

Table of Contents

[Highlights](#) | [Federal Updates](#) | [Policy Trends & Analysis](#) | [New Research](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [News and Resources](#) | [News from the States](#) |

Highlights

Resources to Support Immigrant and Refugee Children

In the first few days of taking office, President Trump signed a series of [Executive Orders \(EO\)](#) related to border security, immigration, and refugees. While the EO focusing on refugees was challenged in court and is being revised by the administration, new guidelines were recently issued by the Department of Homeland Security around enforcing deportation in response to the EO on immigration. CLASP's Wendy Cervantes wrote for [Medium](#) about the impact of these immigration raids on our nation's children. New America writes about the [US Department of Education guide](#) from early January that provides resources on supporting immigrant children and families and how this information can be of particular use now.

[Back to Table of Contents](#) ^

Federal Updates

Education

Organizations across the political spectrum reacted to the confirmation of [Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education](#). Earlier this month, Secretary DeVos was confirmed after Vice President Mike Pence voted to break a tied 50-50 vote.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

[Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos](#) moved ahead with ESSA state plans, requesting states submit their plans by April 3 (an early deadline) or September 18 (later deadline). This is comes as the new administration paused the ESSA accountability regulation put into effect under President Obama. The regulation will be delayed for 60 days while it undergoes review, according to [Education Week](#).

Paid Family Leave

In conjunction with the 24th anniversary of the signing of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) that created protections for unpaid work leave, Sen. Gillibrand lead a group of 27 Senators to reintroduce the [Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act \(FAMILY\)](#) that would

enhance these protections and make them more accessible to millions of families. Read more about the FAMILY Act from [CLASP](#).

Family Supportive Housing

The Administration for Children and Families and the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) published the "[Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool for Family Supportive Housing](#)," a new tool to complement the "[Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool for Family Shelters](#)."

Military Child Care

Initial reports from [Military.com](#) and [The Hill](#) indicated that the President Trump's federal civilian hiring freeze impacted the child care programs from at least two Army bases. Unable to hire new staff to replace "usual staff turnover and illnesses" some programs are being suspended. The [Associated Press](#) writes that these cuts might have been mistakes .

Health Care

The House Republicans released recess talking points for members that included an outline for repealing the Affordable Care Act. [The New York Times](#) reports that it would include reduced federal payments for Medicaid expansion and cap or block grant state's Medicaid reimbursements. [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#), [Georgetown University Center for Children and Families](#) , and [Center for Law and Social Policy](#) have outlined the impact such changes could have on children and families.

[Back to Table of Contents ^](#)

Policy Trends & Analysis

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

The Ounce of Prevention Fund published its latest Ounce Policy Conversation, [Uses and Misuses of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results](#). The paper provides an explanation of why kindergarten readiness is important and how it can benefit states, communities, and educators - but also to guard against misuse of the results.

Child Care and the Safety Net

The American Enterprise Institute released a new report [A Safety Net That Works](#), which includes a chapter on the US child care assistance program and recommends expanding funding and choice for low-income families.

Quality Early Childhood Programs

The Center for American Progress released [Quality 101: Identify the Core Components of a High-Quality Early Childhood Program](#) that offers a guide to what to look for when identifying quality programs.

Food Insecurity

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) released "[Addressing Food Insecurity: A Toolkit for Pediatricians](#)," which provides information to pediatricians on how to screen for food insecurity and connect families to nutrition programs.

Head Start

Bellwether Education Partners released a [new report](#) highlighting lessons from Head Start over the last ten years, including improved teacher quality standards and state profiles.

Medicaid and CHIP

The Georgetown Center for Children and Families and the American Academy of Pediatrics [released state fact sheets](#) on how Medicaid, CHIP and the ACA have covered children and helped coverage reach historic levels.

[Back to Table of Contents ^](#)

New Research

Early Childhood Education

A [new study published](#) in Child Development found that the high-quality, center-based early childhood education offered at Educare has a positive impact on the development of financially disadvantaged infants and toddlers. The randomized control trial (RCT) study found that Educare children after one year of enrollment, at approximately age 2, had significantly higher English language skills, fewer parent reports of problem behaviors and more positive parent-child interactions than children who did not attend Educare. [Read more.](#)

STEM

The report, [STEM Starts Early: Grounding Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Education in Early Childhood](#), looks at research on early childhood and STEM and some of the common misconceptions about how to STEM learning at an early age. The report seeks to help educators, researchers, and policymakers reframe these issues to promote STEM learning.

Head Start

Urban Institute released a new evaluation report, [Early Implementation of the Head Start Designation Renewal System: Volume I & II](#), which finds that DRS is meeting its goal of incentivizing grantees and applicants to engage in quality improvement activities. However, the evaluation also raises concerns about some quality indicators.

[Back to Table of Contents ^](#)

Upcoming Events

February 28, 2017

CLASP and the Georgetown Center for Children and Families are hosting a webinar "[Threats to the ACA and Medicaid: What's at Stake for Children.](#)"

March 17, 2017

The US Department of Health and Human Services' Child Care State Capacity Building Center is accepting applications for a new cohort of its state leaders peer learning forum, [Emerging State Leaders: Leading Change and Influencing People.](#)

March 22-23, 2017

The Ounce of Prevention Fund is hosting the 3rd annual Excellence in the Early Years: District Leadership Summit in Chicago, IL. The Summit provides an opportunity for district leaders and experts to come together from around the country to share innovative birth-through-3rd grade strategies and local practices that are helping students meet their full potential in the early years and beyond. The application to attend is now available on the [Summit website.](#)

June 27-29, 2017

QRIS National Learning Network is hosting the [QRIS National Meeting](#) in Dallas, TX.

June 28-30, 2017

The Education Commission of the States will be hosting its [2017 National Forum on Education Policy](#) in San Diego on June 28-30 at the Hotel Del Coronado.

[Back to Table of Contents ^](#)

News and Resources

Early Childhood

- The Business Roundtable released a report [Why Reading Matters and What to Do About It](#) that lays out a plan to improve reading proficiency through state policy agendas.
- James Heckman and J.B. Pritzker wrote an [op-ed for The Hill](#) outlining the need to link child care and preschool in order to support social mobility.
- [Brookings Institute](#) writes that Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos should embrace early childhood education and take advantage of its bipartisan support.

Child Care

- [New America writes](#) on the role that tax reform can play in improving quality and access to child care and early education programs.
- [WBUR](#) discusses whether or not child care should be considered a public right.
- [MyJournalCourier](#) published an op-ed from the American Enterprise Institute making the case for finding common ground when it comes to child care.
- New America profiles the [history of child care](#) in the US and they country's continued challenges concerning it.

Pre-kindergarten

- [The Hechinger Report](#) discusses the possibilities and limitations of offering online preschool.
- *The New York Times* discusses [what to look for](#) when choosing a preschool program.

Head Start

[U.S. News & World Report](#) published an op-ed highlighting the need to pay Head Start teachers more and that training isn't enough.

Poverty

The National Center for Children in Poverty released a [series of fact sheets](#) about low-income children in the US, highlighting that the youngest children are most likely to live in economic instability.

Workforce Development

The Center for American Progress released the report "[6 Policies to Support the Early Childhood Workforce.](#)" outlining how professional development, clear career paths, and other incentives can improve the quality of care.

Data Systems

States collect data from their early childhood systems, but in many cases their efforts are uncoordinated. This means data used to inform policy decisions and support the coordination of early learning services is often incomplete. That's where integrated data systems come in. The Early Childhood Data Collaborative has just launched its newly updated [website](#). The site includes an interactive map with profiles of state data systems, and other new features.

Homelessness

The brief "[Child and Family Well-Being and Homelessness: Integrating Research into Practice and Policy.](#)" highlights several of the most urgent challenges in addressing the needs of families experiencing homelessness and offers a set of strong policy recommendations for assessment, intervention, research, and service delivery related to homeless children and their parents. Chapter 5 of the brief, "Access to Early Childhood Services for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness," was co-authored by Carie Bires of the Ounce of Prevention Fund.

Home Visiting

Achieve OnDemand now offers live, online webinars and self-paced trainings designed specifically for home visitors and supervisors. Visit our [website](#) to see what is available. Or, email AchieveOnDemand@ounceofprevention.org with any questions.

[Back to Table of Contents ^](#)

News From The States

[CA](#) | [CO](#) | [FL](#) | [IL](#) | [IN](#) | [KS](#) | [LA](#) | [MI](#) | [NE](#) | [NH](#) | [NM](#) | [NY](#) | [TN](#) | [VT](#) | [DC](#) | [WI](#) |

California

- [The Los Angeles Times reports](#) on new survey research that shows some parents choose to leave or are losing their jobs because of high child care costs.
 - [89.3 KPCC reports](#) on districts expanding access to Transitional Kindergarten programs even in the absence of additional state funding.
 - [KPBS reports](#) on efforts to provide family child care providers with professional development and training to improve quality.
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Colorado

- [Chalkbeat](#) reports that educators in Colorado will soon need to take training in order to provide instruction to English learners.
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Florida

- [90.7 WMFE reports](#) on Florida's child care and early childhood education options given the cost and availability of programs in the state.

- [Herald Tribune reports](#) on the birth through age 8 early childhood services offered at the Florida Center for Early Childhood.
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Illinois

- Governor Bruce Rauner gave his third [budget address](#) this February, proposing a \$50 million increase in funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant, \$151.3 million increases in the Child Care Assistance Program, a \$4 million in Early Intervention funding, and increased funding for English learners. However, Illinois has gone almost two fiscal years without a budget.
 - [The Republic](#) assesses the ways in which two years without a budget has negatively impacted Illinois residents.
 - [Chicago Tribune](#) reports that dozens of social service agencies -- including early childhood education providers -- have filed another lawsuit against Governor Bruce Rauner and other Illinois leaders for the continued lack of a state budget and the expiration of the temporary budget in January.
 - The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs announced the [Tiny Boots Program](#), which helps veterans in the state access free child care to attend appointments or job interviews.
 - [Reuters](#) reports on the lawsuit filed by Chicago Public Schools against the state, which claims that the current state education funding scheme discriminates against CPS's student body.
 - [Boston Consulting Group released a report](#) showing Illinois ranks 34th out of states in terms of overall well-being; however, there is optimism about the state's prospects given its investments but it needs a clear vision.
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Indiana

- [The Journal Gazette](#) reports that the Indiana House passed an expansion of the state's pre-kindergarten program. However, as Indiana's [WISHTV](#) writes, the House bill language tying pre-kindergarten expansion to voucher expansion, which is causing backlash among state House Democrats.
 - [Indianapolis Business Journal](#) published an op-ed calling for responsible expansion of the state's pre-kindergarten program.
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Kansas

- The Kauffman Foundation announced that the Early Education Funders Collaborative is [seeking proposals](#) for projects and program that improve early education in Kansas City.
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Louisiana

- [The Times-Picayune](#) reports that Louisiana's preschool ratings are out and while they have a new emphasis on kindergarten readiness, the paper advises parents not to take them too seriously.
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Michigan

- [Slate](#) looks to Michigan to make the case for why free, high-quality pre-kindergarten is achievable and needed.
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Nebraska

- [Omaha World-Herald](#) reports that a state commission is looking to address challenges within the early childhood education profession.
 - [Lincoln Journal Star](#) reports on an approved grant proposal to pilot full-day pre-kindergarten in two elementary schools in Lincoln.
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New Hampshire

- [New Hampshire Public Radio](#) discusses the importance of investing in early childhood to see long-term child and economic benefits.
 - Governor Chris Sununu proposed expanded funding for full-day kindergarten in his proposed state budget.
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New Mexico

- [La Cruces Sun-News](#) reports on the new website "EarlyChildNM.org" to help connect families with young children to needed services.
 - [The Huffington Post](#) reports that Santa Fe can serve as a model for locals can lead on pre-kindergarten.
 - The Santa Fe New Mexican reports that the state's proposed constitutional amendment to take \$112 million for the state's land grant endowment to pay for early childhood education continues to move forward.
 - [The Albuquerque Journal](#) reports that less than one-fifth of the state's families eligible for child care subsidies receive them.
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New York

- [The Wilson Foundation](#) awarded \$1.8 million to Help Me Grow Western New York to build on early childhood initiatives and improve school readiness.
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Tennessee

- [The Chattanooga](#) reports on calls to expand pre-kindergarten in Chattanooga by a City Council Candidate.
 - [The Atlantic](#) writes about a Memphis preschool that incorporates nutrition lessons and healthy food into its curriculum.
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Vermont

- [VT Digger](#) reports on an analysis that predicts expanding child care would lead to large financial returns in the state.
- [WCAX](#) reports on new child care rules the potential effect on child safety.

Washington, DC

- [WTOP](#) has a five party series, "Child Care Crisis," that investigates the cost, quality, and need for more child care in the DC region.

Wisconsin

- [Wisconsin Public Radio](#) reports on a State Senate plane to provide tax breaks to help make child care more affordable.
- According to [WISC-TV](#) Wisconsin is facing a preschool teacher shortage as fewer people pursue the early childhood education field.

[Back to Table of Contents](#) ^

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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