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Highlights

Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CC)

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announced a second round of competitive funding for the EHS-CC partnerships of about \$135 million through three different grant application avenues due July 1, 2016:

- [Early Head Start Expansion and EHS-Child Care Partnership Grants](#)
- [American Indian/Alaska Native EHS Expansion and EHS-Child Care Partnerships](#)
- [Migrant and Seasonal EHS-Child Care and EHS Expansion Partnerships](#)

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Federal Updates

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The House of Representatives Education and Workforce Committee held a hearing on ESSA "[Next Steps for K-12 Education: Upholding the Letter and Intent of the Every Student Succeeds Act](#)," feature testimony from Acting Secretary of Education John King.

Department of Education

- The Senate held [confirmation hearings](#) for Dr. John King's nomination for Secretary of Education last week after [President Obama](#) decided to officially nominate him.
- Acting Sec. King also testified in front of House Ed and Workforce on behalf of the department's FY17 budget request in the "[Examining the Policies and Priorities of the US Department of Education](#)" hearing.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

HHS announced a significant reorganization impacting the Office of Head Start (OHS), the Office of Child Care (OCC) and the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development (ODAS-ECD) in an effort to align Head Start and Child Care. The changes transfer reporting authority of OCC and OHS in their entirety from the Office of the Assistant Secretary (OAS) to the ODAS-ECD. Read more in the [Federal Register](#).

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Policy Trends and Analysis

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The Ounce of Prevention Fund released a new Ounce Policy Conversation, "[Valuing the Early Years in State Accountability Systems Under the Every Student Succeeds Act](#)," which argues that the ESSA represents an important shift away from the No Child Left Behind era's dominating focus on test scores in K-12 accountability and through ESSA states can design accountability systems that take better account of the pre-3rd grade years by including non-assessment measures of school and student success. Accompanying the report, Elliot Regenstein published a [blog post](#) with the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

Race and Ethnic Disparities

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) published "[Disparate Access: Head Start and CCDBG Data by Race and Ethnicity](#)." The report finds that access to child care subsidies and Head Start is sharply limited for all eligible children and even more so for particular racial and ethnic groups and in particular states. Christina Samuels with [Education Week](#) profiles the report.

Children with Unauthorized Immigrant Parents

"[A Profile of U.S. Children with Unauthorized Immigrant Parents](#)" is a new fact sheet produced by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) that reviews literature and data that highlights the disadvantages these children face in terms of development.

Federal Investments

First Focus created a series of fact sheets and reports "[Children in the President's Budget](#)" outlining different areas of the President's FY17 budget including [children at large](#) and [income supports](#).

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New Research

Early Care and Education

Research Connections created a [resource page](#) for the National Survey of Early Care and Education that includes available data files, tutorials, and research reports to name a few.

Parental Employment

Child Trends' Data Bank updated its [report](#) about children and youth with parents with secured employment highlighting that among young children (under the age of six) 30% did not have a parent employed full-time, year-round and for young children in single mother-headed households that number jumps to 58%.

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Upcoming Events

March 7, 2016

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is hosting an encore presentation of "[Fabulous and Free: Resources to Support High Quality Inclusion](#)" featuring Camille Catlett from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute.

March 10, 2016

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is hosting a webinar accompanying its new report on Head Start and CCDBG access. [Register here](#) for "Webinar - Disparate Access: Head Start and CCDBG Data by Race and Ethnicity."

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News and Resources

State Policy Assessment Surveys

ZERO TO THREE's Policy Center released the "[Survey for Families with Children under 3 Years Old](#)," a survey tool that policy leaders and advocates can use to better understand families' experiences accessing health, early learning, and family support services and accompanies the recently released resource "Infants and Toddlers in the Policy Picture: A Self-Assessment Toolkit for States" also located on its state assessment resource page.

Preschool

New America published an article by Steve Barnett, Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University, articulating the purpose behind and takeaways of NIEER's often-cited benchmarks in the State of Preschool reports. Read "[Laying a Solid Floor: What's Important to Know about the NIEER Pre-K Benchmarks](#)" to learn more.

Home Visiting

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, Christian Soura, Director of the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, and other leaders announced the nation's first Pay for Success project aimed at improving health outcomes for mothers and children living in poverty-[the South Carolina Nurse-Family Partnership Pay for Success project](#) --after years of work to study the feasibility of such a [project](#) by the Institute for Child Success (ICS).

Workforce

The Washington Post's [Answer Sheet](#) published a post by child care expert Elizabeth Gilbert about the implications and difficulties of the high rates of functional illiteracy of child care providers.

State of the States

Education Week started compiling summaries of governors' state of the state addresses [here](#) and [here](#).

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News From The States

California

- The Democratic Members of the California Legislative Women's Caucus unveiled a number of legislative proposals to aid working California women including additional state funds for child care and children on welfare reports [The Los Angeles Times](#).
 - The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors approved the launch of a pilot project of the Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting model focused solely on first-time mothers building on the active home visiting programs already in the county. Read more in [The Santa Cruz Sentinel](#).
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Colorado

- Colorado's QRIS, Colorado Shines, recently reported that three centers received the highest rank of 5-indicating that "the center has excelled at health and safety, well-trained staff, supportive learning and programs to engage parents" reports [The Denver Post](#).
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Illinois

- Gov. Rauner delivered his budget address and proposal for FY17 calling on the legislature to accept some of his proposed reforms in return for raising taxes reports [CBS Chicago](#) and the [Chicago Sun-Times](#) . His budget proposal did include increases for education, including early childhood education and care programs. Advocates released statements expressing appreciation for the proposed increases but calling for a response to the current budget situation first. A joint statement on the budget was issued by a group of early childhood advocates including [the Ounce of Prevention Fund](#), with [Voices for Illinois Children](#) issuing a separate statement.
 - Gov. Rauner announced the creation of the [Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth](#), informally known as the Children's Cabinet, which will be a special cabinet aimed at streamlining education and other issues related to young people in Illinois.
 - The Shriver Center and Legal Council for Health Justice and the Chicago firm Goldberg Kohn won a court order that requires the state to pay Family Case Management providers for Medicaid-funded services provided to pregnant women, infants and children. Read more on [Capitol Fax](#).
 - [WBEZ91.5](#) talked with child care providers that are still struggling with Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) payments even after eligibility was restored as offices are struggling to process the paperwork.
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Indiana

- The Lilly Foundation an increased domestic and international partnership with United Way, including the United Way of Central Indiana in its efforts to [expand access](#) to the state's pre-k program.
 - The Indiana Youth Institute released its annual [Kids Count Report](#) that includes data on enrollment in preschool programs noting that enrollment has increased as has enrollment in accredited programs through the state's Path to Quality ranking system.
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Kansas

- Amanda Adkins, chairwoman of the Kansas Children's Cabinet, was criticized by other members of the group for not including more time for discussion on group budgetary recommendations, notes [Education Week](#).
 - [KCUR 89.3](#) highlights the pervasive issue of paying child care workers low wages in light of a recent Economic Policy Institute report on the issue and Kansas child care workers joined Fight for 15.
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Louisiana

- Gov. John Bel Edward released his [Executive Budget](#) which Superintendent John White notes could mean \$13.8 million in cuts to early childhood education programs, including LA 4 and the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development (NSECD) programs, as the state as to address both FY16 and FY17 deficits of \$900 million and \$2 billion respectively.
 - Gov. Bel Edward called a special legislative session to address the current year deficit and the [Policy Institute for Children](#) is tracking legislation related to early childhood.
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Maine

- Gov. Le Page announced that he withdrew the nomination of acting Education Commissioner William Beardsley and is [naming himself](#) instead.
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Michigan

- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded a second four-year \$5.5 million to the Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative (ELNC) to increase access to high quality early learning programs in Kent County, [mlive](#) reports.
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Nebraska

- A reporter for [The Omaha World-Herald](#) profiles the research and positive impacts around home visiting program developed with assistance by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute.
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New Hampshire

- Former state Rep. Elizabeth Blanchard penned an op-ed in [The Concord Monitor](#) expressing her concern about the New Hampshire House voting down a proposal to increase funding for full-day kindergarten.
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New Mexico

- The New Mexico Legislature approved an operating budget for the next year that unexpectedly included cuts as revenue forecasts were lower than expected - but funding did not change for early childhood reading and education programs and other childhood services, reports Morgan Lee with the [Associated Press](#).
- Parents and advocates testified at the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) hearing on its draft state Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) plan due to the federal government in March. They discussed the need for increased investments in the workforce and additional supports to working families. It came to light that there were some errors in the plan that made it look like copayments were increasing and provider rates dropping, but [The Santa Fe New Mexican](#) reports that those have changed.
- The executive director of Ngage New Mexico published an op-ed in [Las Cruces Sun-News](#) about the importance of investment in early childhood education and the countywide initiative to improve lives of children-the Success Partnership.
- Betsy Cahill, the J. Paul Taylor Endowed Professor of Early Childhood Education at the New Mexico State University College of Education, also wrote an op-ed in [The Albuquerque Journal](#) about the return on investment for preschool.

New York

- Independent Democratic Conference Leader Jeff Klein and State Senator David Carlucci announced their proposal to create a [Kindergarten Conversion Fund](#) from unclaimed or forfeited lottery prizes to support full-day kindergarten in the state, building on the learning and development begun in universal preschool programs.
- Department of Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia testified before the state legislature asking for an additional \$1.4 billion for the education budget which part would go toward an investment in universal pre-k rather than a new program as proposed by [Gov. Cuomo](#).
- [The Staten Island Advance](#) profiled Assemblyman Matthew Titone's desire for a serious focus on arts in education as well as early intervention services for children with special needs.
- David Kirp writes for [The New York Times](#) about the history behind New York's pre-k program expansion and implementation.
- [Sen. Daniel Squadron](#) proposes allowing parents to defer up to \$2,000 in taxes a year to ease the burden on high child care costs with the expectation that parents will then pay back the amount over a period of time when children are school age.
- A researcher at New York University studied records of New York City children in kindergarten from 2009 and found an association between those that attended full-time public pre-k and trying out for the gifted and talented classes in public schools reports [The New York Daily News](#).
- The New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council and the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute released "[QUALITYstarsNY: New York State's Bold Step to Ensure Access to Excellence in Early Childhood Education.](#)"

Oregon

- [The Oregonian Editorial Board](#) discussed the limitations of a minimum wage hike in terms of addressing high child care costs.
- The Oregon Department of Education announced results from the third annual [Kindergarten Assessment](#) showing that results are up, but continue to vary across the [state and programs](#).

Washington

- The new director of the Washington Department of Early Learning -- former state senator Ross Hunter -- wants to increase funding to expand access to high-quality preschool programs in the state, reports [The Seattle Times](#).
- The Department of Early Learning also released its [Kindergarten Readiness and Educational Success report](#) on the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). [Read more](#) in The Seattle Times.
- [House Bill 1928](#)-aimed at increasing data reports on homeless children in the state--stalled and died in the House Appropriations Committee for the second year.

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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.

The National Policy Digest is a bi-monthly newsletter that shares up-to-date and noteworthy developments in state and federal early childhood news, policy and funding changes, research, policy trends and analyses, upcoming events, etc. culled from diverse sources in the field. To subscribe, please visit our [website](#).



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