* (H.462, S.267), supported by the Pre-K for MA advocacy campaign. If passed, the legislation would phase in funding for high-quality pre-k for 3- and 4-year-olds in the mixed delivery system in high-needs communities. A bill hearing was held September 16 by the Joint Committee on Education, and the bill is awaiting further action by the committee.



Pre-K Expansion: Massachusetts was awarded a \$15 million federal Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG) and is implementing the PEG program in five local communities — Boston, Holyoke, Springfield, Lawrence and Lowell — and contracting with a research firm to conduct a multiyear evaluation.

Policy Opportunities

- There is increasing agreement among advocates, local leaders, legislators and the Baker administration that the state should increase investments in high-quality early education. There will continue to be discussion about the pace and scope of expansion, with the administration favoring a slow-and-steady approach and advocates as well as legislators pursuing ambitious targeted and universal pre-k policy proposals. The administration is focused on ensuring program quality and positive child outcomes.
- Implementation of the PEG provides an opportunity for elected officials and policymakers to visit high-quality programs and see the local enthusiasm for early education. It also gives state agencies and local programs time to learn best practices in implementation, lessons that can inform the next stages of preschool expansion in Massachusetts. The PEG evaluation will provide invaluable data on program implementation and impact, and advance data collection efforts and best practices.
- Beyond the PEG, several communities have engaged in birth-to-eight alignment partnership work, funded through the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC). Despite this grant ending in December, advocates are confident that much of this work will continue because of growing local momentum to improve school readiness, early literacy, early education services and parent engagement.

Policy Challenges

- State revenue will likely continue to lag behind current state expenditures (across all budget categories), making it difficult for the state to increase its investments in early education.
- Several other public policy areas are in need of state investments, according to recent news headlines and messaging from elected officials. These include transportation, higher education and child protective services. The growing public concern over these issues may crowd out early education, particularly if there are no new taxes or revenue options.
- Divisive issues in K-12 education policy (i.e., the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers exam versus The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, charter school expansion) remain unresolved and therefore dominate news headlines and policymakers' time and attention at the expense of other issues, such as early education.

Contact Information

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MICHIGAN

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Retain \$130 million expansion to the Great Start Readiness Program, (GSRP) – Michigan's preschool program for 4-year-olds at-risk of starting kindergarten underprepared.
- Continue to support Governor Rick Snyder's early literacy/third-grade reading proficiency initiative. Ensure it addresses the needs of families with young children, especially through expansion of evidence-based home visiting, high-quality child care, pilots for pre-K for 3-year-olds, health homes for young children and their families, and increased state investment in Early On early intervention (Michigan's Part C program under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Michigan partners have begun to lay the groundwork for fiscal year 2017, including building on the state's investment in literacy and increasing support for Early On.
- Michigan partners are also advocating for beneficial child care policy reforms to be included in the 2016-2019 Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan.

State Budget Updates

- ⊕ \$2.5 million increase for Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) targeted toward evidence-based home visiting services.
- ⊕ \$1 million for new pilot parent education programs for parents of children ages 0 through age 3 so that children are developmentally ready to succeed in school at the time of school entry.
- ⊕ \$1.6 million to field test a kindergarten entry assessment.
- ⊕ \$1 million increase for support to public libraries to expand their early literacy-focused programming, with the goal to improve 3rd-grade reading proficiency.
- ⊕ \$5.7 million of Michigan's unspent federal CCDF funds appropriated to hire 39 additional licensing consultants and staff, for a total of 105 consultants. This will reduce average caseloads from 150 to 98 per licensing consultant, bringing Michigan closer to the federally-recommended caseload of 50.
- ⊕ Directed unspent federal CCDF funds to increase funding support in Child Development and Care, Michigan's child care subsidy program:
 - \$8 million to provide continuous, 12-month eligibility for families regardless of changes in life circumstances throughout the year.

- \$764,000 to raise the exit income threshold by which a family becomes ineligible for child care assistance from 120 to 250% FPL.
- \$3.1 million increase for additional, tiered reimbursement rates based on the Great Start to Quality star rating of child care programs (Michigan's QRIS), bringing Michigan's subsidy reimbursement closer to the market rate.

Increased new investments supporting K-3rd literacy instruction:



- \$950,000 for grants to districts to support MDE-approved, research-based professional development for K-3 teachers focused on literacy. MDE will also work with Michigan Virtual University (MVU) to provide this professional development online.
- \$500,000 for the adoption of a new certification test to ensure newly certified elementary teachers have the skills to deliver evidence-based literacy instruction.
- \$3 million for competitive grants to a consortium of ISDs in the prosperity regions to provide literacy coaches to support k-3rd grade teachers.
- \$1.45 million to administer diagnostic tools to monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills of k-3rd grade students and to support professional development for educators in data interpretation for the purpose of implementing a multi-tiered system of support.



\$17.5 million for districts that provide additional instructional time for k-3rd grade students who have been identified as needing additional supports and intervention.



No funding for Early On early intervention or boilerplate to support a Medicaid match study.

Recent Policy Changes



Child Care: Many changes to Michigan's child care subsidy program—Child Development and Care—including continuous 12-month eligibility for families, a raise in the exit-income threshold from 120 to 250% FPL; and additional tiered reimbursement rates. These shifts were approved in a FY2015 midyear supplemental budget and were implemented beginning July 2015.



Literacy Development: With the governor and legislature's focus on literacy, Michigan's Maternal Infant Health Program—the Medicaid-supported, evidence-based home visiting program—must now evaluate the feasibility of including an assessment tool to promote literacy development.



Cash Assistance: Department policy was passed into state statute requiring the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to cut off cash assistance to any families who have a truant child.

Policy Opportunities

- Gov. Snyder believes that evidence-based early childhood initiatives can move the needle on kindergarten readiness and 3rd-grade reading proficiency.
- In the next few years, advocates anticipate that research and evaluation will demonstrate the value of Michigan initiatives in home visiting, preschool for 3-year-olds, high-quality child care and medical homes, opening the door for more investment in one or more of these areas.
- The business community is awakening to the importance of high-quality child care in talent retention and cultivation.

Policy Challenges

- The governor and the legislature are committed to finding \$1.2 billion for improvements to Michigan's crumbling roads and bridges. Funding for existing programs, including those in early childhood, may be cut as part of the solution. This same issue could prevent new investment in early childhood in the FY2017 budget.
- Skepticism among some legislators about the demonstrable value of early childhood programs.
- The belief among some legislators that "we've taken care of early childhood" with the expansion of the Great Start Readiness Program.

Contact Information

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NEBRASKA

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Develop a long-term policy strategy for the child care subsidy built around the following tenets:
 - Ensure that publicly subsidized child care buys the level of quality found to reduce the achievement gap;
 - Expand the child care subsidy to reach all children at risk of failing in school (at least 185% FPL); and
 - Incentivize providers to accept the child care subsidy.
- Maximize opportunities provided by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) 2014 reauthorization.
- Develop a cost model of Nebraska's QRIS, *Step Up to Quality*.
- Fund the evaluation of *Step Up to Quality*.
- Secure policies that strengthen the quality and quantity of the early childhood workforce.

State Budget Updates

-  [LB656](#), the state's mainline budget bill, includes stable funding for high-quality early childhood investments in the [Sixpence Early Learning Fund](#) and the [Nebraska Department of Education preschool grant program](#). Previously, \$1 million for the Sixpence Early Learning Fund and \$1.95 million for the Department of Education preschool grant program was scheduled to sunset July 1, 2016. Those amounts will now be funded annually by state general funds rather than with lottery appropriations that would have expired again in five years.
-  [LB547](#) increased the resources available to child care providers, allowing them to stabilize their budgets and improve their quality.

Recent Policy Changes

-  **Child Care School District Partnerships:** [LB 547](#) will allow child care providers to partner with school districts for Sixpence Early Learning grants serving infants and toddlers at risk. This will allow Nebraska to reach more infants and toddlers at risk and make important strides in supporting the professional development of the child care workforce.
-  **Eliminate Child Care Subsidy Cliff Effect:** [LB 81](#) allows families receiving child care assistance a 24-month window to accept small pay raises and promotions that do not impact their child care eligibility status.

P **School Funding Formula:** [LB 525](#) makes a small change in the school funding formula to make it easier for school districts serving large concentrations of low-income children to receive education aid for students served in early childhood education programs.

P **Home Visiting:** The Nebraska Department of Education adopted revisions to its [administrative rule governing early childhood education programs](#) operated by school districts. Among the changes, the rule will now cover home visiting services provided by school districts and require home visiting professionals to obtain certain levels of education and training. The rule is expected to become effective later in 2015, pending approval by the governor.

Policy Opportunities

- Strong leadership in the legislature is looking to leave a legacy before they are termed out after 2016. In addition, the emerging leadership in the legislature recognizes the value of quality early childhood education, including birth to age three, and the State Board of Education is more engaged than ever in and particularly supportive of early childhood investments.
- New Sixpence child care partnership grants are prompting schools and private child care providers to work collaboratively together to fully address early childhood needs in the local communities.
- There is tremendous opportunity to building an early childhood workforce that will eventually meet the needs of young children at risk across the state.

Policy Challenges

- Statewide demand for significant reductions in property taxes, which is the main source of revenue for education funding.
- Administration that still needs to be convinced of the value of investing in quality early childhood efforts.
- Accessing data used to substantiate the growing need for quality early childhood interventions.

Contact Information

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NEW MEXICO

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Continue to advance public awareness and political will for investments in early childhood care and education in New Mexico.
- Continued utilization of the *Early Childhood Care and Education Cost Analysis & Recommendations* research to support a General Fund appropriation increase to funding of high-quality early childhood care and education programs and services, including home visiting, child care assistance, New Mexico PreK, workforce development (T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships) and means of addressing early care and education wage disparities through the INCENTIVE\$ Pay Supplements Project.
- Engage with a variety of stakeholders about the true cost of providing quality early care and education by using the New Mexico Early Care and Education Cost Model.
- Use the *Early Childhood Education Revenue Option* research to engage a variety of stakeholders in a review of revenue options to develop recommendations.
- Use the *New Mexico KIDS are COUNTing on Us* research and policy recommendations to engage a variety of stakeholders and policymakers.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Advocate for the expansion of full-day New Mexico PreK to additional 3-and-4-year-olds.
- Advance the quality, affordability and accessibility of child care and education based on policy recommendations developed by a child care work group hosted by the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD).
- Ensure that there is communication and coordination between CYFD and the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) on the state and local levels so that expansion of NM PreK and growth of quality in child care through FOCUS is done in a way that supports and improves the quality and accessibility of existing early care and education programs and does not displace or disrupt existing programs working to improve quality.
- Continue efforts to advance professional development and wage supplements for the early childhood care and education workforce, including those who provide care in a home.
- Continue analysis of early childhood education and care revenue options with a variety of stakeholders, including business leaders, and the development of policy recommendations.
- Explore policy options that support groups of programs implementing Shared Services.

State Budget Updates

The signed fiscal year 2016 budget included \$249.6 million to support early childhood initiatives, including an additional \$13 million (almost a 6% increase over FY2015 appropriations).

-  \$2.3 million increase to support home visiting programs.
-  \$11.5 million increase to support half-day and extended-day services for 3- and 4-year-olds in New Mexico PreK program.
-  \$1.0 million to support the K-3 Plus program, which provides additional educational time (extending the school year by 25 instructional days beginning before the school year) for students in “high-poverty public schools,” kindergarten through 3rd grade.
-  \$500,000 increase to support New Mexico Reads to Lead!, which funds a reading K-3 formative assessment system that is provided to local school districts at no cost. Regional and district reading coaches, and supports for intervention, and professional development are provided for parents, teachers, reading coaches, parents, teachers, administrators and other stakeholders.
-  \$200,000 to expand INCENTIVE\$ Pay Supplements (a WAGE\$-type program).
-  \$100,000 to expand T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarships.
-  No new funding for child care assistance program.
-  A proposal to include on the next presidential election ballot a constitutional amendment to support early care and education with a percentage of the state’s Land Grant Permanent Fund failed to progress through the legislature.

Recent Policy Changes

-  **Administration Changes:** Monique Jacobson was confirmed as the new secretary of CYFD in 2015.
-  **Child Care Regulations:** CYFD continues the process of implementing child care regulations designed to raise standards and improve the delivery of early childhood care and education. The proposed regulations are focused on (1) smaller group sizes, (2) smaller teacher-to-child ratios, (3) increased education and training requirements for early childhood care and education professionals, and (4) accreditation based on the standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The state also proposes an increase in reimbursement for providers who have reached the QRIS five star designations.

- P** **Child Care Regulations:** CYFD implemented a new rule requiring single parents seeking child care assistance to register with the Child Support Enforcement Division if proof of child support from a noncustodial parent was not obtained. A provision for mothers to request an exemption from this requirement exists.
- P** **New Mexico PreK:** Piloted an extended day (six hours) for 4-year-olds. Piloted services for 3-year-olds.
- P** **Kindergarten Entry Assessment:** As part of the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT–ELC), select school districts in New Mexico piloted a kindergarten observation tool. This is in preparation of administering a kindergarten entry assessment to all students enrolled in kindergarten in fall of the 2016–2017 school year.
- X** **Child Care Assistance Accountability Act (CCAAA):** Designed to identify and collect measures to track the outcomes of child care for children and families. Despite passing with unanimous support in the legislature, the governor ultimately pocket vetoed it. Following the 2015 legislative session, the CYFD is hosting a child care work group to address many of the issues raised in the development of the CCAAA.

Policy Opportunities

- Leverage opportunities to improve and strengthen child care outside of CCAAA given the reauthorization of the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and the CYFD attention to improving the quality of child care through the new T-QRIS FOCUS program
- Strong bipartisan support of early childhood care and education exists in New Mexico. The challenge and the opportunity are to find the best way to utilize this support around a single, unified, early childhood care and education message.
- Momentum is building for increased professionalization of the early childhood workforce—within the workforce itself, within CYFD, and among legislators.

Policy Challenges

- New Mexico faces economic challenges, with a higher-than-average percentage of families living in poverty or in low-income settings.
- New Mexico children face a high level of child maltreatment.
- New Mexico has many promising practices that need additional support to go to scale.

Contact Information

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NEW YORK

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Invest an additional \$190 million in child care to maintain and expand subsidies.
- Invest at least \$150 million to expand Prekindergarten for high-need 3- and 4-year-olds, building on the state's 2015 program, which includes reimbursement in the year services are delivered. Additionally, advocate for:
 - Maintaining current Pre-K investments to maintain current enrollment and moving toward the integration of all current Pre-K funding.
 - Investing appropriately in K-12 aid to ensure Pre-K is followed by a continuum of quality educational services that prepare students for college and career.
- Maintain \$27.3 million and invest an additional \$10.5 million in Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) to adequately fund a continuum of supports and services for families.
- Restore Early Intervention (EI) reimbursement rates by at least 5% and require health insurance companies to contribute to the cost of EI so that young children can receive high-quality services from qualified professionals.
- Increase Advantage After School funding by \$49.9 million.
- Maintain \$3 million and invest an additional \$20 million in QUALITYstarsNY, New York's QRIS System.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Increasing the reimbursement rates for EI services for infants and toddlers with delays or disabilities. The rates were cut in 2010 and 2011 and flat-funded since that time, causing experienced providers to stop accepting EI referrals. An increase is necessary in order to recruit and retain high-quality providers.
- Addressing the need for a more coherent and appropriately funded pre-k system by working with the governor's office, the Regents (New York's state board of education), the state Education Department and public education advocates to move the state to create high-quality, full-day pre-K in the state's diverse delivery system. The effort includes close attention to rates to assure equity across settings in public schools and community-based settings so children have access to effective teachers and comprehensive services.
- Working to align the Pre-K investment with other early childhood funding streams, especially child care and Head Start, to move the state toward a more seamless system of early care and learning, prenatal to grade 3.
- Increasing investments in the continuum of MIECHV programs by restoring funding for Healthy Families New York and adding funding for The Parent-Child Home Program Inc. and Parents as Teachers.
- Increasing investment in subsidized child care services and working with the state to use the new Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to improve the quality of and protect access to subsidized child care. That will include

- seeking to address inequities in our county-based child care subsidy system and working toward expansion of quality assurance strategies, such as quality rating.
- Working with our congressional delegation to create a voice for the federal investments necessary to move New York forward and protect existing services. This requires special attention to CCDBG and the federal Preschool Development Grant, which are most at-risk in the coming year.
 - Winning paid family leave insurance.

State Budget Updates

- ⊕ \$30 million increase for statewide Pre-K programs for 3- and 4-year-olds.
- ⊕ \$5 million increase for child care subsidies.
- ⊕ \$4 million increase for the Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting program.
- ⊕ \$3 million increase for QUALITYstarsNY.
- ⊕ \$1.5 million increase for Advantage After School.

Recent Policy Changes

- Ⓟ **Family Engagement:** The state has used the federal preschool development grant as a vehicle to expand family engagement strategies and add quality improvement strategies.

Policy Opportunities

- Ability to influence the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) state plan.
- The new State Education Commissioner is interested in early education.
- The state administration has a focus on alleviating poverty.

Policy Challenges

- There is a lack of substantive interest from the administration in human services issues, including child care, as well as constant staff turnover.
- The Office of Children and Family Services faces a 2% funding cap.
- Implementing CCDBG reauthorization changes will be costly.

Contact Information

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- Jessica Klos Shapiro, Director of Policy and Community Education, Early Care & Learning Council, jklos@earlycareandlearning.org.

OKLAHOMA

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Maintain funding and program quality to the greatest extent possible for early childhood programs and supports during the upcoming legislative session, as Oklahoma is facing between a \$600 million to \$1.2 billion shortfall for fiscal year 2017.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Develop an outcomes measurement plan for all state-funded and administered home visiting programs in order to establish consistent data collection and reporting across programs.
- Develop a policy for data governance that facilitates the sharing and connection of early childhood data currently collected by child-serving state agencies.

State Budget Updates



Several state agencies received reductions in their state appropriations. It is unclear what the impact will be on early childhood programs and services.

Recent Policy Changes



Home Visiting: The *Family Support Accountability Act* was signed by the governor. This law implements accountability standards and reporting requirements for the state's home visiting programs in order to define outcomes and create a system to measure those outcomes.



Repealed Third Grade Retention: Recent changes to the Reading Sufficiency Act (RSA) were extended for an additional three years. The act was altered last year to end mandatory retention of 3rd-grade students who do not pass end-of-year reading tests. This law originally went into effect during the 2014–2015 school year.



Child Care Registry: The Center for Early Childhood Professional Development expanded its registry to include professionals working with young children outside of direct child care environments. This Professional Development Collaborative offers improved coordination and cross-sector training opportunities to child development specialists, behavioral health specialists, speech and language pathologists, early intervention specialists, home visitors, and mental health consultants.



Early Literacy Assessment: An electronic, early literacy quick assessment was piloted throughout the state and evaluated for reliability and validity. As

a result, hundreds of classrooms throughout the state have adopted the assessment and are using the results to inform teacher instruction.



Data System Integration: The P20 Data Coordinating Council was not extended during this legislative session while up for sunset review. The review was laid over until next session where it may be reviewed next year and subsequently extended through July 1, 2022. The Council was charged with aiding in the integration of state early childhood data with the student longitudinal data system.

Policy Opportunities

- Expanding business leader support for high-quality early care and education programs.
- Momentum among state agencies to improve coordination of agency information systems.
- Restructuring of the State Advisory Council to improve coordination and alignment of early care and education programs.

Policy Challenges

- Significant budget shortfalls in the state are threatening funding for early childhood programs.
- Oklahoma elected not to seek voluntary federal funding to support preschool expansion, and program funding is being explored in budget deficit conversations.
- Participation in early childhood programs and supports is declining, while the number of children in the child welfare system is rising.

Contact Information

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OREGON

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Advocate for increased funding for Early Intervention—Part C of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—and Early Childhood Special Education—Part B of IDEA—to address increasing caseloads and cost of living increases.
- Fix a \$5.3 million budget error in calculating the Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten Program’s roll-up costs to ensure the legislature serves the full number of children it expected.
- Ensure HB 3380, legislation that allows for high-quality preschool expansion through a mixed delivery system, and the \$27 million investment in state preschool money are implemented successfully.
- Monitor and support successful implementation of the Kindergarten Partnership & Innovation Fund to strengthen the birth-through-grade-3 system in Oregon.
- Monitor the rollout of the Department of Education’s commitment to annually publish chronic absence data of Oregon’s public K-12 schools, disaggregated by grade level and by subgroups.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Lay the groundwork for expanded access to resources for infants and toddlers in Oregon.
- Support policies that promote infant-toddler mental health.
- Support Medicaid billing to help support financing of home visiting services and Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education services.
- Further increase funding for Early Intervention/ Early Childhood Special Education to address statewide plan to implement universal developmental screening.
- Support family engagement birth-through-grade-3 policies.
- Ensure policies and practices are in place to support implementation of initiatives in rural Oregon.
- Create pathways to build and enhance the early learning workforce.
- Further expand access to high-quality preschool in Oregon.
- Develop strategies to build and sustain 2015 policy work.

State Budget Updates

This legislative session was an unprecedented victory for Oregon’s young children. Although some proposed changes were not fully allocated at the proposed levels, all major early learning programs were sustained or received significant increases, and a new investment was made in state-funded preschool.



\$27 million for implementation of the preschool expansion bill (HB 3380) in the 2015–2017 biennium.

-  \$9.45 million increase for the home visiting program Healthy Families Oregon (HFO).
-  \$5 million increase to the Kindergarten Partnership & Innovation Fund.
-  \$45 million to expand access to subsidized employment-related child care and support improved child care quality.
-  \$2.3 million to create focused child care networks.
-  \$220 million for K-12 to support implementation of full-day kindergarten statewide.
-  \$10.3 million increase for Oregon’s regional and community-based Early Learning Hubs to coordinate resources across early learning, health, human services, K-12 education and the private sector to support and promote on-track development, school readiness, and stable and attached families.
-  \$4 million for the state’s Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education program.
-  \$1.7 million for a school attendance pilot project to work with schools serving large populations of Native American students in order to decrease chronic absenteeism.
-  \$3 million to develop a P-20 education plan for children of color who are economically disadvantaged and experience a significant achievement gap.
-  \$1.2 million for Relief Nurseries in the state.
-  \$15 million increase for Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education was requested and only a \$4 million increase was allocated this session.
-  The Oregon Department of Education proposed an \$85 million investment in an Age 3 to Grade 3 Literacy Initiative to provide intensive intervention in K-3 for students falling behind and align K-3 professional development and best practices with early childhood system. New policy referencing this approach was passed, but no funds were allocated.

Recent Policy Changes

-  **High-Quality Preschool Expansion:** HB 3380 is an important step forward for Oregon. The preschool legislation provides a new blueprint for high-quality preschool while supporting the development of a cohesive early learning system. It also establishes new, higher-quality preschool standards, increases pay for preschool teacher overtime, and allows for a mix of providers in diverse settings to receive state funding for preschool for the

first time. Additionally, a portion of the new funding under HB 3380 will expand access to Head Start and reduce existing wait lists for many programs across the state.



Evidenced-Based Home Visiting: The \$9.45 million increase to home visiting also came with additional mandates to ensure quality and accountability, including the creation of new outcome metrics to demonstrate effectiveness and the development of a new screening tool to identify potential parent/child risk factors of eligible families, the integration of home visitors into the state's early learning professional development system and the creation of a new professional development system for home visitors.



Chronic Absence Data: The Oregon Department of Education will be required to annually publish chronic absenteeism data broken down by grade level and separately by race/ethnicity, income, and English Language Learner and disability status. This data will allow schools and districts to identify their greatest strengths and challenges for attendance and create tailored solutions. The first release of this data is scheduled for fall 2015.

Policy Opportunities

- Current governor supports and prioritizes early learning.
- Despite funding challenges, there was an unprecedented increase for early learning during the past legislative session.
- State has a clear vision about what systems transformations are needed for children and families.

Policy Challenges

- Limited state funding to fully pay for early education, health and social service programs at scale or to a high enough quality.
- Lack of a system to support a highly qualified early learning workforce and high-quality, center-based care.
- State has a large vision, but still in the early stages of building capacity to implement well.

Contact Information

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PENNSYLVANIA

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Increase developmental screenings and effective referrals.
- Improve health coverage outreach, enrollment and renewal practices.
- Integrate early learning licensing, program monitoring and quality improvement system.
- Expand preschool investments to reach all at-risk children and make headway into serving middle-class children.
- Improve child care rates of reimbursement to move toward cost of high-quality care.
- Model Pay for Success (PFS) opportunities.
- License family child care and increase oversight of informal, nonfamily member providers' participating in child care subsidy.
- Implement new school funding formula and increase state investments in basic and special education.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Reauthorize state Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Expand use of Medicaid to finance home visiting.
- Align Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania's QRIS system, standards with those that drive child outcomes and align standards for preschool-age services between Keystone STARS and Pre-K Counts.
- Charter school reform.

State Budget Updates

The new fiscal year began July 1 without a state budget. The governor's budget proposals included the following investments that would greatly benefit children and families and were coupled with a proposal to expand the personal income tax, sales tax and shale tax:



\$120M increase for preschool that includes nearly doubling the funding for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts to \$197.3 million in fiscal year 2015–16, up from the current \$97.3 million in FY2014–15. Funding for the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) would increase by \$20 million, for a total state allocation of \$59.2 million.

- 
 The spending plan allocates additional federal funds from the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) that would allow an additional 3,600 children to be served off the waiting list (through an \$18 million increase), boost reimbursement rates for Keystone STARS' levels STAR 3 and 4 facilities (using an additional \$11 million in funds) and create an infant-toddler add-on rate (using an additional \$2 million federal investment).
- 
 More than \$40 million increase for county child welfare services.
- 
 \$25 million to provide health insurance coverage for an additional 15,881 children using expanded federal SCHIP funding.
- 
 \$410 million increase for basic education funding and a \$100 million increase for special education.

The Republican-controlled legislature passed a budget that the newly-elected Democratic governor vetoed. The budget didn't include increased taxes but did contain what was described as the floor for legislature's desired investments in children's programs. The legislature also passed a stopgap budget that the governor also vetoed.

- 
 \$30 million increase in pre-k and a \$100 million increase in basic education.

Recent Policy Changes

- 
Preschool Access: Removed barriers to provider participation in Pre-K Counts and state-funded Head Start by increasing cost per child and allowing funds to be used for transportation to Head Start home-based services in geographically isolated areas.
- 
Health Insurance: Brought CHIP benefits into compliance with minimum essential coverage (MEC).
- 
Health Insurance: Expanded Medicaid for uninsured adults, including coverage options to more than 130,000 uninsured parents.
- 
School Funding Formula: Basic education funding formula developed by a bipartisan commission and passed in statute.

Policy Opportunities

- The new governor, cabinet secretaries and deputy secretaries are committed to more children and families accessing high-quality services.
- Expanded, bipartisan legislative interest.
- Strong advocacy coalitions for child care, pre-kindergarten, children's health and K-12 education.

Policy Challenges

- The state budget impasse has left preschool programs without payment since June, and expansion funds have not been awarded. This is coupled with woefully inadequate rates of reimbursement for child care subsidy, including a multiple year rate freeze for some providers.
- Conflicting guidance from licensing, program monitoring and the QRIS system.
- Inadequate resources to serve any target population groups, including babies and mothers seeking home visiting, and children and families seeking subsidy for high-quality child care and preschool.

Contact Information

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RHODE ISLAND

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Expand access to the Rhode Island Pre-K Program in a mixed delivery system.
- Expand access to full-day kindergarten.
- Expand access to high-quality child care.
- Maintain/expand access to Early Head Start and Head Start.
- Maintain/expand access to Early Intervention and preschool special education within high-quality, inclusive early learning programs.
- Promote participation in BrightStars (Rhode Island's QRIS) across sectors (public schools, child care and Head Start) and quality improvement of programs.
- Promote and protect the state's new paid family leave program.
- Strengthen state systems for evidence-based home visiting.
- Develop policies to link early years to early grades.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Financing for high-quality early learning programs post Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC).
- Connect children's health and development data system to longitudinal data system.
- Continue to strengthen connections and supports for young children in the child welfare system, including developmental screening and follow-up, eligibility determination for Early Intervention, high-quality child care, home visiting, access to Head Start and RI Pre-K Program.

State Budget Updates



\$1 million increase in state funding for Pre-K in addition to federal funding awarded to Rhode Island as a Preschool Expansion Grant. Combined new state and federal funding will increase the number of State Pre-K slots by about 80% (from 306 to 558).



\$1.4 million to support expansion of Full-Day Kindergarten with new state mandate that all districts must offer universal Full-Day Kindergarten by August 2016.



\$2.2 million to support a 3% rate increase for child care providers serving children in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).



\$200,000 to make a pilot program permanent that allows unemployed, low-income families to participate in CCAP while they are in approved job training programs.



Failed to restore eligibility to 225% of the federal poverty level (FPL) for the CCAP program, but the cliff-effect policy remains in place, allowing families to

retain enrollment as their income increases above 180% of the FPL. Participation is growing.

Recent Policy Changes

- P** **Preschool Access:** Combined new state and federal funding (Preschool Expansion Grant), which almost doubles the number of RI Pre-K slots (from 306 to 558).
- P** **Tiered Reimbursement:** Senate resolution passed requesting the Department of Human Services to develop a plan for tiered reimbursement connecting CCAP rates to quality.
- P** **System Coordination:** New strategic plan finalized by the state Department of Education identifies early childhood education as one of six priorities, with the goal of building a coherent, coordinated system for birth through grade 3.
- X** **Paid Family Leave Access Limitation:** A 2015 legislative effort to limit access to paid family leave failed to pass in the General Assembly. In 2014, the first year of implementation, 3,870 individuals received paid family leave to bond with a new child (74%) or to take care of a seriously-ill family member (26%). Almost one-third of participants were male.
- P** **Pregnancy Discrimination:** Legislation passed that prohibits job discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions. It requires employers to make reasonable accommodations to workers for conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth, including breastfeeding.

Policy Opportunities

- Governor Gina Raimondo took office in January 2015 and is partnering with the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Rhode Island Early Learning Council to identify priorities for the early care and education system because of her interest in improving access to high-quality early learning programs.
- Gov. Raimondo is working to fundamentally restructure the state child welfare agency to ensure the state's most vulnerable children and families receive effective, early intervention services to improve outcomes.
- The Rhode Island economy is stabilizing after the deep and long recession. The current state budget maintains and increases support for many important programs for young children and families.

Policy Challenges

- Rhode Island is in the final year of RTT-ELC grant funding and is struggling to secure resources to sustain supports for program quality improvement.
- Even with a recent rate increase, CCAP reimbursement rates remain inadequate to support high-quality care, particularly for infants and toddlers.

- Wages for the early learning workforce remain low. New strategies are needed to improve compensation so community-based programs can attract and retain skilled early childhood educators.
- Continuing to expand RI Pre-K may be challenging if Preschool Development Grant resources are interrupted or end because of federal budget negotiations.
- Balancing support for Head Start expansion with RI Pre-K expansion.

Contact Information

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UTAH

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Increase funding for School Readiness Initiative.
- Increase funding for Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) statewide.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Statewide Uniform Kindergarten Assessment based on the Utah Early Childhood Core Standards.

State Budget Updates



\$1 million for Nurse-Family Partnership appropriated from unused Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program funding.

Recent Policy Changes



No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Waiver: Utah's application for a one-year extension of its flexibility waiver from NCLB was approved, including new language emphasizing state authority over educational decisions.



Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Reauthorization: Beginning in fiscal year 2015, "Job Search Child Care" is available for parents who were working at least 32 hours per week and lost their job.

Policy Opportunities

- Increased political will to expand access to high-quality preschool and/or Optional Extended Kindergarten (OEK).
- Salt Lake County, the largest county in Utah, is establishing a Pay for Success program that will provide interventions to low-income mothers either during pregnancy or in the first years of their child's life.

Policy Challenges

- Fiscal implications of a conservative political climate.

Contact Information

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WASHINGTON

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Advocate for new investments and policy adjustments needed to ensure successful implementation of the *Early Start Act*, which may include expansion of child care subsidies, additional professional development resources and data systems development.
- Expand the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) to make progress toward becoming a full entitlement program in 2020 as required in statute. Expansion priorities may include additional slots, adjustments to the slot rate, facilities and policies and investments to support a mixed delivery system that includes both child care centers and family homes.
- Explore new revenue to fund a continuum of early learning from birth-to-five.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Administrative advocacy to support successful implementation of the *Early Start Act*. This includes Early Achievers (Washington's QRIS), data collection and analysis, changes to child care subsidy policy, development of a pathway for child care providers to deliver ECEAP, and standards alignment.
- Exploration of different models for contracted child care subsidy slots.

State Budget Updates

The state increased investments for early learning and education for the next biennium by \$159 million, which includes:

-  \$92 million to implement the *Early Start Act*, including funding for provisions such as sustaining and growing Early Achievers, tiered reimbursement and 12-month child care subsidy authorizations.
-  \$17 million to increase the base rate for child care subsidies.
-  \$41 million for ECEAP. These funds will support 1,600 new slots and maintain existing full- and extended-day slots that were formerly supported with federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) dollars.
-  \$6 million for expansion of home visiting services.
-  \$4 million for early intervention.
-  \$2 million for the Early Childhood Intervention Prevention Services program (ECLIPSE, formerly known as Medicaid Treatment Child Care).
-  \$2.219 million for the biennium was proposed in HB 1783 to support early learning dual language immersion programming and did not pass.

Recent Policy Changes

The Early Start Act: The bipartisan omnibus bill (HB 1491) includes a variety of incentives, supports and accountability measures aimed at producing positive outcomes for children. The *Early Start Act* requires:

- Child care providers serving non-school age children and receiving state subsidy to rate at a level 2 in Early Achievers by August 2017 and a level 3 by June 2020. Extensions may be granted due to unexpected life circumstances.
- The Department of Early Learning (DEL) to create professional development pathways for providers that are culturally and linguistically reflective of their needs and demographics. The pathways must include opportunities for grants and scholarships.
- DEL to implement a protocol to maximize and encourage participation of low-income and culturally diverse providers including:
 - Creation of a teacher substitute pool;
 - Needs-based grants for providers at level 2 in Early Achievers to assist with purchasing curriculum, instructional materials, supplies and equipment to improve quality;
 - Development of Early Achievers materials and assessments in provider and family home languages;
 - Development of flexibility in the type and amount of Technical Assistance/coaching available based on individual provider need and cultural context; and
 - Prioritization of resources for providers rating at level 2 to help them move to level 3 in communities where access to care is limited.
- Oversight and review measures for Early Achievers, including:
 - Creation of an Early Achievers review subcommittee, including providers and parents, that must be consulted on all major changes to the program;
 - An annual report from DEL to the legislature outlining participation trends and data, barriers and recommended changes, including specific analysis of resources available to diverse children and communities;
 - Beginning in 2018, if 15% or more of providers in any county or zip code are not meeting rating level requirements, a review process is triggered and a plan must be developed to mitigate impacts to children served by those providers; and
 - A joint select committee of the legislature to meet in 2018 to review Early Achievers implementation, including adequacy of resources.
- Existing ECEAP providers to rate at a level 2 in Early Achievers by October 2015 and level 4 March 2016. New ECEAP providers will have 12 months to reach a level 4.

P

- 12-month eligibility for all children receiving child care subsidies, regardless of changes in family circumstance.
- Ongoing funding in the maintenance level budget.

Policy Opportunities

- The Early Start Act has brought significant new resources and policy improvements, including increased stakeholder engagement mechanisms, to Washington, and there is an opportunity to make major improvements in access to high-quality early learning.
- Significant expansion of ECEAP will be required in the coming years in order to reach entitlement for all eligible children by 2020, as required by statute. This presents a unique opportunity to integrate preschool and child care and improve the quality of care overall.
- Early learning has broad bipartisan and bicameral support in the state legislature, as evidenced by the passage and funding of the *Early Start Act*.

Policy Challenges

- Following the 2015 legislative session, the state Supreme Court found the legislature in contempt for failing to fully fund K-12 education per the McCleary, et. al vs. State of Washington ruling. The legislature may address this shortfall in the 2016 legislative session and early learning is not part of the definition of basic education.
- Implementation of the *Early Start Act* has just begun, and it is critical to demonstrate early success to avoid criticism.

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WISCONSIN

Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

2016 Agenda

- Increase the number of children in high-quality early learning programs.
- Increase the number of families and children in evidence-based home visiting programs.
- Improve health care insurance coverage for children and parents.
- Reduce racial disparity.

Ideas or Topics in Development

- Promote continuity of care and improve quality as the state implements new Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization regulations.
- Develop a feasible plan to increase early childhood mental consultation.
- Play a strong role in promoting key issues to recommend to the governor through the governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC); in particular expansion in YoungStar (Wisconsin's QRIS) and home visiting.
- Improve state policies on children's health, with an emphasis on increasing health care coverage and obesity prevention.
- Develop key elements of a model community approach to address racial disparities.

State Budget Updates



\$20 million increase for the child care payment rate increase. The Joint Committee on Finance's budget supported a two-year, 2015–2017 budget for child care subsidy that includes a \$20 million increase in payment rates, a promising turnaround after a seven-year freeze on the rates.



The overall child care subsidy budget was reduced by \$6 million over the two-year budget despite an increase in the child care payment rate. The cut was much less severe than in recent years. The new child care subsidy budget provides \$100 million less per year than it did five years ago.



Rejected \$360 million in federal funds to expand Medicaid to adults up to 138% of the federal poverty level, which is expected to have a negative impact on low-income parents.



Enrollment in universal free 4-year-old Kindergarten (4K) continues to grow, with 95% of school districts offering 4K to 47,844 children – or about 66% of all 4-year-olds in the state. 4K financing could be affected by lower allocations to many public schools.

Recent Policy Changes



Interim Support for Child Care Rates: The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) got legislative approval to increase child care payment rates for the last seven months of the 2014–2015 fiscal year, prior to the 2015–2017 biennial budget, which began July 2015.



Child Care Policies: As the DCF plans to implement an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system to pay subsidy payments via parents, initial discussed policies would pay based on enrollment, pay upfront and eliminate attendance reporting—all positive changes for child care providers. The plan also includes QRIS quality bonus payments included on the parent's EBT card, causing concern for providers because the policy would result in lower bonus payments to many high-quality programs (4- and 5-Star) and confuse parents.

Policy Opportunities

- Strong state interest in improving 3rd-grade reading proficiency.
- General support for YoungStar QRIS.
- Build on efforts funded by the state's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant, which will total \$34 million over four years.

Policy Challenges

- Very conservative administration, with top-down decision making.
- Lack of collaborative environment for problem solving with key state officials.
- Funding for early care and education is being shifted, possibly permanently, to other priorities.

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