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Highlights

Infant-Toddler Mental Health

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee voted out of committee the *Mental Health Reform Act of 2016* with the inclusion of a provision addressing the need for prevention, intervention and treatment programs for infants and toddlers. Sens. Bill Cassidy and Chris Murphy championed the provision with the support of Chairman Lamar Alexander and Ranking Member Patty Murray. Read more from [ZERO TO THREE](#) and the [Senate HELP Committee](#).

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Federal Updates

Affordable Diapers

President Obama spoke at the SxSW Interactive Festival about the White House's new [policy initiative](#) around making diapers more affordable and accessible for everyone and the partnerships between the private and non-profit sectors. The Founder and Executive Director of the National Diaper Bank Network (NDBN)—a contributor to the partnership and increased efforts—published an op-ed in [The Huffington Post](#) in support of the initiative.

Impact Project

The State Capacity Building Center within the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance System announced the new [Impact Project](#) in which intensive consultation and assistance will be offered from the State Capacity Building Center's experts from ICF International, WestEd and Child Trends. Services are available for a period of 18 to 48 months for up to 10 states starting August 1, 2016. Applications are due April 22, 2016.

Child Care

The Office of Child Care (OCC) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announced a second request for comment in the [Federal Register](#) for the National Child Care

Hotline and Website that ACF is developing in response to the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014. Comments due midnight, April 7, 2016.

Early Childhood

ACF published a review of last year with its publication of "[2015 Early Childhood Accomplishment](#)" which includes the new, cross-sector Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) system and Head Start's 50th Anniversary.

Immigration

The Supreme Court is slated to hear [U.S. vs. Texas](#) in April, ultimately ruling whether the President's executive actions on immigration (known as DAPA and Expanded DACA) can go forward. The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), American Academy of Pediatrics, American Federation of Teachers, First Focus, National Association of Social Workers, and the National Education Association filed an amicus (friend of the court) [brief](#) on the interests of children on behalf of 76 educators and children's advocacy groups.

Affordable Care Act

Last week was the sixth anniversary of the signing of the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](#) (PPACA or ACA for short) and the [White House](#) and [HHS](#) celebrated the [20 million people](#) who gained coverage with the ACA.

FY17 House Republicans Budget Resolution

The House Budget Committee [voted](#) the [FY2017 Budget Resolution](#) out of committee. The resolution proposes changes to a number of social service programs, including block granting the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP), and repealing the ACA, -both of which support young children and their families. Read press releases from the [Food Research & Action Center \(FRAC\)](#) and the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities \(CBPP\)](#).

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Policy Trends & Analysis

Poverty

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) released "[Poverty in the United States: 50-Year Trends and Safety Net Impacts](#)" report that looks at the impact of the safety net on poverty rates between 1967 and 2012.

Early Childhood Financing

The Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start's Early Educator Central published "[Financing High-Quality Infant-Toddler Care: Options and Opportunities](#)," by Louise Stoney, co-founder of the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance and Opportunities Exchange.

School Readiness

The Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation (OPRE) released "[Developmental Foundations of School Readiness for Infants and Toddlers: A Research to Practice Report](#)."

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New Research

Preschool

Lynn Karoly and other researchers with the RAND Corporation analyzed and compiled evaluation [findings from 15 full-scale preschool programs](#) in an effort to see "whether publicly funded, high-quality preschool programs-implemented under real-world conditions-benefit participating children and whether the associated economic costs and benefits generate favorable economic concerns." The study- "[Informing Investments in Preschool Quality and Access in Cincinnati: Evidence of Impacts and Economic Returns from National, State, and Local Preschool Programs](#)" -reports on shared features of programs with sustained effects including the quality of teacher-child interactions and quality of instructional support, among others. *EducationWeek* highlights the study [here](#).

Hispanic Children

The National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families published "[Using Existing Large-Scale Data to Study Early Care and Education among Hispanics](#)" that describes data elements specific to ECE experiences and the limitations and opportunities in existing large-scale data sets.

TANF Reengagement

Researchers with MDRC under the auspice of the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) project used behavioral economics lens to design an intervention that would increase the number of TANF recipients in Los Angeles that reengage in the program after a 2013 policy change removed the exemption afforded adults with young children. Read "[Framing the Message: Using Behavioral Economics to Engage TANF Recipients](#)" and the [report overview](#).

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Upcoming Events

March 30, 2016

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY), Sen. Patty Murray and Rep. Bobby Scott are hosting a congressional briefing "[Early Childhood Homelessness in the United States.](#)"

June 1-3, 2016

ACF is hosting the [2016 Research and Evaluation Conference on Self-Sufficiency \(RECS\)](#) in Washington, D.C. that will focus on programs, policies and services that support low-income and vulnerable families on the path to economic self-sufficiency and well-being.

June 29, 2016

The Education Commission of the States' is holding its [National Forum on Education Policy](#) in Washington, D.C.

July 11-13, 2016

ACF is hosting the [National Research Conference on Early Childhood](#) (formally the Head Start National Research Conference) in Washington, D.C.

October 13-14, 2016

The Institute for Child Success (ICS) is hosting the [fourth annual Early Childhood Research Symposium](#) in Charlotte, North Carolina. Deadline for calls for papers is June 1, 2016.

November 15-16, 2016

The Ounce of Prevention Fund is hosting the [Sixth National Summit on Quality in Home Visiting Programs](#) in Washington D.C. The event is targeted to researchers, advocates,

policymakers and practitioners. Call for workshop proposals is [now open](#). For more information, visit [here](#).

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News and Resources

Child Poverty

The American Academy of Pediatrics published a policy statement titled "[Poverty and Child Health in the United States](#)" in which they recommend greater investments in promising public policies such as early childhood programs like home visiting as well as two-generation strategies. In addition they share ways in which individual pediatricians can support the healthy development of children by screening for poverty-related disorders and collaborating with community organizations and promising programs such as early intervention and MIECHV.

Early Childhood Education

- The National Conference of State Legislatures continues to update weekly its [Early Education and Child Care Bill Tracking Database](#) in which legislation can be searched by state, topic, status, primary sponsor, bill number or keyword.
 - [Lillian Mongeau](#) with *EducationWeek* reports that SXSWed included 12 dedicated early-education sessions and appearances by U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. and other state leaders as the topic became a prominent feature at the tech-focused education conference.
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Preschool

- The dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, [James E. Ryan](#), published a piece in *Education Week* about the potential for state constitutions' guarantee for a right to public education to include preschool as state-funded programs expand, citing his own law review article.
 - Juleyka Lantigua-Williams writes for [The Atlantic](#) about San Antonio's experience implementing the city-funded Pre-K for San Antonio initiative.
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Early Childhood Investment

[Caridad Araujo](#), the lead economist in the social protections and health division of the Inter-American Development Bank participated in an interview with *The Atlantic* about the benefits of investing in early childhood education.

Developmental Delays

The American Academy of Pediatrics created a new tool for parents "[The Physical Developmental Delays: What to Look For.](#)"

Child Trauma

Wendy Smith, an associate dean at the University of Southern California's School of Social Work, adapted remarks given during a Congressional roundtable for an article in [The Chronicle for Social Change](#) about the impact of child trauma on children's brains and the need for greater investments.

Child Care

ZERO TO THREE's executive director, Matthew Melmed, posted an op-ed in [The Huffington Post](#) about the lack of high-quality infant-toddler child care and called for including access to high-quality child care in the next administration's policy agenda.

Inclusion

- Linda K. Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development, and Phil Strain from the University of Colorado Denver discussed the research supporting early childhood inclusion in "[Preschool Inclusion: What's the Evidence, What Gets in the Way, and What do High-Quality Programs Look Like?](#)"
 - The Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute has archived supporting materials from the Professional Development SIG of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) webinar on free resources to support high-quality inclusion. You can find them [here](#) and [here](#).
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Interoperability

[Maria Cancian](#), the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy at the Administration for Children and Families, wrote about the proposals included in President Obama's FY 2017 Budget that support systems interoperability—a Statewide Human Services Data System (SHSDS) and a Systems Innovation Technical Assistance Center (SITAC)—and ultimately leverage already existing investments in children and families.

Substance Abuse

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) released "[Principles of Substance Abuse Prevention for Early Childhood](#)".

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News From The States

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ARIZONA

- [The Arizona Republic's](#) Alia Beard Rau profiles the state's extensive history and utilization of tax credits which has fed concerns of mission creep and erosion of the tax base, especially as numerous tax credits have already been proposed in the current legislative session—including one to fund early childhood education.
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CALIFORNIA

- The California state Assembly swore in Assemblyman Anthony Rendon as Speaker of the Assembly in early March reports [capital public radio](#). The new Speaker has noted his desire to prioritize early childhood education, having led an early education non-profit before his time in the Assembly. [KPCC](#) reports on the advocacy already underway by early childhood stakeholders with the new Speaker.
- [New America](#) released profiles of Fresno, Oakland, and East San Jose as part of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Starting Smart and Strong Initiative.

FLORIDA

- Head Starts in the Miami area and surrounding counties have begun implementing the "Raising a Reader" initiative aimed at engaging caregivers in routine book sharing reports [The Miami News-Record](#).
- A fellow with the Studer Community Institute writes in [The Pensacola News Journal](#) about the Legislature's decision to have the state's Office of Early Learning not release kindergarten readiness rates again as programs continue to adapt to the new system.

GEORGIA

- Educare Atlanta's early focus on reading was profiled by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's public media initiative [American Graduate, Let's Make it Happen](#).

ILLINOIS

- As the state continues to operate with a formal budget for FY2016, State Senate Democrats [passed a \\$3.8 billion funding bill](#) for colleges and social services after a similar proposal cleared the House.
- State Comptroller Leslie Munger reported to the Senate appropriations committee that the \$7.6 billion bill backlog is technically higher because it only accounts for what is required by court order and the amount could reach [\\$10 billion](#) by the summer.
- House Speaker Michael Madigan published an op-ed in [The State Journal-Register](#) about the budget impasse and the Rauner administration's actions related to changing child care eligibility.
- Early childhood advocates reached out to legislators about the lasting impact the temporary eligibility rule changes to the Child Care Assistance Program and the lack of a budget are having on young children and the child care system as [enrollment remains much lower](#) than previous years.
- Mayor Rahm Emanuel's office is overhauling the delivery of preschool services in the city again after changes in 2013 were met with mixed results, reports [Catalyst Chicago](#).

INDIANA

- United Way of Central Indiana predicts that as many as 7,000 families will apply for Indianapolis' pre-k program during the 2016-2017 school year although only about 1,600 scholarships will be available reports [Education Week](#).

KANSAS

- After both the Senate and the House rejected the proposal in the governor's budget to sweep \$57 million from the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) and Children's Initiative Fund (CIF) and support early childhood programs through the general fund, Senate Bill 463 was introduced to [abolish the KEY and CIF](#).
- The Senate Ways and Means Committee held a hearing on Senate Bill 463 and advocates-including Kansas Action for Children-testified about the [implications of the legislation](#) on children.

- The Women's Foundation commissioned the University of Kansas' Center for Science and Technology & Economic Policy to produce the "[Status of Women in Kansas](#)" report that analyzes factors such as economic well-being.
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LOUISIANA

- The Louisiana Legislature adjourned its first 2016 Special Session after passing House Bill 122 in response to necessary mid-year budget cuts. In the final version, early childhood education programs were protected from these mid-year cuts reports [The Times-Picayune](#) and the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children.
 - The 2016 Regular Legislative Session kicked off in mid-March and the state continues to face financial woes in the ballpark of \$800 million for fiscal year 2017.
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MAINE

- [The Bangor Daily News](#) Editorial Board wrote about Gov. LePage's changes to the state's TANF eligibility that has resulted in a drastic caseload drop and millions in unspent federal TANF funds.
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MICHIGAN

- Early childhood programs in Flint, Michigan are in a hiring push after additional state and federal funds have been directed to the city reports [mlive](#).
 - The president and CEO of United Way for Southeastern Michigan gave the [opening remarks](#) at a White House forum about the Social Innovation Fund and the United Way's use of it in the Detroit area.
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NEBRASKA

- The Trustees of the Sixpence Early Learning Fund [announced](#) that six new grants were awarded to school district-early care and education partnerships in North Platte, Kearney, Falls City and a consortium serving communities in hubs.
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NEW HAMPSHIRE

- State Sen. David Watters published an op-ed in [The Concord Monitor](#) about the need for a state-funded preschool program and his proposal to allow for pay for success in the state, particularly for early childhood programming.
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NEW MEXICO

- A pediatrician at the Young Children's Health Center, University of New Mexico Health Systems writes in [The Albuquerque Journal](#) about the impact of adverse experiences on child development.

NEW YORK

- The Assembly's SFY 2016-17 [budget proposal](#) would invest \$83.7 million to support additional child care slots, after school care and other working families' supports.

VIRGINIA

- The 2016 General Assembly finalized the biennial state budget and included numerous [increased investments](#) in early childhood programs including \$4.2 million increase for early intervention, \$4.6 million increase to support a mixed delivery system for at-risk preschool and strengthening of the early care workforce, and an additional \$4.75 million for Healthy Families.

WASHINGTON

- Advocates are requesting that the state support the nearly 200 homeless children on the waitlist for Washington's subsidized preschool program with an additional \$2 million investment reports [The Seattle Times](#).
- The co-founder and former CEO of Costco Wholesale, Jim Sinegal, and his daughter, Suzanne Sinegal McGill, co-founder and president of Rwanda Girls Initiative, published an [op-ed](#) in *The Seattle Times* about the need for additional investment in early childhood education to expand access to the eligible children currently not being served.
- The Washington Senate [approved House Bill 1541](#) that would help close the achievement gap by ending long-term suspensions and expulsions and improves bilingual instruction reports Education Week.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

- The D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute and D.C. Appleseed released a report "[Solid Footing](#)" about the discrepancy between government subsidy received by prekindergarten centers and the cost of receiving high quality early childhood education in the district.

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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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