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National Policy Digest

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Highlights

Federal Agencies Partner to Report on the Well-Being of Children

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics released the 17th version of its annual report of indicators on the well-being of children in the United States. "America's Children: Key Indicators of Well-Being, 2015" included participation from 23 federal agencies and has 41 key indicators. Highlights include data that show a slight drop in the number of infants born preterm or before the 37th week of pregnancy to 11.3% in 2013 and a decrease in the number of children living in poverty to 20% in 2013. Additionally, the report's special feature this year was on health care quality, which showed the percentage of children (0-17) having well-child visits as having increased to 83%. Read more [here](#).

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Federal Updates

Head Start

- US Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell signed an extension for the public comment period of the proposed Head Start Performance Standards revisions. The new and revised standards were published in June and represent the first major overhaul of the standards since they were first published in 1975. The comment period date has been extended from Aug. 18 to Sept. 17, 2015. Read the Federal Register announcement [here](#). View the full Notice of Proposed Rule Making and revised standards [here](#). Comment on the standards [here](#).
- The US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) published a companion piece to the Head Start Emergency Preparedness Manual, 2015 Edition, called Responding to Crises and Tragic Events: Information and Handouts, which addresses program needs when community violence and natural disasters occur. Read more [here](#).

Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP)

The US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Offices of Head Start, Child Care, and Early Childhood Development developed an Information Memorandum (IM) on policy and program guidance for the EHS-CCP. Read

more [here](#).

Preschool

The US Department of Education Office of Early Learning and the US Department of Health and Human Services Early Childhood Development Office launched a new website for the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) program to support state efforts around creating and expanding high-quality preschools, aligning preschool programs with birth-through-third-grade continuum of services, and more. Visit the website [here](#).

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Policy Trends and Analysis

Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC)

- The Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) co-sponsored a webinar on building public will around early learning issues and released a summary document on best practices and lessons learned on engaging the public. Read more [here](#).
 - BUILD released chapter seven of its e-book, *Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective systems for Young Children and Families*, about integrated data strategies. Read chapter seven [here](#) and an accompanying blog post [here](#).
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Child Care

- The Urban Institute published two reports about the recent reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and the federal workforce programs in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the intersection of the two in ensuring low-income parents who need education and training have supported child care needs through a partnership of these two federal programs. Read the CCDF-focused one [here](#) and the WIOA-focused one [here](#).
 - The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and the National Women's Law Center (NWLC) hosted a webinar about how the new Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) law could impact low-wage workers. Watch [here](#).
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Child Tax Credit (CTC)

The Center for American Progress (CAP) released a new report, "Harnessing the Child Tax Credit as a Tool to Invest in the Next Generation," that offers proposals to strengthen the current CTC in a number of ways including making it fully refundable, indexing the value to inflation, and enhancing the credit with a supplemental Young Child Tax Credit for children under age 3. CAP says what's proposed would lift more families and children out of poverty and help parents tackle the rising cost of raising a child. Read more [here](#).

Workforce

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the National Research Council (NRC) released a summary guide to their seminal report, "Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation." Read the full report [here](#) and the guide [here](#).

Child Development

Children's HealthWatch published a new Policy Brief on the relationship between co-enrollment in public programs and stable housing for children and what research shows as the positive effect stable housing on the health and education of a child. Children's HealthWatch found in other research that families receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and housing assistance were 72% more likely to be housing-secure than those just receiving a housing subsidy. Read more [here](#).

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New Research

Social Competence

The *American Journal of Public Health* published a 20-year retrospective study funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) about the positive association between kindergarteners who exhibit "social competence" traits and the attainment of higher education and well-paying jobs. For the study, researchers from Pennsylvania State University and Duke University followed kindergarten children evaluated for social competence measures for two decades. Read a summary of the study [here](#).

Home Visiting

Researchers from Mathematica Policy Research created a report for the Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) called "Addressing Attrition Bias in Randomized Control Trials: Consideration for Systematic Evidence Reviews," that discusses the Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness Review's (HomVEE) attrition standard. Read more [here](#).

Language Development Assessment and Screening

OPRE analyzed data from the Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (Baby FACES) in its new report, "Measuring Infant/Toddler Language Development: Lessons Learned About Assessment and Screening Tools," that looked at common language instruments including (1) Ages & Stages Questionnaires Third Edition Communication Scale (ASQ-3), (2) MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (CD), and (3) Early Communication Indicator adapted for use in Baby FACES (ECI-Adapted). Read more [here](#).

Child Development

The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (UChicago CCSR) published a report, "Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework," that offers a holistic view of children's developmental needs from early childhood to young adulthood. Read more [here](#).

Poverty

University of California Irvine School of Education Professor Greg Duncan is embarking on a new multi-year study about the impact of poverty on children's brain development and cognitive functioning by creating a random control trial in which low-income women with newborns are given varying cash payments. Other team members are based at the National Bureau of Economic Research, University of Wisconsin Madison, Columbia University, University of Maryland and Harvard University and include three neuroscientists and four social and behavioral scientists. Read more [here](#).

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Upcoming Events

Aug. 25

BUILD Initiative and the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) webinar: "**Lessons from the Learning Table on Great Teaching and Learning**"

[Learn More](#)>

Sept. 2

First Focus webinar: "**Pay-for-Success Initiatives for Early Childhood Programs**"

[Learn More](#) >

News and Resources

Presidential Election 2016

Kris Perry, the executive director of First Five Years Fund (FFYF), published a piece in the *IJReview* about the need for presidential candidates to support quality early childhood education, as polling shows the public as rating it the No. 2 national priority after improving jobs and the economy. Read more [here](#).

Homelessness

Child Care & Early Education Research Connections published its July 2015 Research-to-Policy Resource List on resources supporting young children and families experiencing homelessness. Read more [here](#).

Child Well-Being

The New York Times made the connection between the push for corporations to eliminate unpredictable scheduling practices and the developmental well-being of children, citing research reported by the Economic Policy Institute that highlighted a positive association between the two. Read more [here](#).

Child Care

- *The Washington Post* conducted a poll and found that a majority of mothers and fathers in the United States (75% of mothers and 50% of fathers) made job decisions-passed up opportunities, switched jobs, or quit-in order to care for their children. Read the accompanying article and the additional polling data [here](#).
 - First Five Years Fund (FFYF) and Yahoo Parenting published blog posts about Care.com's Annual Cost of Care Survey that looks at child care costs across the states. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).
 - Illinois-based nonprofits Illinois Action for Children and the Latino Policy Forum, released a report called "Chicago Mothers on Finding and Using Child Care During Nonstandard Work Hours," that provided Illinois data on provider availability and interviewed 50 single mothers with nontraditional schedules. Read more [here](#).
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Home Visiting

- Earlier this summer the Pew Charitable Trust hosted more than 700 policymakers, home visiting practitioners, and researchers to discuss home visiting innovations, workforce development improvements, and research on language that encourages utilization of programs. Read lessons learned from the summit [here](#).
 - The Pew Charitable Trust developed a list of indicators to guide states in data collection and analysis of home visiting investment impacts. Read more [here](#).
 - Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago created a short video that displays the expansion of home visiting models across the country from 1983 to 2015. Watch [here](#).
 - The May 2015 mdrc Mother Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation (MIHOPE) email includes key components of the first MIHOPE report released to Congress. Read more [here](#).
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Early Head Start/Head Start

- The Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), held the 19th Annual Birth to Three Institute. An archived video of the live-streamed conference is now available. Watch [here](#).
 - The Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), published an amendment to the user's manual developed by the Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality (FPTRQ) project about family services staff and family services staff parent measures. Read more [here](#).
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Retention

The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) created a review of research and practice literature related to the effects of early retention in its new FastFact, "Retention

in the Early Years: Is Early Retention an Effective, Research-Based Strategy for Improving Student Outcomes?" Read more [here](#).

Early Childhood Financing

The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) published an annotated bibliography on using tax policy-such as refundable tax credits-to assist with financing early childhood programs. Read more [here](#).

Leadership

The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) hosted its 2015 Roundtable, "Leading for Excellence: Building Key Competencies to Lead High Performing Early Learning Initiatives," in New Orleans this summer and published a summary of notes from the meeting. Read more [here](#).

Literacy Development

New America profiles a program aimed at closing the word gap-Ready 4K!-that involves texting parents about early literacy and other early learning skills. The program was piloted in the San Francisco Unified School District in 2013 by researchers at Stanford University. Read more [here](#).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) analyzed the Senate's version of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) reauthorization, *Every Child Achieves Act* (S. 1177), and the fact that it does not create a dedicated funding stream for pre-k, as well as the House version, *Student Success Act* (H.R. 5). Read more [here](#).

Child Development

- First Focus hosted a congressional briefing called "Early Childhood Screenings Ensure a Healthy Start in Life: What's Happening in the States to Improve Screening Rates?" in late July and presentations are now available. Read more [here](#).
 - The Autism Institute at Florida State University College of Medicine developed a free online tool, About Autism in Toddlers, for families and professionals interested in learning how to recognize early signs of autism spectrum disorder in young children. See more [here](#).
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News From The States

CA | CO | FL | IL | KS | LA | NM | NY | OK | OR | WA | WI |

California

California's drought is threatening the existence of the state's federally-funded Migrant Head Start centers as migrant farm working families have moved away from the traditional areas,

creating a low enrollment of eligible children. Read more [here](#).

Colorado

Erin Mewhinney has been named the Director of the Division of Early Care and Learning in the Office of Early Childhood by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Read more [here](#).

Florida

- The state director of the Children's Movement of Florida published an op-ed in the *Tallahassee Democrat* about early learning, specifically about the need for Florida to increase funding for its School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten programs, extend KidCare to children of lawfully-residing immigrants, and expand Help Me Grow! for parents accessing resources. Read more [here](#).
 - *The Miami New Times* investigates the lack of transparency and knowledge about the \$290 million the Miami-Dade Head Start received in federal funds to improve the program and the county's track record of fund mismanagement. Read more [here](#).
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Illinois

- Illinois State Legislature's Joint Commission on Administrative Rulemaking (JCAR) met to vote on the emergency rules introduced to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) that would significantly reduce eligibility for the program. A supermajority vote was required to override the rules, but despite the urging of early childhood advocates, JCAR did not block implementation of the rules. Read media coverage of the vote [here](#), as well as press releases from advocacy groups [here](#) and [here](#). Prior to the vote the Daily Journal editorial board wrote about the rule changes [here](#). Several social service and advocacy groups filed an official complaint with regard to the emergency rules before the hearing, more information [here](#).
- Despite the budget impasse, the *Chicago Tribune* reports that people estimate almost "8 of every 10 state tax dollars has been freed from the limbo of the budget impasse, much of it either by law or a judge's ruling" and calls it the new normal. Read more [here](#).
- An Illinois appellate court panel ruled that even without a state budget payments would continue to flow to home-based day care providers, upholding a Circuit Court decision that state government workers could continue collecting full salaries without a budget and clarifying that home-based day care centers were covered. These providers serve more than 104,000 children whereas the remaining 75,600 (42 %) are served by for-profit and not-for-profit child care centers that do not apply in the ruling. Read more [here](#).
- The Illinois House agreed to remove state money from a bill that would authorize spending of federal aid and passed a "clean" bill back to the Senate that must agree to the other changes the House made with regard to authorizing federal spending by the Illinois state government. This spending will include early childhood intervention programs, child care assistance and home-delivered meals for seniors. Read more [here](#).
- United Way of Illinois surveyed more than 400 human service agencies about fiscal

response to the current state budget stalemate and found that "34 percent of respondents have already cut the number of clients they serve and 39 percent are tapping into reserves to continue operations." It also revealed that agencies providing childhood education and job training are the hardest hit by the stalemate. The survey had responses from agencies in every county and of varying size (annual budgets from \$500,000 to \$15 million). Read more [here](#).

- Two of Illinois' Early Learning Council subcommittees created reports on child health and well-being: The Systems Integration and Alignment Committee (SIAC) discussed integrating health into early care and education, and the Home Visiting Task Force published recommendations about child health in home visiting programs. Read the SIAC report [here](#) and the home visiting one [here](#).
- The City of Chicago teamed up with mRelief, a group that has created a public benefits eligibility screener and portal for individuals, and other early learning agencies and nonprofits to develop the Early Learning Finder. This online tool and text message app will allow parents to explore eligibility for and location of the city's early learning programs. Read more [here](#).
- The Exelon Corporation gave the City of Chicago and the Chicago Public Library a \$2.5 million grant to open early learning STEM centers at 15 library branches. Read more [here](#).

Kansas

The Kansas State Board of Education has made additional changes to teacher licensure, including now allowing elementary teachers to teach preschool, and preschool teachers to teach kindergarten. Read more [here](#).

Louisiana

The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) considered and approved changes that will give more money to Louisiana's child care centers. Changes to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to help low-income families pay for early care and education services include reducing family copayments, raising reimbursement rates, and authorizing eligibility for at least one year regardless of changes in parents' work or school status. These new policies will be implemented sometime in the winter of 2016 and will be paid for through excess Child Care Development Fund grant funds. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

New Mexico

- *The Santa Fe New Mexican's* Ringside Seat column discussed New Mexico's poor (49th out of 50) ranking in child well-being according to the recent Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2015 Kids Count Data Report and the opportunity for Gov. Susana Martinez to make a difference in the lives of children. Read more [here](#).
- The American Federation of Teachers' affiliate New Mexico Early Educators United joined with the Quality Early Learning Association, which represents preschool owners, and the OLE Working Parents Association, which represents parents, to create a new group aimed at improving early childhood education in the state. The Parents, Educators, and Owners Partnering for Learning in Early-education for the Kids (PEOPLE for the Kids) is working on a substitute educator pool and trust fund

for paid sick leave. Read more [here](#).

New York

The Annie E. Casey Foundation awarded the Read to Succeed Buffalo Coalition a Pacesetter Community award for its efforts to improve literacy rates and early childhood education levels. Read more [here](#).

Oklahoma

The Tulsa Public Schools are still accepting enrollments for preschool, but additionally for the early learning education services offered prior to pre-K that provided by the CAP program. Read more [here](#).

Oregon

Oregon programs aimed at reducing risk factors for child abuse and neglect have submitted proposals to receive some of the \$20 million investment in services for young children that was included in the FY2016 state budget. *The Bulletin* profiles the Healthy Families of the High Desert run by the Early Learning Hub of Central Oregon that applied. Read more [here](#).

Washington

- The executive director of the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP published an op-ed in *The News Tribune* about the recently proposed federal changes to the Head Start Performance Standards and his disapproval about the elimination of the mandatory Family Partnership Agreement and consequent weakening of parent voice on Policy Councils. Read more [here](#).
 - *The Seattle Times* interviewed the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP about the change in the Head Start Performance Standards to a six-hour day and the potential loss in Head Start slots. Read more [here](#).
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Wisconsin

Pat Dillon at *Madison Magazine* wrote an in-depth article about the struggles of finding affordable, high-quality child care for working families in Wisconsin. Read more [here](#).

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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

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