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**Highlights**

**Louisiana Embarks on New ECE Accountability System**

The Louisiana Policy Institute for Children published a new report "[Measuring Up: Strengthening Louisiana's Early Childhood Accountability System](#)," that offers a comprehensive roadmap for improving Louisiana's system for observing and rating Pre-K classrooms and child care centers for some 62,000 children statewide age 4 and under attending publicly-funded early childhood care and education programs. [The Advocate](#) profiled the report.

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**Federal Updates**

**Career Pathways**

- The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a draft policy statement on early childhood career pathways building on four recent developments that underscore the importance of the early childhood workforce, including the Institute of Medicine report recommendations and the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) definition of career pathways. Read more about the draft policy statement [here](#). Comments due on the draft by May 20 by emailing [ECD@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ECD@acf.hhs.gov).
- Building on the federal partnership to promote the use of career pathways created in April 2012 between the US Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services, 12 federal agencies came together to release a [joint letter](#) around shared definitions and goals for career pathway systems.

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

The next round of applications for Early Head Start Expansion and EHS-Child Care Partnership Grants is set to be posted on June 30 and due August 30 according to the HHS Grants Forecast [website](#).

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## Head Start

The [Obama Administration](#) announced \$300 million in funding to expand the number of Head Start children attending full school-day and full-year programs through the US Department of Health and Human Services.

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## Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

As directed by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) [strengthened the nutrition standards](#) for CACFP, aligning them with WIC and other child nutrition programs.

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## Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The US Department of Education is seeking input on what areas of ESSA to provide non-regulatory guidance, specifically ways in which to [expand early learning](#) by May 25, 2016. Comments should be sent to [ESSA.guidance@ed.gov](mailto:ESSA.guidance@ed.gov).

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## Policy Trends & Analysis

### Child Refugees

Researchers at the Migration Policy Institute produced "[Providing a Head Start: Improving Access to Early Childhood Education for Refugees](#)," that looked at two cities where refugee resettlement and Head Start programs have been working together to increase refugee participation and pass along benefits of early childhood education services.

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### Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) produced [three new briefs](#) about the implications of the CCDBG reauthorization for state Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) state policies after reviewing the CCDF state policies database.

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### Pre-K through 3rd Grade

New America's Early and Elementary Education Policy Program created a series of briefs "[Principal's Corner: Perspectives on Teaching and Learning in Prek-3rd Grade](#)" based on focus groups of elementary school principals.

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### Early Intervention

The National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) issue brief called "[State Medicaid and Early Intervention Agency Partnerships to Promote Healthy Child Development](#)" highlights strategies from Connecticut, Illinois and Oregon for aligning Medicaid and Part C Early Intervention agency processes and policies for developmental screening and referral.

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## New Research

### Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

Opportunity Institute published "[New Kids on the Block: Findings from the First Year of California's State Preschool QRIS Block Grant](#)," that evaluates the Early Learning Quality

Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grant that awards \$50 million annually to counties in California to build QRIS after its first year of applications. Findings include significant expansion in the number of children (59,000) served by programs with the highest quality ratings if the applications are implemented successfully.

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## Home Visiting

Researchers with MDRC released the third annual report on the largest random assignment study on home visiting services, "[An Early Look at Families and Local Programs in the Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation-Strong Start](#)" presenting baseline characteristics of families and local home visiting programs in the study.

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## Upcoming Events

### May 25, 2016

The Ounce of Prevention Fund is hosting "A Seat on the Rug: Enrolling and Serving Children Experiencing Homelessness in Early Learning Programs" in Chicago, Illinois and via webcast that will explore best practices for servicing families experiencing homelessness in early care and education programs. Learn more [here](#).

### June 1, 2016

The Ounce of Prevention Fund, the Inclusion SIG and the Policy and Advocacy arm of Division for Early Childhood (DEC) are hosting the first of a number of webinars on inclusion in high quality early childhood programs and services, "[Inclusion for Young Children with Special Needs in Child Care: What the Field Needs to Know at a Federal, State and Local level.](#)"

### June 1-3, 2016

The US Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (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 22-24, 2016

The Institute for Child Success (ICS), ReadyNation, and the Sorenson Impact Center are co-hosting the [Third Annual Conference of the Early Childhood Social Impact Performance Advisors](#) in Denver, Colorado.

### 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.

### July 12-14, 2016

The BUILD Initiative and the QRIS National Learning Network are hosting the [2016 QRIS National Meeting](#) in New Orleans, Louisiana.

### October 13-14, 2016

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

### Preschool

- First Five Years Fund (FFYF) executive director Kris Perry authored a blog post on [Medium](#), "Yes, preschool works. Let's make it work for more children."
- American Enterprise Institute's Katharine B. Stevens published a blog post "[We're asking the wrong questions about early childhood education: Popularity doesn't tell the whole story.](#)" about her recent paper highlighting research on the success of pre-k programs.

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### Social Emotional Learning

The National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) convened a small group of state officials and state and national partners for an in-person forum focused on "Cross-Systems Collaboration for Children's Social-Emotional Development." Materials available on the [Alliance for Early Success website](#).

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### State Early Childhood Policy

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) continues to update its [Early Care and Child Care Tracking Bill Database](#) with 2016 state legislation.

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### Benefits Access

The [Work Support Strategies \(WSS\)](#) initiative produced videos about five of the states that received funding and technical assistance to design, test, and implement more effective, streamlined and integrated approaches to delivering key supports (including health coverage, nutrition benefits and child care subsidies).

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### Family Support

Brookings Institute's Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst published "[Family support or school readiness? Contrasting models of public spending on children's early care and learning](#)" in the Evidence Speaks blog series.

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### Science and Technology

- The Center on the Developing Child created "[From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts: A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising Future for Young Children and Families.](#)"

- Sesame Street Workshop and IBM's Watson are teaming up for three years to develop products for preschool classrooms and home that build on Watson's artificial intelligence capabilities. Read more in the [Washington Post](#) .

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## Early Childhood Investment

Foundation Strategy Group (FSG) created "[Improving the Odds: Seven Principles for Investing in Early Care and Education](#)" based on its work with funders such as Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Houston Endowment.

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## Mental Health

The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) finally finalized the [rules](#) for mental and behavioral health parity in Medicaid in response to the passage of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) in 2008 and following the rules created for commercial plans in 2013. [Read more](#) from Center for Law and Social Policy's (CLASP) Suzane Wilke.

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## News From The States

[AZ](#) | [CA](#) | [CO](#) | [FL](#) | [IL](#) | [IN](#) | [KS](#) | [LA](#) | [ME](#) | [MI](#) | [NH](#) | [NM](#) | [NY](#) |

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## Arizona

- The Arizona Legislature passed a \$9.6 billion budget that failed to contain a restoration of KidsCare, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which was closed to enrollment in 2010 leaving Arizona as the only state that does not participate in the [program](#).

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## California

- Assemblyman Kevin McCarty introduced AB 2660, [The Quality Early Education and Development Act](#), that builds on the vetoed AB 47 from the previous legislative session in asking for the legislature to come up with a multi-year plan to provide access to high-quality pre-k programs for at least one year and enhance the quality of public pre-k.
- California's [expansion of Medicaid](#) to undocumented children that was included in the 2015-16 budget goes into effect this month. California is now the largest state to cover low-income undocumented children as 170,000 children under the age of 19 are estimated to be eligible.

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## Colorado

- The Colorado Office of Early Childhood secured a four-year grant to improve the administration and logistics of its QRIS system, Colorado Shines and just announced a [new platform](#) that will connect the new and legacy data systems through a Salesforce platform.

## Florida

- The [Orlando Sentinel's](#) Scott Maxwell penned a column about the legislature's failure to increase funding for pre-k despite past voter approval.
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## Illinois

- Steve Bogira with the [Chicago Reader](#) profiles the budget impasse's impact on home visiting programs in light of recent emergency funding that the higher education community received through legislative action.
  - The number of school-age children living in poverty and attending the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has dropped by about 10,000 to 11,000 students from last year and higher than the overall drop in district enrollment, leading many to believe the numbers are drastically undercounting the true number. The impact this number has on budgets at schools has many worried as they hypothesize and investigate the cause of the change. Read more in [Catalyst Chicago](#).
  - The Chicago Board of Education approved a new Education of Homeless Children and Youth Policy to assist with ensuring all children have access to high-quality education. Read the [press release](#).
  - [ReadyNation](#) released Illinois' STEM Workforce Starts with Early Education.
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## Indiana

- [New America's](#) Abbie Lieberman discusses the positive impact Early Head Start Child Care partnerships can have on enrolled children as well as their counterparts as she profiles a partnership between Early Learning Indiana and Little Dove Daycare in Indianapolis.
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## Kansas

- Advocates in Kansas urged the legislature to [repeal state income tax cuts](#) that Gov. Sam Brownback signed and damaged the stability of the budget for the past two years.
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## Louisiana

- The Louisiana Policy Institute for Children published a new report "[Measuring Up: Strengthening Louisiana's Early Childhood Accountability System](#)," that offers a comprehensive roadmap for improving Louisiana's system for observing and rating pre-k classrooms and child care centers for some 62,000 children statewide age 4 and under attending publicly-funded early childhood care and education programs. [The Advocate](#) profiled the report.
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## Maine

- The House and Senate voted to override Gov. LePage's veto of LD 1689-now [Public Law 2016, Chapter 497](#)-requiring criminal background checks to put Maine in compliance with the new Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) rules.
- In addition, the Judiciary Committee initiated, and the House and Senate passed, a [Joint Study Order to Establish a Working Group To Study Background Checks for Child Care Facilities and Providers](#).

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## Michigan

- The Genesee Intermediate School District teachers are going door to door in Flint to register children for early education programs as a response to the city's drinking water crisis reports [Michigan Radio](#).
- Cornell William Brooks, president and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Yasmina Vinci, executive director of the National Head Start Association, penned an op-ed in [The Detroit Free Press](#) calling for access to Head Start for all children in Flint and highlight the President's recent visit to the city and call from "Little Miss Flint."

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## New Hampshire

- [New Hampshire Public Radio](#) interviewed the executive director of Early Learning NH, the executive director of Rochester Child Care Center, and the editor of Business New Hampshire Magazine about the Economic Policy Institute's report about state-by-state costs of child care. Guests also included the senior economist at EPI and co-author of the report and state Sen. Andrew Hosmer.

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## New Mexico

- Advocacy groups--SWOP Action, New Mexico Voices for Children, HELP-NM, NGage New Mexico, OLÉ, AVANCE and the Borderlands Writing Project-gathered candidates together as part of a series of forums on early childhood education. More information available at [www.EarlyChildhoodVoter.com](http://www.EarlyChildhoodVoter.com) and [Las Cruces Sun-News](#).

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## New York

- [News Channel 13](#) reported about Gov. Cuomo's push to strengthen standards and oversight for child care centers.
- David Sandman, the president of New York State Health Foundation, published an op-ed in [Huffington Post](#) about the need to compliment universal prekindergarten with universal school lunch.

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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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33 West Monroe Street Suite 2400  
Chicago, IL 60603 · 312.922.3863  
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