



## STATE POLICY UPDATE: NOVEMBER 2016

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THIS REPORT BROUGHT TO YOU BY

[Ounce of Prevention Fund national policy team](#)

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**Overview:** This update asks states to look forward to the upcoming 2017 state legislative session and share policy priorities, political challenges and opportunities. It also provides an updated snapshot of what has recently happened in each state during the 2016 legislative sessions as of October 2016.

You can find previous editions of the State Policy Update here: <http://bit.ly/1HuMmKF>

The Ounce of Prevention Fund gives children in poverty the best chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest quality care and education from birth to age five. The Ounce national policy team works to increase the capacity of early childhood advocates, Educare schools, and school district leaders (and other state and local leaders) to improve, implement and expand the policies, investments, programs and services that create high-functioning, high-quality state early care and education systems. The national policy team focuses on the intersection of policy and practice—providing consultation, technical assistance and content expertise to state and local early childhood stakeholders.

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## OVERVIEW

In 2016, numerous states across the country made major policy changes and investments that advanced access to high-quality early learning programs.

- **Rhode Island** codified key elements of the state's home visiting system into law through the passage of The Rhode Island Family Home Visiting Act. The state's Department of Health is required to work with other state agencies to identify vulnerable families and offer them the opportunity to enroll in evidence-based home visiting programs.
- The passage of The School Readiness Tax Credit Act will create two new state tax credits in **Nebraska** for early childhood programs and individual early childhood professionals in 2017. Early childhood programs that serve children at risk and demonstrate high quality will be eligible for a nonrefundable tax credit, and early childhood professionals demonstrating competencies classified under Nebraska's Professional Record System are eligible for a refundable tax credit.
- Building on the budgetary momentum over the past two years, **California** continued to restore and reinvest millions of the \$1 billion lost in early care and education funding during the recession. The additional \$147 million secured for fiscal year 2017 was complemented by an unprecedented multiyear investment plan that is expected to grow to more than \$500 million in 2019–20.
- The 2017 budget for elementary and secondary education in **Illinois** increased the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) by \$79 million, restoring the ECBG to a historically high annual funding level of nearly \$400 million and representing the largest increase in its history. Additionally, building on years of increasing the funding for infant-toddler programs, which ECBG funds, in addition to preschool programs, legislation will require 25% of any new block grant funds in each fiscal year to be spent on infant-toddler programs, starting with FY2017.

Other states faced significant challenges this year, with state advocates battling harmful proposed budget cuts. **Kansas** fought off attempts to abolish the Children's Initiatives Fund and Kansas Endowment for Youth or to sweep funds into the State General Fund. **Illinois** never passed a comprehensive budget for FY2016 or FY2017, with human services programs such as home visiting receiving only partial funding and child care services being paid through a combination of court-ordered spending and federal funds. Early Intervention continues to be paid through a court order. A number of states, including **Oklahoma** and **Louisiana** also faced tremendous revenue shortfalls.

The ***State Policy Update: November 2015*** highlighted the common goals and opportunities states identified for 2016, and as this policy update illustrates, many were indeed major issues this year.

- **Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) Reauthorization.** The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan deadline necessitated hearings, work groups, administrative rules changes and legislation around almost every facet of child care. Arizona, Colorado, California and Florida are among the many states that made changes to comply with the new eligibility requirements, including 12-month eligibility and income phase out. Maine successfully passed legislation requiring the state Department of Health and Human Services to adopt rules around criminal background checks.
- **Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health.** The groundswell of support and acknowledgment of the importance of a child's social-emotional development at every level continues. Colorado is doubling the number of early childhood mental health intervention specialists. Illinois submitted a 1115 Medicaid demonstration waiver to the federal government

that included home visiting and early childhood mental health consultation as part of the state's developing behavioral health plan. The Maine Children's Growth Council continues to analyze the prevalence of suspension and expulsion in the state as well as develop recommendations to strengthen professional development offerings and a range of other supports to early childhood professionals.

- **Home Visiting Financing.** A number of states are still investigating the use of Medicaid funds to support evidence-based home visiting models, including California, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Oregon.

Finally, states also saw a number of improvements to the broader child and family support services that complement early education programs in supporting the healthy development of and learning for children. Access to health care insurance was at the forefront in 2016. After a six-year hiatus, Arizona restored its Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and unfroze enrollment for KidsCare. Florida removed the five-year enrollment ban for children of lawfully residing (legal) immigrants, allowing up to 17,000 children immediate access to its CHIP, known as KidCare. Pennsylvania saw to the reauthorization of its CHIP program, and Iowa invested more in its 1st Five program. States also made headway in support for families, with New York passing comprehensive paid family leave and California repealing the Maximum Family Grant rule for its Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

Looking forward to 2017, the 23 states surveyed for ***State Policy Update: November 2016*** highlighted a number of common goals and opportunities for advancing high-quality early learning in addition to the challenges states will face. Many remain the same as those identified for 2016—implementing the new CCDBG regulations and exploring how to lift up social-emotional development and mental health—with the addition of leveraging and implementing the new Head Start Performance Standards and components of the Every Student Succeeds Act. While the country continues to react to a new administration on the federal level and what that means for advancing early childhood efforts across the country, it is positive to note that a majority of states identified strong leadership, burgeoning champions and increased interest in supporting high-quality early learning and development. These range from leadership in the **California** General Assembly speaker's office to growing interest in child care from the Metro Atlanta Chamber in **Georgia** to a "growing bipartisan and bicameral consensus around the value of early learning" in **Washington**.

This strong showing of support will be necessary in many places as unstable state budgets and slowly recovering state economies still remain huge obstacles for the field. Much like in 2016, sustaining adequate revenue to support these vital investments will be problematic in 2017 as states like Arizona and Kansas face declining tobacco tax funds, Illinois and Pennsylvania strive for revenue reform, and Colorado battles tax limitations. Even without revenue problems, many more states are looking at squeezed and declining budgets.

# KEY

## Budget Changes

-  Pending or Proposed Increase/Restoration
-  Funds Held Level
-  Pending or Proposed Budget Cut
-  Budget Cut
-  Budget Proposal Did Not Pass

## Policy Changes

-  Policy Change
-  Pending Policy Change
-  Policy Change Did Not Pass

# ARIZONA

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Expand legislative and public knowledge of importance of the early years and state-funded programs as well as the larger early childhood system that supports these programs.
- Support state agency partners in pursuing funding that supports child welfare and early learning.
- Support the creation of a unified coalition of for-profit, nonprofit, faith and publicly funded programs within the early childhood system represented by an umbrella organization.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Development of the Kindergarten Developmental inventory with piloting in various K-classrooms.
- Testing of recommendations for continued improvement of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) model, such as financing.

## State Budget Updates

-  \$2 million increase in general fund spending for child care for foster children.
-  Voter referendum passed (Prop 123) that will tap the state land trust for additional monies directed to K-12 education over the next 10 years.
-  Early Childhood tax credit (HB 2685) failed to pass the legislature.
-  Voter referendum to sweep early childhood dollars for K-12 education, failed to pass the legislature.

## Recent Policy Changes

-  **Child Care Eligibility:** HB 2262 states that child care assistance must cease after a time period specified in rule by the Department of Economic Security once the family income exceeds 165% of the federal poverty level but remains below 85% of the state median income (SMI). If the family income exceeds 85% of SMI, child care assistance must cease on notification by the department. The list of reasons the department may pay different levels of child care assistance rates is expanded to include the level of a state-approved quality indicator.

**Arizona Advisory Council on Indian Health Care:** HB 2312 expands the membership of the Arizona Advisory Council on Indian Health Care to 28 by adding two tribal representatives and modifying requirements for tribal representatives, and adding one representative from the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, one representative from an urban Indian health organization, and one representative from the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board. The duties of the council are also modified. Session law provides for retention of current members of the council.

**Cash Assistance Eligibility:** HB 2452 requires the Department of Economic Security to allow cash assistance for an otherwise eligible dependent child during the period in which the child is in the legal custody of the Department of Child Safety and is placed in unlicensed kinship foster care with a nonparent relative.

**Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP):** SB 1385 eliminates the enrollment cap for the Arizona's CHIP program (KidsCare). Repeals statute terminating KidsCare if the federal government eliminates or significantly reduces federal funding. The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System Administration is required to submit to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) a state plan amendment to resume enrollment in the program. Conditionally enacted on CMS approving the plan amendment to resume enrollment by July 1, 2017.

### Policy Opportunities

- There is a growing awareness that the education continuum begins before kindergarten and a focus on the early years as a determining factor for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading scores.
- There is an increased focus on local (county and municipal) public policy initiatives that advance the early childhood system.
- Continuing to explore public-private partnerships as one of the keys to the long-term sustainability of First Things First.

### Policy Challenges

- Reduction in state general fund obligations for early childhood and child care programs.
- Increased awareness of lack of funding for K-12 education.
- Retention of tobacco tax revenues dedicated to the early childhood system.

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# CALIFORNIA

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Continue to engage state agencies and policymakers on the new Child Care and Development Block Grant Act requirements and the significant implementation challenges many of the provisions present for California.
- Build early care and education infrastructure components and systems to support quality. The adoption of several one-time investments in the fiscal year 2016 state budget, in addition to several proposals considered by the Legislature, lay the foundation for next year's policy priorities. These include:
  - A one-time, Infant-Toddler Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) grant to coordinate Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) efforts, State Preschool QRIS block grant consortia, and First 5 California IMPACT (Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive) program participants to increase quality for infant-toddler child care environments. County-level consortia will use this funding for professional development, training, technical assistance and other resources to support infant-toddler care providers within local QRIS systems.
  - Enhancing the statewide consumer education database and website to include required information, such as additional public information to assist consumers with child care searches and accessing additional public benefits.
  - Continuing to build from the budget approval that moved inspection of child care facilities from the previous frequency of every five years to three years, with the goal of moving toward annual inspections.
- Launched First 5 IMPACT, the largest state investment in local continuous quality improvement infrastructure, to increase the number of high-quality early learning and care settings across California and support and engage families in early learning processes. First 5 IMPACT builds on the RTT-ELC Framework and First 5 California's current and historical program investments in order to build and strengthen a network of local QRIS systems that better coordinate, implement and evaluate early learning programs. First 5 IMPACT also creates pathways for counties/regions to enter the initiative at various stages based on local readiness via supports for quality improvements and systems.

## State Budget Updates

California's FY2017 budget includes a strong multiyear investment in young children and the adults who care for and educate them, building on the \$300 million secured in the previous legislative session. These new investments expand early childhood opportunities and sustain the infrastructure of early education and care programs, beginning with an additional [\\$147 million](#) in 2016–17 that is expected to grow to more than \$500 million in 2019–20. This is unprecedented in that the FY2017 budget outlines a multiyear investment plan of successively higher investment amounts in California's early care and education programs.



**Provider Reimbursement Rates:** Additional \$67.6 million to increase standard reimbursement rates by 10%, and \$69.9 million to increase regional market reimbursement rates to address the minimum wage increase and help providers cover the cost of care starting January 1, 2017. The legislation includes language expressing legislative intent to increase these rates alongside minimum wage increases and to reimburse child care providers at the 85th percentile of the most recent regional market rate survey.



**Access:** Additional \$7.8 million to provide access to full school-day state preschool for nearly 3,000 eligible children starting March 1, 2017. Over four years, nearly 9,000 full-day state preschool slots will be added for \$100 million.



**Early Childhood Workforce:** Additional \$1.4 million invested in Los Angeles Trade-Tech Community College to provide job training, mentoring and college courses through an Early Care and Education Apprenticeship Pilot Program.



**Quality:** No additional investment, but the budget requires the California Department of Education to develop a new quality funding expenditure plan that must prioritize activities that support the QRIS by March 1, 2017.



**Kindergarten:** The budget requires the state superintendent of public instruction to produce a report to the Legislature by July 1, 2017, on best practices for providing full-day kindergarten programs and options for incentivizing them.



**Transitional Kindergarten:** Gov. Jerry Brown's original FY2017 state budget proposal included a consolidation of existing early care programs into a \$1.6 billion Early Learning Block and the elimination of the Transitional Kindergarten for 4-year-olds program, which guarantees a fully credentialed teacher, is funded at the traditional K-12 rate and is an entitlement program. The governor's proposal would have frozen prior funding levels and capped the possibility of automatic growth, as previously permitted. This also would have placed all State Preschool programs, which are currently provided through a mixed-delivery system, under school district authority. The governor's proposal to combine early childhood program funding into a block grant and eliminate transitional kindergarten was strongly and swiftly rejected by the Legislature.

## Recent Policy Changes



**Transitional Kindergarten and Quality Improvements:** [AB 2660](#), the Quality of Early Education and Development Act of 2016, built on the vetoed AB 47 from the previous legislative session by asking the state to develop a plan to offer high-quality prekindergarten to all eligible children. The plan was to address the elements that research has shown make a difference in improving outcomes for children, especially for dual-language learners, low-income children and children with special needs. Although the bill was not approved, the Assembly speaker announced a plan to convene an Early Education Blue Ribbon Commission to chart a path forward to create universal preschool year for 4-year-olds and to improve infant and toddler programs.



**Kindergarten Readiness Assessment:** [Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 125](#) was introduced with language that would state the Legislature's intention "to work toward adopting a statewide, developmentally appropriate kindergarten readiness assessment tool to assess the readiness of children entering transitional kindergarten and kindergarten." The sponsor, Sen. Ben Allen, withdrew the resolution.



**Mental Health:** [AB 1644](#) would expand the definition of an eligible pupil for services provided under the Mental Health Intervention and Prevention Services for Children Act of 1991 to include pupils attending a "preschool program at a contracting agency of the California state preschool program or a local educational agency, and a pupil who is in transitional kindergarten." This bill was to be considered in August 2016.



**Child Care:** [AB 2150](#) would amend the state's Child Care and Development Fund program to be in compliance with the new 12-month eligibility determination. This bill was to be considered in August 2016.



**Temporary Assistance for Needy Families:** The Legislature repealed the Maximum Family Grant rule that denied financial assistance to new children born to mothers already receiving welfare, as part of the FY2017 California state budget.



**Accountability:** In May 2016, the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education began laying groundwork for a new local, state and federal system of accountability and continuous improvement. This effort includes design of local evaluation rubrics that are a significant piece of the state system of K-12 local control and the state plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The board has considered drafts of the rubric and is expected to adopt the final versions and to review the initial ESSA state plan in September 2016. These are major elements in K-12 accountability.



**Professional Development:** In June 2016, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing heard an update report from its advisory panel charged with making recommendations on updating the state’s requirements for the Child Development Permit matrix. The permit matrix governs preparation and continuing professional development requirements for individuals working in state-subsidized, center-based child care and preschool programs. The panel is expected to complete its work and to return to the commission in December 2016 with final recommendations. The preliminary recommendations are expected to include stronger and more consistent requirements for field-based or practicum experiences, utilization of competencies that are aligned with what teachers and program leaders should know and be able to do and a proposal for statewide program standards.

### **Policy Opportunities**

- The Early Education Blue Ribbon Commission is going to chart near- and long-term priorities.
- There is strong leadership in the Assembly speaker’s office on behalf of young children.
- There is increasing cohesion within the early childhood education advocacy field.

### **Policy Challenges**

- Administration’s proposal at the beginning of last budget cycle to consolidate and cap funding for early learning programs.
- Slowing growth in economy and revenues.
- Reluctance to prioritize early childhood funding above “rainy day” fund set-aside.

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# COLORADO

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Build state capacity to expand access to pre-k and work to increase associated funding.
- Continue to expand access and improve quality of child care in Colorado.
- Ensure a healthy start for all of Colorado's children, with particular focus on mental health and social-emotional development.
- Pursue policy strategies and investments to support families in advancing their child's healthy development.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Increasing access to behavioral health supports in primary care settings.
- Improving access to developmental screening and referral systems and early childhood mental health consultation models to support the healthy development of young children.
- Improving access to supports for maternal depression, including through Medicaid reform.
- Addressing obstacles for accessing child care for vulnerable children and families, including those in foster care, families experiencing homelessness and children of teen parents.
- Addressing the utilization and disproportionality of suspensions and expulsions in early learning settings and promoting alternative interventions.
- Addressing Colorado's fiscal and constitutional constraints to increasing access to quality early learning, including child care and preschool.
- Improving the recruitment, retention and compensation of the early childhood workforce, including exploring possible supports such as tax credits.
- Monitoring the implementation of Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) reforms and ensuring adequate funding is secured to support the implementation process.

## State Budget Updates

- ⊕ \$2 million increase in state funds to support recent reforms to CCCAP, including tiered reimbursement for providers.
- ⊕ \$673,524 in new federal funds and then an annualized \$735,527 to fund staffing for the new requirement of annual child care licensing visits.
- ⊕ \$3.8 million increase for Early Intervention direct services to serve an additional 467 eligible infants and toddlers who may have developmental delays, a 6% caseload growth.

-  \$6.7 million increase in Nurse Family Partnerships, an evidence-based program that supports low-income first-time mothers in achieving healthy outcomes for themselves and their children.
-  \$1,522,936 in federal Child Care and Development Fund spending authority to continue the child care quality initiative, including the state Quality Rating and Improvement System and Professional Development Information System.
-  \$50,000 to implement Pay for Success in Colorado, a performance-based financing program that was authorized in legislation in 2015.
-  \$2.5 million in additional funds for the Colorado Family Planning Initiative, including access to long-acting reversible contraception.
-  One-year maintenance of the Medicaid primary care rate bump for many services, including health and risk assessments, screening for pregnancy-related depression under a child's Medicaid ID, adolescent depression screening and smoking-cessation codes.
-  Converting the Hospital Provider Fee into an "Enterprise Fund" that would make the revenue exempt from the state Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) revenue limits.

### Recent Policy Changes

-  **Child Support Exemption for Teen Parents and Domestic-Violence Victims:** [HB16-1227](#) exempts teen parents and domestic-violence survivors from the requirement that they cooperate with child support enforcement as a condition of receiving aid under CCCAP.
-  **Child Care Cliff Effect Program:** [SB16-022](#) eliminates the 10-county limit in the "cliff effect" pilot program for CCCAP to allow all Colorado counties to participate. The program addresses the "cliff effect" that occurs when working parents receive a minor increase in their income (which is often not enough of an increase to cover child care costs completely) that makes them ineligible for child care assistance. The pilot allows for a more gradual phase out of assistance to help families transition from the child care subsidy program toward self-sufficiency.
-  **Early Childhood Mental Health Specialists:** [HB16-1242](#) provided for a supplemental appropriation for the Colorado Department of Human Services-directed funding to double the number of early childhood mental health intervention specialists employed by the state from 17 to 34 and to support a stronger infrastructure for mental health consultants throughout the state.
-  **Child Care 12-Month Eligibility:** [SB16-212](#) aligns state law with changes in federal law related to CCCAP to ensure that a child receiving CCCAP continues to receive services for a full 12 months before eligibility is redetermined, as long as the child's family income remains below 85% of the state median income for their family size.

- Student Data Privacy:** [HB16-1423](#) Adds to existing student data security laws by adopting additional duties that the State Board of Education, Department of Education, school districts, boards of cooperative services and charter schools must comply with to increase the transparency and security of the student personally identifiable information.
- Child Care Assistance Rules:** Adopted administrative rules to reform CCCAP. Reform changes included tiered reimbursement for providers based on program quality, tiered reduced copayments for families based on program quality, increased alignment with Head Start, transition periods for families exceeding income eligibility limits, allowing contracting for slots, and stabilization periods for families experiencing homelessness.
- Child Care Center Regulations:** Adopted updated licensing regulations for child care centers, including changes to social-emotional policies and requirements; qualifications and training for staff; and health policies, among them healthier meals and snacks, limited screen time and media use, improved access to health services and increased physical activity requirements.
- Interim Commissions:** The Colorado Legislative Council did not approve the Early Childhood School Readiness Legislative Commission as an interim committee but did approve an interim committee on the federal Every Student Succeeds Act.

### Policy Opportunities

- Recent reforms to major federal funding sources, including the now-final rules for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and the Head Start Performance Standards, provide opportunities for collaborative and progressive conversations focused on policy and regulatory changes to the early childhood system.
- Increased interest in mental health and early childhood suspensions and expulsions across sectors and interest groups has provided opportunities for policy and regulatory change in the next year.
- Though the split party legislature does present challenges, it also ensures that any policy or budget decisions must have strong bipartisan support in order to pass.
- A statewide collaborative project on transforming Colorado's early childhood workforce creates opportunities to elevate the importance of the field and provides opportunities for policy and regulatory change.

### Policy Challenges

- Colorado continues to face budgetary constraints going into the next legislative year, particularly because of provisions of the TABOR, which limits the amount of revenue the state can take in, as well as a state constitutional amendment mandating increases in K-12 spending every year. There was a possibility of

these issues going to the ballot for voter action in November, but those efforts were ultimately pulled.

- Local control is very important to the state's political system and could create challenges to the implementation of the large-scale early childhood education reforms now coming into effect in the state. In particular because of the budget constraints that counties are facing, the question of whether access or quality is more important for early childhood programs is being brought up more frequently.

### **Contact Information**

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# FLORIDA

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- *Financial Stability:* Funding for tax-preparation assistance to increase the number of tax returns filed by, and earned income tax credit (EITC) refunds, child tax and other credits claimed by, low- and moderate-income Florida families.
- *Health:* KidCare (Children’s Health Insurance Program, or CHIP) outreach and enrollment; training for mental health counselors on early childhood mental health issues; expanded access to dental care for children birth to age three; mental health bill to include parental and caregiver anxiety and depression, pregnancy-related mental health issues and early childhood mental health; coverage for perinatal depression screening and treatment as part of children’s Medicaid benefits; expanded prenatal Medicaid eligibility (currently at 185% of federal poverty level).
- *Safety:* Expanded access to trauma-informed care and courts; trauma-informed competency for those who deal with children and their families.
- *Early Learning:* Funding for quality child care and for expanded access; funding for home visitation and community-based support; expanded parental support through Help Me Grow; collection of relevant data to measure child/family well-being.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Implement a “First 1000 Days” communications plan and strategy to increase public awareness about the need for cross-system alignment of social services for comprehensive systems of care for young children and families.
- Coordinate the work and develop shared resources that result in more-effective public policy efforts among early childhood advocates and stakeholders.
- Strengthen the integration of home visitation and other services for expectant and new families as part of early learning continuum.
- Develop and implement a coordinated, comprehensive assessment for school readiness, voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) and kindergarten readiness (3-to-5-year-olds).

## State Budget Updates

- ⊕ \$15.5 million increase to school readiness budget (\$5.5 million for performance-based increases in provider reimbursement and \$10 million for contracted slots in high-poverty neighborhoods).
- ⊕ \$650,000 increase to maintain Help Me Grow (parent information and community support “warm” line).
- ⊕ \$1 million increase for Early Learning Florida online professional development.

- 
 \$500,000 first-time state allocation to United Way of Florida for expanding free tax preparation and financial education services statewide to increase the number of tax returns, EITC refunds and child tax credits claimed by low- and moderate-income Florida families.
- 
 \$85 million to scale up the School Readiness Performance Funding Pilot to a statewide performance-based, tiered-reimbursement model.
- 
 Increase in Voluntary Prekindergarten base student allocation (which remains at \$2,437 per child for a three-hours-per-day program).
- 
 \$4 million to expand Help Me Grow statewide.

### Recent Policy Changes

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**CCDBG Reauthorization Implementation:** Early Learning bill passed to bring Florida’s School Readiness Program into compliance with minimum CCDBG reauthorization requirements for 12-month eligibility redetermination, monitoring and inspections for license-exempt programs participating in School Readiness Program, and to create a statewide professional development registry.
- 
**Payment Rates:** The Florida Department of Education’s Office of Early Learning was given \$15.5 million for performance funding to continue implementation of a performance-based model with adjusted reimbursement rates that are aligned to quality standards. The Legislature also allocated \$10 million in contracted slots, enabling early learning coalitions to establish differential-payment contracts in high-poverty neighborhoods.
- 
**Voluntary Prekindergarten:** VPK eligibility rules amended to allow children to enter at either age 4 or 5.
- 
**Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP):** [HB 5101](#) removed the five-year enrollment ban for children of lawfully residing (legal) immigrants and allowing up to 17,000 children immediate access to Florida’s CHIP Program, KidCare.

### Policy Opportunities

- **Federal CCDBG reauthorization requirements** continue to present opportunities to address health, safety, quality and continuity of care by amending Florida early learning statutes.
- **The Florida Department of Education’s Office of Early Learning** was allocated \$15.5 million for performance funding to continue implementation of a performance-based model with adjusted reimbursement rates that are aligned to quality standards. The Legislature also allocated \$10 million in contracted slots enabling early learning coalitions to establish differential-payment contracts in high-poverty neighborhoods.
- **VPK and kindergarten readiness assessments** have been suspended pending the development of new assessment and accountability measures. There is now

a window of opportunity to contribute to this effort and develop coordinated, comprehensive school readiness, VPK and kindergarten readiness assessments for the state's 3-to-5-year-olds. The **Florida Early Learning Consortium**, working with the Office of Early Learning, is taking the lead in this effort.

- **The Florida Chamber of Commerce** and its emerging Business Alliance for Early Learning has acknowledged the critical importance of early childhood development, opening up as-yet-undetermined possibilities to engage the business community in efforts to support additional public investments in high-quality programs.
- **The "First 1000 Days" initiative** has brought together home visiting, early learning, child-welfare, early intervention, family-support and other entities focused on the prenatal, infant and toddler years. The Florida Children and Youth Cabinet adopted the First 1000 Days as a focus for its work. An advocacy platform has been developed, and the opportunities await for engaging public and legislative support.

### Policy Challenges

- Despite some progress last session, there is still a lack of consistent standards for monitoring the health and safety of children for licensed and unlicensed facilities that receive public funds.
- Florida law has still not established minimum quality standards for publicly funded child care programs.
- Low provider payment rates and low salary scales for early learning teachers limit the ability of providers to meet higher quality standards.
- Florida accountability requirements have been poorly conceived and will likely lead to poor feedback. Additionally, as currently implemented, the requirements have imposed onerous burdens on providers and created an unfunded mandate.
- While \$15.5 in additional funding was added to the School Readiness Program last year, the total is still \$32 million below funding levels a decade ago and very far from what is needed to provide quality early learning for all eligible children in Florida.

### Contact Information

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# GEORGIA

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- State and federal funding to ensure that the state can fully implement its plan for child care subsidies, including expanded eligibility, increased reimbursement rates across the board and tiered reimbursement for Quality Rated Providers.
- Continue to lead the partnership with the Harvard Center on the Developing Child and the state of Georgia on innovative policy and programs to impact social-emotional learning.
- Continue to manage implementation of the public awareness campaign for Quality Rated that launched in spring 2016.
- Lead state effort to establish a shared definition of school readiness.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Develop an infant mental health agenda.
- Work as part of the leadership of Georgia's grade-level reading campaign.
- Monitor the development and implementation of the state's kindergarten readiness assessment.

## State Budget Updates



\$36 million to support increases to salaries for Georgia Pre-K lead and assistant teachers.

## Recent Policy Changes



**Home Visiting:** The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting grant moved from the Georgia Department of Human Services to the Department of Public Health.

**CCDBG Reauthorization Implementation:** Pending policy change highlights from Georgia's new Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) state plan:



- Increased payment amounts that providers receive. The state plans to raise subsidy rates to the 50th percentile for all providers. In order to improve access to higher quality early education for children and families eligible for subsidy, the state will increase the tiered bonus percentage to 5%, 10% and 25% for one-, two- and three-star providers.
- Increased income eligibility thresholds. Families who are at 65% of the state median income or below are eligible for the program.
- Additional requirements for programs receiving CCDF funds that are exempt from licensing. The requirements will include additional monitoring and reporting.

- Additional supports for infants and toddlers. Specifically, the state will pilot different service models (contracts and grants) geared to increasing the quality of infant and toddler classrooms.

### **Policy Opportunities**

- Implementation of new Kindergarten readiness profile will, hopefully, provide data to help support instruction and inform policy.
- State will soon announce the latest results of its Pre-K longitudinal study.
- The Metro Atlanta Chamber is very interested in child care issues and has just released a report to legislators regarding the skills gap in Georgia that provides a new tool for advocates

### **Policy Challenges**

- Funding for child care subsidies is insufficient to meet the need in the state. Moreover, without additional funding, full implementation of the new state child care plan including higher reimbursement rates for providers may result in a cut of up to 17,000 slot.
- Need better data in determining placement of Pre-K classrooms to prevent unfilled seats.
- The state has not yet addressed how they will sustain work in the Early Education Enterprise Zones once Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge funding ends at the end of 2017.

### **Contact Information**

- Mindy Binderman, executive director, GEEARS: The Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, [mbinderman@gears.org](mailto:mbinderman@gears.org).

# ILLINOIS

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Advocate for a \$50 million increase to the Early Childhood Block Grant in FY2018 to continue to expand the reach and quality of early learning programs and to meet the obligations of Illinois' federal Preschool Expansion Grant. Advocate for an increase of \$13 million to restore services for bilingual students, which includes children in early childhood programs.
- Acquire new revenue to restore cuts to vital state-funded programs, including early childhood programs.
- Find a resolution of the "stopgap," partial FY2017 budget for human services programs, including \$16.9 million for home visiting programs, as well as adequate funding for child care—particularly to fund key new investments outlined in CCDBG reauthorization—and Early Intervention. Further, ensure the stability of these programs by enacting a full-year, FY2018 budget that includes sufficient funding for each of these important programs.
- Support legislation to significantly reduce expulsion in early care and education settings and to improve the use of best practices in transitioning children to new settings when needed, increased professional development supports for early care and education professionals (including program leaders and teachers) and improved data collection on expulsion from early care and education settings.
- Influence/monitor the full recompetition of the Early Childhood Block Grant for FY2018 grants to ensure that serving the most at-risk children in high-quality settings is prioritized.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Creation of the state plan to implement new Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization changes.
- Continue efforts to build a unified data system as part of the state's Longitudinal Data System, including this year's successful test project of creating an unduplicated count of children enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and Preschool for All. Head Start children are also expected to be added to the unduplicated count in 2017.
- Continued focus on ensuring that early childhood programs and services are designed and implemented to support the highest-need children and families. Specific efforts include establishing new eligibility and enrollment guidelines for the Preschool Expansion Grant and consideration of new strategies to ensure that the state's Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) can be better leveraged to support high-need children.
- Development and implementation of a statewide system of mental health consultation and supports embedded across the early childhood system.

- Continued development of a home visiting managed-care pilot, as well as a state Medicaid plan amendment addressing Medicaid reimbursement for home visiting services.
- Influence development of the state’s behavioral health plan (including 1115 Medicaid demonstration waiver and state plan amendment) to include home visiting and early childhood mental health consultation. UPDATE: the 1115 waiver submitted to the federal government includes an innovative approach to using Medicaid funding to pay for early childhood mental health consultation, as well as an expansion of home visiting to a targeted, high-risk population of infants exposed to drugs.

## State Budget Updates

A full fiscal year 2016 budget was never enacted for Illinois. Some programs were funded through piecemeal budget bills and a series of court orders and consent decrees. On June 30, one day before the end of FY2016, the Illinois General Assembly passed and the governor signed into law a measure including the following:

-  Full-year funding for early childhood through 12th-grade education in the Illinois State Board of Education budget, including a significant increase to early childhood education of \$79 million. This increase fully restores funding losses sustained over the past several years and brings the ECBG to a historically high level of funding at \$393 million. This amount also allows the state to maintain its federal Preschool Expansion Grant commitment.
-  Grant-funded human services programs such as home visiting received 65% of the annual funding the programs would normally receive, to be applied to all of FY2016 and the first half of FY2017. Most home visiting programs received 100% of the amount they billed for FY2016 services (although in many cases this was less than their contracted amount because of cost-saving measures). A small amount of funding remains to be applied to the first few months of FY2017 home visiting services. After those funds are exhausted, however, continued payment delays are likely.
-  Appropriation of federal funding, including MIECHV and payments to child care centers and resource and referral activities.
-  Not included in the bill are items currently being paid via court order and consent decree, which include Early Intervention as well as family child care.

## Recent Policy Changes

-  **CCAP Eligibility:** In November 2015, faced with the possibility that legislative action would be taken that would restore child care eligibility rules and reverse four months of a shutdown of intake into the child care assistance program, the governor announced a new set of emergency rules. These restored CCAP eligibility to 162% of the federal poverty level (FPL), as opposed to its previous level of 185%, and committed to further restoring eligibility to 185% of FPL when

a fully funded budget was passed. While this change restored the eligibility for thousands for families, some remain ineligible (in addition to those between 163% and 185%), including full-time students. The governor's revised emergency rule also reversed plans to institute criminal background checks for relative caregivers and require compliance with child support. Unfortunately, enrollment continues to lag in the program, with end-of-May enrollment still at least 30,000 less than a typical caseload.



**CCDBG Reauthorization Implementation:** Illinois submitted its Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) state plan, including a request for a number of waivers. The state's request to receive a year's delay in implementing 12-month eligibility and monitoring license-exempt caregivers was approved. However, a waiver delaying implementation of increased health and safety training requirements for license exempt providers was denied.



**Infant-Toddler Set-Aside:** [SB238](#) was overwhelmingly approved and signed into law, and clarifies how infant-toddler funding is increased through the state's infant-toddler set-aside in the ISBE ECBG. It states that at least 25% of any new funding shall be directed to birth-to-three programs until infant-toddler funding is at least 20% of the total block grant funding.

### Policy Opportunities

- General support for increasing K-12 education funding (which can help early childhood funding from the education agency, but not necessarily for the rest of the early childhood system).
- Leveraging federal investments to inform and protect state investments.
- Despite high level of turnover in the General Assembly, early childhood legislative champions are poised to remain in office.

### Policy Challenges

- The combination of budget instability, need for revenue increase and the political stalemate.
- Unclear vision for child care from administration coupled with CCDF implementation.
- Ongoing loss of supporters/champions in state agencies.
- Race to the Top (RTT) funds ending in June 2017 leaving the need to develop sustainability strategies for RTT-funded programs

### Contact Information

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# INDIANA

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Policy priorities and strategies being explored have yet to take shape but will become the 2017 agenda. The focus is on preschool expansion, though the magnitude of the expansion has yet to be determined.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Explore state-funded pre-k expansion to increase access to low- and moderate-income children and expand to every county that builds on Indiana's two current pre-k pilot programs through support from diverse voices including lawmakers and the current governor, gubernatorial candidates, state superintendent and a coalition of Hoosier families and community leaders called [All IN 4 Pre-K](#).

## State Budget Updates

Indiana operates on a biennial budget and is currently in the second year of its FY15-16 state budget. Some early childhood related state budget updates from the 2015 legislative session include:

-  \$10 million a year for five counties to pilot On My Way Pre-K, a program awards grants to four-year-olds from low-income families so that they may have access to a high-quality pre-k program the year before they begin kindergarten. Families who receive a grant may use the grant at any approved On My Way Pre-K program.
-  \$2 million a year for Early Education Matching Grants (EEMG) that supports scholarships for families below 100% of federal poverty line (FPL) to attend high-quality pre-k in Indiana; grants go directly to high-quality programs in our mixed-delivery system.

In addition to state budget advances, in March 2015 the Indianapolis City-County Council approved \$4.2 million to create the Indy Preschool Scholarship Program (Indy PSP) to provide free scholarships for children from low-income families to attend high quality preschools.

## Recent Policy Changes

-  **Health and Safety Training:** State is implementing new health and safety training requirements (10 hours) for all early childhood professionals in the state.
-  **CCDF Wait List:** Set aside TANF funding to help significantly reduce the CCDF waitlist.



**Early Education Matching Grants:** The state oversaw the largest round of EEMG to support scholarships for families below 100% of poverty to attend high-quality pre-k in Indiana. The grants go directly to high-quality programs in our mixed-delivery system.



**Behavioral Health:** Indiana's Systems of Care (INSOC)—the state's behavioral health services system housed in the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) is expanding its efforts to include early childhood.

### Policy Opportunities

- The primary state-funded pre-k program, On My Way Pre-K, has just released a high-level white paper on year one of a four-year longitudinal study. Early findings show gains for participating children.
- There is a lot of focus on the value of high-quality pre-k in Indiana, increasing the odds of significant support for pre-k expansion. Both 2016 gubernatorial candidates identified pre-k expansion as a main part of their campaign platforms.
- A large number of legislators are learning about high-quality early childhood services and the resulting positive effect on communities. These legislators and more continue to show interest in how this focus can be supported around the state.

### Policy Challenges

- Potential early childhood budget increase will compete with other education items (e.g., K-12 assessment and postsecondary).
- Potential early childhood budget increase will compete with other legislative priorities.
- A large segment of very influential legislators do not understand the value of high-quality early childhood services.

### Contact Information

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# IOWA

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2016 Agenda

- Restore funding to Early Childhood Iowa (ECI).
- Expand Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP) to additional low-income children.
- Strengthen the child care subsidy by increasing eligibility to at least 160% of the federal poverty level and raising reimbursement rates.
- Incorporate additional provisions within managed- and accountable-care activities under Medicaid to promote comprehensive, preventive services that respond to social as well as biomedical determinants of health.
- Promote achieving school readiness for all children and closing disparities and inequities as a priority for the Iowa General Assembly.

### State Budget Updates

-  Iowa General Assembly expanded for the third year in a row 1st Five to additional counties through increased appropriations. This public-private partnership bridges primary care and public health services in Iowa.
-  General Assembly did not establish structure for redirecting SVPP ending balances for use in expanding preschool in other districts, but this expansion strategy is being pursued for next session.
-  General Assembly did not address child care rates, because the Iowa Department of Human Services is implementing the new Child Care and Development Fund reauthorization mandates. Plans for addressing rates are being saved for next session.

### Recent Policy Changes

-  **Early Childhood Iowa Funding:** Despite no new money for ECI, the General Assembly did provide policy language changes that allow for more funding flexibility: Local ECI areas can now allocate resources to higher need areas, not just prescribed areas.
-  **Medicaid:** The governor implemented Medicaid managed care in May. The General Assembly ensured that pediatric health was in the oversight bill that passed.

### Contact Information

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# KANSAS

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Repair the Kansas tax code so the state can fund early childhood services. Preserve the Kansas Earned Income Tax Credit, which benefits more than 280,000 Kansas children.
- Protect and fund the Kansas early childhood infrastructure by directing the state's full portion of tobacco settlement dollars to funding children's programs. Prevent the securitization, or selling off, of tobacco settlement funds.
- Restore access to safety net programs like child care assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Modify provisions of legislation passed in 2015 and 2016 to strengthen access to child care and ensure safety net programs reach Kansas children and families in need.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Demonstrate the harmful implications of securitizing a portion of the state's tobacco-settlement revenue currently dedicated to early childhood education. Highlight the negative experiences of other states that have securitized these funds.
- Share the local impact of budget cuts to early childhood programs to build support for restoring funding in 2017.
- Improve access to and quality of child care for all children through the opportunity created by the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), focusing on strategies such as convening stakeholders, developing and disseminating a child care workforce study, regulatory change, participation in the development of a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), and strategic communications.
- Strengthen 12-month continuous eligibility of child care assistance.
- Advance revisions to the recently passed HOPE Acts, which limited eligibility for child care assistance, cash assistance and food assistance.
- Identify new public and/or private revenue sources to fill an anticipated long-term funding gap for early childhood programs beginning in fiscal year 2018, in light of the depletion of the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund as well as declining tobacco-settlement payments.
- Build on recently implemented model of grassroots advocacy in Kansas, called regional field organizers, to mobilize support for early childhood investments.

## State Budget Updates



The 2016 Legislature approved \$49.2 million for early care and education programs funded by the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund. This reduced funding by \$2 million from the amount approved by the 2015 Legislature.

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The Legislature replaced \$11.3 million in CIF dollars with \$11.3 million in TANF funds. A portion of the Parents as Teachers program and the Kansas Pre-K Pilot Program are now funded using TANF dollars. Families must meet one of 19 risk criteria to qualify for TANF-funded services.
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The governor allotted, or unilaterally cut, early care and education funding to address budget shortfalls in the current fiscal year. In November 2015, a \$9 million allotment reduced funding for 20 programs by 6.5%. In May 2016, a \$3.3 million allotment reduced funding for some programs by 14%. In June 2016, the governor reduced funding by \$680,000 for the Kansas Reading Success program fund.
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In January 2016, the governor's FY2016 budget proposal recommended sweeping the balance of the CIF into the State General Fund (SGF) and funding early care and education programs using SGF dollars. The Legislature rejected this \$50.5 million sweep.
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In February 2016, the Senate introduced legislation abolishing the CIF and the KEY Fund. Senate Bill 463 would have permanently eliminated the statutory protections that direct tobacco-settlement funds to early care and education programs. After holding a hearing, the Senate Ways and Means Committee did not advance this legislation
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In April, the governor proposed securitizing a portion of tobacco-settlement dollars in exchange for one-time revenue to balance the state budget. This action would have required dismantling the CIF and the KEY Fund. Despite serious fiscal pressure, the Legislature overwhelmingly opposed efforts to securitize tobacco settlement dollars
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In August, the executive branch directed state agencies to submit budget proposals for FY 2018-2019 that included a 5% reduction in overall funding. If this proposed cut is included in the January 2017 governor's budget proposal and enacted during the 2017 Legislative Session, at least 800 children will lose access to early learning services and/or child care assistance.

## Recent Policy Changes

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**Safety Net Programs:** The 2015 Legislature passed numerous restrictions to accessing cash assistance, food assistance and child care assistance. In 2016, the Legislature passed and the governor signed a second HOPE Act. This legislation further reduced the state lifetime limit for cash assistance to 24 months (with a possible 12-month extension for individuals with a demonstrated hardship) and increased the documentation required to apply for safety net programs. It also repealed ATM withdrawal limits for cash assistance and strengthened work requirement exemptions for mothers of infants.

- P School Finance:** The 2015 Legislature repealed the existing school finance formula and replaced it with a two-year block grant system. The 2016 Legislature did not create a new school finance formula. A special legislative session in June addressed a court decision ruling the block grant system unconstitutionally inequitable. In September 2016 the state Supreme Court heard oral arguments to determine whether the level of school funding is adequate.
- P Statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System:** The state Department for Children and Families is developing a statewide QRIS as a part of its work to implement the reauthorized CCDBG. A field test is planned for early 2017.

### Policy Opportunities

- The high-profile discussion over early childhood funding during the 2016 legislative session demonstrated the influence of early childhood stakeholders, including the business community and grassroots advocates. This built the knowledge level and capacity of these stakeholders and energized them to advocate for future funding for early childhood programs.
- Changes in the composition of the Legislature following the August 2016 primary suggest policymakers may be open to revisiting the state's tax policy choices in 2017. Many newly elected policymakers voiced their support for funding early learning during their campaigns.
- The requirements of CCDBG reauthorization offers the opportunity to improve child care and early learning access, particularly around 12-month authorization of child care assistance and tiered phase out of eligibility for families.
- Following a temporary block-grant education funding structure, the Legislature is expected to write a new school funding formula in the 2017-2018 legislative session. This presents the opportunity to strengthen the state's financial commitment to early learning.

### Policy Challenges

- Following unsustainable tax policy changes in 2012 and 2013, Kansas does not have the revenue necessary to fund essential state services, including investments in early education. Repeated budget shortfalls have resulted in a series of cuts to early childhood programs. In 2016, the governor proposed selling off the tobacco settlement revenue that funds the state's early childhood programs in exchange for a lump sum of cash to close the state's budget shortfall for just one year. Funding for children's programs will remain in jeopardy until the state addresses its unbalanced tax policy.
- The context of a budget crisis complicates other efforts to improve early childhood policy. It is difficult to focus policymakers' attention on proactive opportunities when they also must handle repeated budget shortfalls and the harmful implications of other cuts to state services.
- Changes to safety net programs weakened families' economic supports, making it more difficult for low-income families to meet their children's basic needs. This

increases demands placed on other areas of the early learning system attempting to help children learn and thrive.

**Contact Information**

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# LOUISIANA

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Secure the passage of a new Louisiana School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTC) package that more effectively incentivizes, supports and enhances quality care for children birth through age four and is based on the new early learning system being implemented under Act 3.
- Increase funding for early care and education through the SRTC, Child Care Assistance Program, LA-4, the Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development Program (NSECD), the Louisiana Education Quality Trust Fund (also known as 8g), or other sources.
- Continue to monitor the implementation of Act 3 of the 2012 Louisiana legislative session and ensure that the policies proposed by the Louisiana Department of Education and passed by the state board of education with regard to early care and education will be effective based on the research, best practices and experiences of other states.
- Engage the business community across Louisiana in advocacy for increased investment in early care and education in the state, including releasing a study to assess whether lack of access to stable child care impacts worker productivity and development as part of the business-community engagement strategy.
- Ensure Louisiana's state plan for the Child Care and Development Block Grant has strong provisions to support continuity of care and increased access to quality early care and education for vulnerable children, birth through age four.
- Identify additional potential components for Louisiana's Early Care and Education Accountability System.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Consider regulation around licensure of family homes. Louisiana is one of only a handful of states that do not license family homes in any way.
- Explore opportunities for the state to adopt an expulsion policy for early care and education programs.

## State Budget Updates



Funding for Louisiana's high-quality pre-k program, LA 4, which totals \$75.5 million, had been repeatedly shifting from state general funds to federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds. In fiscal year 2016, only \$8 million of the \$75.5 million was state general fund money, depleting TANF funding for child welfare and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). During the 2016 legislative session, the governor and the Legislature added \$27 million in state general funds to LA 4, replacing that amount of TANF funds, so that the funding is now more stable and the TANF funds were restored to child-welfare services.



Full funding for Louisiana's public and nonpublic Pre-K programs and the School Readiness Tax Credits were sustained even though the state budget faced an unprecedented shortfall in January, prompting a special legislative session in February that preceded the regular session that began in March. The sessions saw proposals to reduce and even eliminate funding for Louisiana's various public and nonpublic Pre-K programs and posed threats to the School Readiness Tax Credits, all of which were defeated.



A second special session was called in June immediately after the conclusion of the regular session to address the remaining budget shortfall in the coming fiscal year, and this again presented more opportunities for cuts in early childhood education programs. Such cuts were avoided, but many other services and programs, including funding for K-12 and higher education, were cut substantially.

### Recent Policy Changes



**Child Care:** Effective February 2016, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) increased the per-child subsidy rates for CCAP by up to 250% both increasing the amount paid per child and decreasing the amounts of parent copays. BESE also changed CCAP eligibility policies to allow children to maintain their eligibility for an entire year, with the possibility to include additional months as well as to enable children to complete the full school year. In August, BESE also voted to lower the hours required for parents to work or be in school from 30 hours to 20 hours in order to be eligible for the CCAP program.



**Children With Special Needs:** In June 2016, BESE increased subsidy rates for the CCAP program again, specifically for children with special needs. Families that qualify for CCAP will qualify for the full Special Needs Care Incentive rate, with no state-required copay. The definition of a special needs child was changed to a child with an Individual Education Program (IEPs) or who has an Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs). In addition, in August, BESE also voted to lower the hours required for parents to work or be in school for children with special needs from 30 hours to 15 hours in order to be eligible for the CCAP program.



**Accountability System:** The ratings of the new Accountability System will continue to be solely based on scores of the CLASS assessment performed twice a year in every publicly funded early care and education program.

- The performance ratings will expand from three to four in order to better differentiate programs that are in the middle range. The four performance rating levels will be titled: Excellent, Proficient, Approaching Proficient and Unsatisfactory.
- The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) will also prioritize the delivery of quality improvement supports to programs rated

Unsatisfactory (less than 3.0 overall CLASS average scores) and programs rated Approaching Proficient (3–4.99).

- Beginning in 2019, public funding will be revoked from programs rated Unsatisfactory for two or more years within a three-year period.
- Third-party observers' scores on the CLASS assessment will be retained in lieu of local observers' scores when scores differ by more than one point within the same semester. Where consistent scoring discrepancies occur (defined as more than 50% of observer scores diverge by more than one point), only third-party scores will be used for accountability purposes.

The LDOE will be required to explore additional potential components for the Accountability System (in addition to CLASS) and report on these to BESE by January 2017.

P

**Health and Safety:** Act 81 ([House Bill 175](#)–Hilferty) provides that the Office of Public Health will furnish information and resources to the LDOE for all areas of training required for employees of early learning centers in promoting the health, safety and welfare of children.

P

**Child Care Licensing:** Act 411 ([House Bill 197](#)–Pylant) declares the operation of an unlicensed child day care center a crime and provides criminal penalties, including potential fines and imprisonment.

P

**Criminal Background Checks:** Act 646 ([HB 830](#)–Seabaugh) requires the LDOE, instead of the owner or operator of a center, to request criminal background information on any owner, employee, volunteer or applicant at an early learning center and authorizes the collection of processing fees to remit to the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Information and the FBI.

P

**Privacy:** Act 473 ([SB 109](#)–Barrow) provides for the confidentiality of applications and client case records for child care assistance clients. Authorizes offices and divisions within the Department of Education to share access to these records as necessary for the administration of these programs, except as prohibited by federal law or regulation.

### Policy Opportunities

- There is a new Legislature and governor to educate about early childhood issues.
- Gov. John Bel Edwards has publicly announced his interest in improving Louisiana's high poverty rate.
- There is an upcoming report studying worker productivity and its impact on child care in Louisiana.

### Policy Challenges

- The state continues to face a budget shortfall and threats of midyear cuts. Louisiana has a \$300 million carryover deficit from last year, on top of recently passed temporary sales taxes that were approved to address older budget holes

- and are now slated to expire in less than 18 months, adding to the sense of urgency.
- Recent flooding and subsequent recovery efforts will have unknown impacts to budget and state funding priorities.
  - Louisiana remains a conservative state with high child poverty.

### **Contact Information**

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# MAINE

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Continue effort with the Maine Children's Growth Council and Maine Department of Education on social-emotional learning and development project. In early 2017, a final report that includes data and recommendations for evidence-based policies that promote the social-emotional development of young children from birth through age eight will be submitted to the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.
- Monitor and review proposed child care subsidy and licensing regulations as a result of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and state child care plan and provide testimony and comments.
- Monitor and provide testimony regarding the submission of major substantive rules relating to background checks for child care staff during the 128th legislative session. Review report of legislative working group on the implementation of background checks of child care providers.
- Continue efforts to support and promote state-funded Head Start, Maine Families/home visiting, child care and public preschool as critical elements in Maine's early childhood system.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Work with partners on possible legislative proposals to improve Maine's child care subsidy system, including the application process and rate structure for providers.
- Monitor the possible impact of citizen initiatives relating to school funding and the legalization of marijuana on early childhood program revenues.
- Explore professional development for elementary school principals/child care directors to educate and inform them of opportunities to improve results for children through implementation of social-emotional development curriculum for young children.
- Explore advancing a legislative proposal to fund a pilot Early Childhood Consultation Program for implementation in the fall of 2017.

## State Budget Updates

The administration did not propose a supplemental budget in 2015, so there were limited opportunities in the second legislative session to address budget changes.



During the first legislative session in 2015, the House and Senate passed a bill to provide \$2.2 million of new funding to the Maine Department of Health and Human Services for home visiting services. The bill was held over by the Appropriations Committee to the second session in 2016. An amendment was proposed to reduce the amount to \$1.1 million but failed to pass on a party-line vote.



A majority of members of the Health and Human Services Committee voted to support a bill to allocate \$785,630 in fiscal year 2016–2017 to increase the child care subsidy reimbursement rates from the 50th to the 60th percentile of the 2015 Market Rate Survey. The majority report prevailed in the House but failed in the Senate.

The administration of home visiting services, Maine Families, was moved from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Maine Children’s Trust. A contract for \$22.8 million (over 30 months) includes the new utilization of \$6.9 million of TANF funds to replace a MIECHV competitive grant of \$8 million.

## Recent Policy Changes



**CCDBG Reauthorization Implementation:** The Maine Office of Child and Family Services proposed a draft of the 2016–2018 CCDF State Plan to stakeholders in January 2016. The Department of Health and Human Services held public hearings in February and submitted the plan in March 2016. The new plan proposes numerous changes to Maine’s CCDF system, including streamlining the application process and integration with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families child care. The initial draft of the plan proposed an increased child care subsidy rate from the 50th to the 60th percentile. The final plan submitted to the federal government was set at the 50th percentile. There are numerous references in the plan to improving social emotional development for young children, including mental health consultation and professional development.



**Criminal Background Checks:** Maine lawmakers passed a bill requiring the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to adopt rules to require criminal background checks in accordance with federal law under the CCDBG. The rules must be submitted to the Legislature’s Judiciary Committee by January 12, 2017, for legislative review.



**Working Group to Study Background Checks for Child Care Facilities and Providers:** The Maine Legislature created a working group of legislators to review issues relating to the implementation of background checks for providers. A final report by the Group must be submitted by to the legislature by November 2, 2016.

## Policy Opportunities

- Recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs on the social-emotional learning and development of Maine’s young children creates the opportunity for policy changes that will support children, parents and early care and education staff in addressing challenging behaviors.
- During the first legislative session in 2017, the administration will propose a new biennial budget. With a new legislature, there could be an opportunity to

increase funding for state-funded early care and education programs within the state budget.

- Language in existing law that provides that all school districts in Maine will offer public preschool by the 2018–19 school year, along with the success of the new public preschool programs made possible by the Preschool Expansion Grant, offers an opportunity to push for expanding Maine’s public preschool program.
- The recently passed legislation on criminal background checks has resulted in a new group of legislators becoming engaged in child care issues. Their interest, along with an increasingly engaged number of child care providers, could present an opportunity to make changes in Maine’s child care system.
- A new group of legislators offers an opportunity to educate and lay the groundwork for a long-term policy agenda by creating a Children’s Caucus within the Legislature to improve early childhood outcomes in Maine.

### **Policy Challenges**

- Animosity between Governor Paul LePage and members of the Legislature has continued to grow following controversial comments the governor made to a legislator, which received much state and national attention. These increasing tensions may hinder major legislative actions on multiple state priorities, including early childhood.
- With all members of the Maine Senate and House up for re-election, much depends on the legislative makeup following the November election.
- Maine law restricts members of the House and Senate to four consecutive two-year terms. As a result of term limits, there is a loss of a number of early childhood champions within the Legislature, including the speaker of the House.
- Maine’s previous child care administrator resigned from the Department of Health and Human Services in July and has not been replaced to date.

### **Contact Information**

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# MASSACHUSETTS

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Preschool expansion: supporting local planning, system building and advocacy, while communicating progress and lessons learned to state policymakers. Advocating for continued state investment.
- Workforce supports: information sharing and advocacy for increased investments in workforce quality, credentials and compensation.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Continue to partner with the Building on What Works coalition on issues, strategies and events promoting topics that cut across the birth-to-college education continuum, including Birth to Third Grade State Team, Every Student Succeeds Act state planning, braided funding streams for preschool expansion and local bridge building between school districts and birth-to-five community partners.

## State Budget Updates

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and its programs are funded at \$540.6 million. The budget also includes a \$12.5 million rate reserve for early educator salaries. Together this represents a \$2 million increase in overall funding for early education and care, the fourth straight increase since fiscal year 2013's low point. But funding has still not returned to prerecession FY2009 levels.



Most line items are stable or level funded, including child care access accounts, resource and referral agencies, and Head Start state supplement.



The budget includes a \$12.5 million rate reserve to support workforce salaries in early education and care programs that receive state subsidies. This is more than double the \$5 million rate reserve that the legislature funded in FY2016 and will help address the ongoing workforce crisis.



A new quality improvement line item in the EEC budget consolidates funds transferred from existing line items, including Universal Pre-Kindergarten quality grants, Early Childhood Mental Health Services for Infants and Parents, and EEC administration. A total of \$4 million is earmarked for the Quality Rating and Improvement System, including \$2 million in direct grants to programs. The consolidation signals the legislature and Governor Baker administration's shared agreement on the importance of quality in the early education and care system.



Full-day kindergarten grants were eliminated and \$18.59 million cut from the current fiscal year. These grants to local school districts support a variety of quality initiatives, including paraprofessional salaries, professional development,

special needs inclusion, kindergarten transition activities and accreditation support. The elimination of the grant will have a negative impact on kindergarten quality across the commonwealth.

## Recent Policy Changes

**Workforce:** The EEC Board has increased its focus on the workforce:

- **P** EEC's FY2017 aspirational ask included a \$31 million rate reserve to begin bringing the state rate to the 75th percentile of market rate over a five-year period. (As noted above, the FY2017 final budget includes a \$12.5 million rate reserve.)
- A new EEC Board Working Group on Workforce and Quality Improvement is studying workforce quality in detail to make recommendations for policy.

**P** **Preschool:** The EEC awarded state-funded preschool expansion planning grants to 13 communities. Grantees created strategic plans based on community needs assessments, with the goal of expanding access to high-quality preschool for high-needs children.

**P** **Social-Emotional Learning:** The EEC Board adopted state standards for Social-Emotional Learning/Approaches to Play and Learning. The department is offering professional development in support of the standards.

**P** **Kids First:** Senate President Stan Rosenberg launched a Kids First initiative, a multi-issue strategy for ensuring children's long-term success. The first phase of work focuses on birth through 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

**P** **Workforce:** House Speaker Robert DeLeo launched the Early Education and Care Business Advisory Group, an opportunity for business leaders to lend their management expertise, strategic guidance and financial advice on the critical needs of the early education and care workforce in Massachusetts.

**P** **Alignment:** The Birth-Grade Three state team continues to meet to collaborate across agencies on shared goals and objectives, including assessment and preschool expansion.

**P** **Workforce:** Massachusetts was selected to join the CEELO and BUILD Learning Table on State Policy and Supports to Promote Effective Teaching and Learning. The Massachusetts team, a subset of the Birth-Grade Three state team, is studying early educator credentials and compensation to identify gaps, learn from other states and make recommendations for Massachusetts.

**X** **Preschool:** Preschool expansion legislation did not pass during the 2015-2016 legislative session. On June 21, 2016, after two deadline extensions, all 10 early education bills were sent to study by the legislature's Joint Committee on Education. State revenue shortfalls continue to hamper preschool expansion and quality improvement efforts. Advocates plan to refile legislation,

incorporating lessons learned from implementation of the federal Preschool Expansion Grant in five communities, as well as 13 communities' preschool expansion strategic plans.

### Policy Opportunities

- **Political leadership:** In Massachusetts, the House speaker and Senate president are supportive of early education and care and have prioritized this issue, albeit through different initiatives. In monitoring the Baker administration's approach to early education policy, Education Secretary Jim Peyser's engagement is encouraging. He will be a valuable working partner in the years ahead, particularly on issues of program quality and workforce development. The opportunity and challenge is to ensure shared agreement from House, Senate and governor on a policy or funding solution for the next legislative session.
- **Workforce awareness:** There is growing public awareness of the workforce crisis in early education and care, including awareness of the salary gap between community-based preschool teachers and their peers with similar credentials working in district-run preschools. This new awareness has come about for many reasons: local "mixed-provider" preschool and workforce planning, state-level advocacy, national workforce research and reports, and compelling journalism covering the topic, both in Massachusetts and nationally. This momentum contributed to a \$12.5 million workforce investment in the state FY2017 budget, and advocates are hopeful for additional policy and investment in next year's budget. House Speaker Robert DeLeo is focusing on the early education workforce through a recently convened business advisory.
- **Local momentum:** Thanks to federal Preschool Expansion Grant funds and state preschool planning grants, several Massachusetts communities are investing time and resources in rethinking the delivery of high-quality preschool. There are opportunities for connecting communities to one another and to state leaders. Local stories of communities "ready" to implement high-quality pre-k will be critical to ensure buy-in from legislators and further state investment.

### Policy Challenges

- Despite policymakers' growing awareness and support for publicly funded high-quality early education, state investments remain modest. The FY2017 state budget marks the fourth consecutive year of "slow and steady" increases in early education, but early education and care funding in 2016 is still below prerecession levels. The state's inability to make a more robust investment in early learning is driven in part by state revenue shortfalls.
- The early education and care workforce is still in crisis. Low salaries make it difficult to attract and retain qualified teachers. The state has not yet established a clear career trajectory or pathway tied to credentials and compensation. The system lacks data to understand trends, needs, and impact, and to inform workforce policy proposals.

- The legislature eliminated full-day kindergarten grants in the FY2017 budget, a loss of \$18.59 million. High-quality full-day kindergarten is an essential piece of the birth-to-3<sup>rd</sup>-grade continuum. Lowering quality during the kindergarten year not only harms investments in early learning but will make long-term academic goals like 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade reading proficiency all the more difficult to reach.

### **Contact Information**

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# MICHIGAN

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Improve the Child Development and Care Program—the state’s child care subsidy system—by focusing on increasing provider rates, increasing eligibility and moving away from an hourly reimbursement structure. In addition, work to improve the application approval process and ensure that license-exempt providers are continuously and appropriately supported throughout the process.
- Advocate for state funding for a study on how to maximize Medicaid for Early On—Michigan’s Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C program—as well as additional state funding for the Early On program itself.
- Maintain the state’s investment in the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), the state’s preschool program for 4-year-olds at-risk of starting kindergarten underprepared.
- Maintain the state’s investment in Flint for early childhood programming, including Early On, home visiting, child care and preschool.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Michigan partners are laying the groundwork to move away from a two-tiered system of early intervention through Early On to streamline the system. Also underway are various efforts to look at better financing of Early On, all of which help make the case for needed state investment.
- As continued focus is placed on child care expulsion issues, partners are working on how to increase social-emotional supports for early childhood educators and families to better support young children exhibiting challenging behaviors.
- Efforts are underway to lay the groundwork to better understand adverse childhood experiences and trauma, as well as to improve screening processes to be able to provide the necessary supports to prevent and mitigate trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

## State Budget Updates

The following budget increases are specific to address the needs stemming from the Flint water crisis:

-  \$1.2 million to the Genesee Intermediate School District (GISD) to provide additional early childhood services and nutrition services for children and families impacted by the Flint water crisis.
-  \$6.2 million to GISD to provide early intervention services to children from birth through age three that are similar to those services described in Michigan’s Early On state plan. For FY2016, there was an additional \$10.9 million for early intervention services for children birth through age four. Any unspent funds in the current fiscal year can be used in FY2017.

-  \$1.5 million in FY2017 to GISD to provide universal school-day-length preschool for 4-year-olds in GSRP regardless of income. For the remainder of FY2016, \$900,000 is provided for summer GSRP or summer GSRP-like early childhood programming.
-  \$8.1 million in new federal CCDF to provide subsidized child care to families with children birth to age three living at or below 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL). These funds can be used through FY2018 if not expended by the end of FY2017.
-  \$15.1 million for an array of health and human services needs, including nutrition assistance and education, child and adolescent health centers, children's health care access program (a pediatric medical home model), Pathways to Potential programming, evidence-based home visiting services, nursing services and outreach for children exposed to lead, through community mental health.

The following are statewide budgetary changes:

-  \$7.7 million to increase the child care subsidy income entrance threshold from 121% FPL to 125%.
-  Retained GSRP funding for 4-year-olds.
-  \$185,000 for several independent school districts to pilot the Maryland-Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment in Michigan.
-  \$175,000 to pilot a partnership between a school district and an early learning collaborative to begin providing a 3-year-old preschool program to evaluate the benefits of two years of preschool versus one year. This is the first of three years of funding for this pilot.
-  Nearly all of the investments targeted toward improving 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade reading proficiency were retained except for the \$1 million Parent University pilot funds, which were never expended in FY2016 and were removed via negative supplemental.
-  Expansion of the clothing allowance to all children served by the Family Independence Program (FIP), Michigan's cash-assistance program, expanding to 25,000 additional children and youth. Previously, Michigan provided the clothing allowance only to children cared for by parents not receiving FIP benefits themselves
-  The final budget did not include \$50,000 that the state House of Representatives had provided for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to work with the Michigan Department of Education to investigate funding opportunities for Early On, including the feasibility of maximizing Medicaid reimbursement. Also, no statewide investments in Early On were included in the state budget.

## Recent Policy Changes



**Child Care Eligibility:** Increased the entrance eligibility income for the state's child care subsidy program from 121% of the federal poverty level to 125%.



**Child Care Application Process:** Beginning October 1, 2016, Michigan reduced the wait time to determine child care subsidy eligibility from a 45-day period to 30-days.

## Policy Opportunities

- The Michigan Department of Education—Office of Great Start is focused on not only complying with the new federal CCDBG regulations but also improving the child care system as a whole, which provides an opportunity to make much-needed policy shifts to this program.
- The Flint water crisis led to the first ever state appropriation for Early On. This created an opportunity to educate policymakers on the purpose of the program, and advocates must continue to educate policymakers on this important program and the needs of the Early On system.
- The combination of the long-term outlook for the state budget continuing to improve and the recent enactment of a regulatory structure for the medical marijuana industry will result in the opportunity for increased discretionary spending.

## Policy Challenges

- With attention to Flint having significantly died down, ensuring that young children in Flint continue to get the services they need will be challenging.
- The large increase in GSRP funding from several years ago continues to foster a sentiment that early childhood has been taken care of in Michigan by policymakers and administration officials.
- The turmoil within the Republican Party will likely cause many Michigan GOP elected officials in safely Republican-drawn districts to entrench themselves further to the right as the 2018 elections draw nearer.

## Contact Information

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# NEBRASKA

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- *Administrative:* Working with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, the Nebraska State Board of Education and the Department of Education to influence the early childhood recommendations that are included in Nebraska's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) state plan and our K-12 accountability system (AQuESTT)
- *Legislative:* Holding exploratory meetings with state senators, school superintendents, the business sector and other stakeholders to determine whether there are existing funding sources, particularly within the K-12 funding formula, that could be redirected to early childhood.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Develop a long-term policy strategy for the child care subsidy built around the following tenets:
  - Ensure that publicly subsidized child care buys the level of quality found to reduce the achievement gap
  - Expand the child care subsidy to reach all children at risk of failing in school (at least 185% of the federal poverty level)
  - Incentivize providers to accept the child care subsidy
  - Maximize opportunities provided by the 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)
  - Develop a cost model of Nebraska's Quality Rating and Improvement System, Step Up to Quality, with the purpose of tying reimbursement levels for each step in the system to the cost of providing quality
  - Continue to fund the evaluation of Step Up to Quality and use the results to improve the system and set rates that pay for the cost of quality
- The Buffett Early Childhood Institute has kicked off its Early Childhood Workforce Development multi-year Theory of Change to transform Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce which includes a state shared vision and common language, plans for alignment and integration, sustaining a professional environment, and plans for developing workforce professionals.
- Governor Ricketts' Education and Workforce (EdW) Roundtable has identified early childhood and career academies as two priorities of the roundtable. This initiative provides opportunities to link early learning to broader efforts in building the state's talent pipeline. To date, the early childhood conversation within the roundtable has focused on child care and the need for data.

## State Budget Updates

Advocating with legislators and state government for adequate, reliable early childhood and education funding within a restricted budgetary process. Nebraska's state budget is heavily reliant on local property taxes to fund education. While Governor Ricketts supports quality education, he has made property tax relief his main priority.



Stable funding for high-quality early childhood investments in the Sixpence Early Learning Fund and the Nebraska Department of Education preschool grant program.

## Recent Policy Changes



**Early Childhood Workforce:** A cross-sector interest in a collaborative framework to analyze Nebraska's early childhood workforce challenge and [recommend feasible strategies to address it led to the introduction of LB773](#). This legislation proposed the establishment of a task force representing higher education, public schools, state government, the child care community and business leaders. Despite the bill generating widespread support and ongoing interest, the introduction of Governor Ricketts' Education and Workforce (EdW) Roundtable opened new opportunities to link early learning to broader efforts in building the state's talent pipeline, so LB773 was withdrawn from consideration. The EdW Roundtable efforts continue with an early childhood focus on child care.

**School Readiness Tax Credit Act:** [LB889](#) creates two tax credits:



1. A nonrefundable tax credit for early childhood programs that serve children at risk and that have demonstrated they offer the level of quality that closes the achievement gap (at least a Step 3 in Nebraska's five-step quality rating system).
2. A refundable tax credit for individuals working in the early childhood field, with an emphasis on community child care providers, who demonstrate competencies classified under Nebraska's Professional Record System.

These credits will be available for early childhood programs and individual early childhood professionals beginning in 2017.



**Home Visiting Accountability:** [LB939](#), introduced in 2016, requires departments that administer early childhood home visiting programs (both child development and health related) to submit an outcome measurement plan to the governor and the Legislature by January 1, 2017, with the intent of establishing uniform standards around home visitation and ensuring accountability measures are in place. LB939 was not advanced from committee.

## Policy Opportunities

- Established strong relationships with the members of the State Board of Education.
- The business community will be working to influence Nebraska's governor on the importance of early childhood.

## Policy Challenges

- Nebraska's Unicameral consists of 49 senators. Seventeen (17) new senators were elected this year, and five incumbents, all Republican, were unseated. Due to term limits in Nebraska, 34 of the 49 state senators will have two years or less of experience.
- Entering the 2017 legislative session with an almost \$1 billion shortfall and a governor who is gradually reducing state spending – will create an atmosphere where there is rarely any new money and will mean working within existing funding structures

## Contact Information

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- Becky Veak, director; First Five Nebraska, [bveak@firstfivenebraska.org](mailto:bveak@firstfivenebraska.org).

# NEW JERSEY

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Increase support for the healthy development of infants and toddlers.
- Expand affordable child care for families.
- Improve access to high-quality preschool and child care.
- Ensure effective kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> grade systems to build on the early learning foundation.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Increase state funding for high-quality preschool by partnering in the Pre-K Our Way Campaign.
- Reduce chronic absenteeism by 5% statewide by supporting the adoption of legislation that will mandate schools to track, report and address chronic absenteeism.
- Improve access to high-quality child care by advocating for full state implementation of the federal Child Care Development Block Grant and by advocating for legislation to require criminal history background checks of family child care providers and certain family members.
- Expand access to early intervention services by collaborating with state and local staff on practices to ensure that potentially eligible children are screened and receive services, specifically (1) developing policy and contract changes in Medicaid to encourage early regularized screening in well-child visits and (2) creating practices that take developmental needs into account in child welfare cases.

## State Budget Updates

- ✕ \$25 million for preschool expansion was included in the fiscal year 2017 proposed budget but was line-item vetoed by Governor Chris Christie.

## Policy Changes

- P** **Suspension and Expulsion:** Legislation [S-2081](#) expanded current preschool suspension and expulsion protections to 2<sup>nd</sup> graders.
- P** **Chronic Absenteeism:** [S-447/A2352](#) would require the New Jersey Department of Education to define chronic absenteeism, require schools to report chronic absenteeism data in their school report cards, and require schools with 10% or more of their students identified as being chronically absent to develop a committee to address the issue.
- P** **Governance:** [S-1454/A-3369](#) would establish a new state department to focus exclusively on early childhood programs and services. The new Department of Early Childhood would assume the responsibilities of the current Division of

Early Childhood Education in the Department of Education. This division oversees the state's preschool program, among other duties.



**After-School Care:** [S-1456](#) would expand before- and after-care for state-funded preschool in certain districts. Eligibility requirements were tightened in FY2011, making many families ineligible for this service and reducing funds to community-based child care centers that also offer state-funded preschool.



**Early Childhood Innovation Act:** [S-973](#) would create a five-year innovation loan pilot program and study commission within the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. According to language in the bill, "the pilot program shall concern nonprofit early childhood services with the purpose of encouraging private investment in early childhood programs to reduce federal, State, and municipal expenditures related to those services. The pilot program shall assess the feasibility of expanding an early childhood innovation loan pilot program statewide and expanding the scope of early childhood innovation loan guarantees."



**Child Care Tax Credit:** [S-1453/A-331](#) would implement a nonrefundable tax credit for child care expenses for taxpayers who are eligible for the federal child and dependent care credit and have New Jersey taxable income of \$60,000 or less.



**Health and Safety:** A bill is pending to require family child care providers and adult members living in the household to undergo a criminal history background check. Also child care center inspection reports are now available online.

### Policy Opportunities

- New Jersey Department of Education enthusiastically engaging the early childhood community in the development of the state's Every Student Succeeds Act plan.
- Renewed legislative interest in early childhood education.
- A well-funded campaign (Pre-K Our Way) that aims to expand high-quality preschool throughout the state.
- Improved program quality through the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.

### Policy Challenges

- Inadequate funding throughout the birth-to-3<sup>rd</sup> grade continuum.
- Inadequate communication between the state and outside stakeholders.
- Lack of a system for the education and compensation of the early childhood workforce.

### Contact Information

- Cynthia Rice, senior policy analyst, Advocates for Children of New Jersey, [crice@acnj.org](mailto:crice@acnj.org).

# NEW MEXICO

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Increased funding for high-quality child care to meet new federal regulations without reducing quality or eligibility.
- Expansion of full-day New Mexico PreK to additional 3- and 4-year-olds.
- Increased access to home visiting services.
- Increased access to T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarships and INCENTIVE\$ wage supplements.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Promote the use of more TANF funds to support quality child care, not only funds that are transferred from TANF to CCDBG but also TANF spending generally where states can exercise many choices for which the funds are used. Ensure that TANF-eligible families are prioritized for quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs and that navigators are assigned to help TANF families learn about and sign up for the variety of ECCE programs available.
- Promote high-quality child care as a foundational program of New Mexico's early learning system, working with and assisting the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) in meeting the new federal regulations of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and New Mexico's state Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) plan.
- Partner with CYFD and business leaders on the Second Annual Child Care Policy Summit, offering sessions for child care providers that will be helpful in developing policies related to high-quality care and to the implementation of the state's CCDF plan.
- Advocate for the expansion of full-day New Mexico PreK to additional 3-and-4-year-olds.
- Advocate for continued expansion of home visiting.
- Advance the quality, affordability and accessibility of child care and education based on policy recommendations developed by a child care work group hosted by the CYFD.
- Ensure that there is communication and coordination between CYFD and the New Mexico Public Education Department on the state and local levels so that expansion of New Mexico PreK and growth of quality in child care through FOCUS is done in a way that supports and improves the quality and accessibility of existing early care and education programs and does not displace or disrupt existing programs working to improve quality.
- Continue efforts to advance professional development and wage supplements for the early childhood care and education workforce, including those who provide care in a home.

- Continue analysis of early childhood education and care revenue options with a variety of stakeholders, including business leaders, and the development of policy recommendations.
- Explore policy options that support groups of programs implementing Shared Services.
- Promote the use of more TANF funds to support quality child care, not only funds that are transferred from TANF to CCDBG but also TANF spending generally where states can exercise many choices for which the funds are used. Ensure that TANF-eligible families are prioritized for quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs and that navigators are assigned to help TANF families learn about and sign up for the variety of ECCE programs available.

### State Budget Updates

The final fiscal year 2017 budget includes \$244.2 million to support early childhood initiatives, down \$6.8 million from the year before (about a 2.7% decrease from FY2016 appropriations). The early childhood initiatives that were not funded were early childhood initiatives in kindergarten through 3rd grade, not birth-to-five initiatives.

-  \$900,000 increase to support home visiting programs.
-  \$50,000 increase for INCENTIVE\$ Pay Supplements (a WAGE\$-type program) and T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarships.
-  No cuts to birth-to-five early childhood programs in the 2017 session. Given the dire financial state of New Mexico's economy, this is a huge accomplishment.
-  No new funding passed for the K-3 Plus program, which provides additional educational time (extending the school year by 25 instructional days beginning before the school year) for students in "high-poverty public schools," kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
-  No new funding passed for early literacy programs.
-  No new funding passed for the child care assistance program.
-  Joint resolutions to include on the 2016 electoral ballot a constitutional amendment to support early care and education with a percentage of the state's Land Grant Permanent Fund (valued at \$14 billion) failed to progress through the Legislature.

### Recent Policy Changes

-  **Child Care Regulations:** Advocates and partners continue to closely monitor the implementation of a 2015 CYFD rule requiring single parents seeking child care assistance to register with the Child Support Enforcement Division (if proof of child support from a noncustodial parent was not obtained) and the provision

that lets mothers in domestic-violence situations request an exemption from this requirement.



**Reauthorization of the CCDBG:** The state has updated its regulations to be in compliance with the 2014 CCDBG reauthorization. CYFD will begin implementing the state CCDF plan and new federal child care regulations, which includes initiatives such as increasing the continuity of care for children and families.



**Sustainability:** As RTT-ELC funding goes away this year, discussions will begin with CYFD to find other sources of funding to continue essential projects.

### Policy Opportunities

- **Build on broad support for early childhood.** Broad support for early childhood in the October 2016 special legislative session meant there were no cuts to early childhood programs. The session was called to make budget cuts and increase state revenue to cover deficits in the current fiscal year (FY2017). This was an accomplishment to be built on.
- **Promote an understanding of the importance of the whole early learning system.** This year provides an opportunity to promote an understanding of the importance of the whole early learning system that includes high-quality child care, New Mexico PreK, home visiting and Head Start.
- **Communication and coordination.** Communication and coordination among state, local and private entities in expanding early childhood services is an important and challenging area of work. New Mexico's Early Learning Advisory Council has taken this on as a project.
- **Promote high-quality child care:** This year, with the implementation of the reauthorization of the CCDBG and the successful New Mexico Child Care Policy Summit in October, there is more momentum and value in promoting and funding high-quality child care.

### Policy Challenges

- **New Mexico's economy:** The state's economy is struggling. Any increases to funding early childhood programs will be a huge accomplishment.
- **Communication and coordination:** Communication and coordination among state, local and private entities in expanding early childhood services is an important and challenging area of work.
- **New Mexico's Land Grant Permanent Fund:** Finding ways to go forward in exploring how and if to access resources from the state's Land Grant Permanent Fund will require transforming the conflicts into civil discussion and exchange of views.

### Contact Information

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# NEW YORK

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

#### *Child Care*

- Implement legislative and regulatory changes to implement the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) reauthorization requirements.
- Ensure future subsidy funding is sufficient to cover the market rate at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile<sup>1</sup> and addresses the impact of the minimum wage increase on existing salary structures.
- Improve access to child care subsidies for children experiencing homelessness in line with the new CCDBG requirement to prioritize serving these children.
- Create an early childhood learning fund with a dedicated revenue stream to increase the percentage of children being served by child care subsidies.

#### *Pre-K*

- Maintain all current funding for pre-k and add at least \$150 million to expand access to quality pre-k outside of New York City, with priority to high-needs districts/neighborhoods.
  - \$125 million to expand access to pre-k for 3- and 4-year-olds in public schools and early childhood programs in community-based organizations.
  - \$25 million to promote the infrastructure and support strategies, such as professional development, coaching and mentoring, and other evidence-based methods that help programs meet quality benchmarks.
- Protect existing pre-k services and move the state toward a coherent and sustainable pre-k financing strategy.
- Include adequate investment in K-12 school aid to ensure pre-k is followed by a continuum of quality educational services that prepare children for college and career.

*Home Visiting.* Maintain \$26.8 million and invest an additional \$11.5 million in maternal, infant and early childhood home visiting to adequately fund a continuum of supports and services.

*Early Intervention (EI).* Begin restoring reimbursement rates by increasing the current rates by at least 5%.

#### *Expanded Learning*

- Appropriate \$32.8 million to the Advantage After School Program (AASP).
- Increase Advantage After School funding to serve 20,000 participants, the peak number funded in 2007–2008 (+\$5.9 million).
- Align per-student funding to Extended School Day funding level of \$1,600 per student, consistent with national best practices (+\$4.6 million).

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<sup>1</sup> The federal government recommends that states reimburse at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

*Quality Rating and Improvement System.* Increase funding for QUALITYstarsNY by \$20 million to expand the program.

*Workforce.* Create a state task force to evaluate the immediate and long-term impact of the increasing minimum wage on current salary structures and the cost of these critical services, and to develop recommendations to ensure appropriate compensation for the professionals working in these programs.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Increasing the reimbursement rates for EI services for infants and toddlers with delays or disabilities. The rates were cut in 2010 and 2011 and flat-funded since that time, causing experienced providers to stop accepting EI referrals. An increase is necessary in order to recruit and retain high-quality providers.
- Addressing the need for a more coherent and appropriately funded pre-k system by working with the governor's office, the Regents (New York's state board of education), the state Education Department and public education advocates to move the state to create high-quality, full-day pre-k in the state's diverse delivery system. The effort pays close attention to rates to assure equity across settings in public schools and community-based settings so children have access to effective teachers and comprehensive services.
- Working to align the Pre-K investment with other early childhood funding streams, especially child care and Head Start, to move the state toward a more seamless system of early care and learning, prenatal to grade 3.
- Increasing investments in the continuum of MIECHV programs by restoring funding for Healthy Families New York and adding funding for The Parent-Child Home Program Inc. and Parents as Teachers.
- Increasing investment in subsidized child care services and working with the state to use the new Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to improve the quality of and protect access to subsidized child care. That will include seeking to address inequities in the county-based child care subsidy system and working toward expansion of quality assurance strategies, such as quality rating.
- Working with the congressional delegation to create a voice for the federal investments necessary to move New York forward and protect existing services. This requires special attention to CCDBG and the federal Preschool Development Grant, which are most at risk in the coming year.
- Winning paid family-leave insurance.

### State Budget Updates

- ⊕ \$22 million increase invested in pre-k for 3-year-olds; no new funding for 4-year-olds.
- ⊕ \$3 million increase for QUALITYstarsNY, for a total of \$5 million.
- ⊕ \$2 million maintained for after school programs; \$3 million increase (\$5 million total).



No funding for child care, including for CCDBG.



No increased funding for home visiting; Nurse-Family Partnership actually lost \$500,000.

### Recent Policy Changes



**Paid Family Leave:** New York became the fifth state to adopt paid family leave. Once fully phased in, the legislation will mandate up to 12 weeks of paid time off from a job to bond with a new child or care for gravely ill family member. The law goes into effect January 1, 2018.



**Early Intervention (EI):** Governor Andrew Cuomo's executive budget proposal to restructure the EI program with health insurance was rejected.



**Preschool:** There was no movement on pre-k funding streams.

### Policy Opportunities

- As regulations that govern pre-k funding streams sunset, there is an opportunity to consolidate funding streams to have one set of governing standards and a streamlined procurement process.
- There is an opportunity to offer creative solutions to meeting the interim steps of CCDBG implementation.
- Election results will cause power shifts in the state Senate and could put supporters and allies in a better position to affect change.

### Policy Challenges

- Concern over the increased public discourse on the need for additional funding in the K-12 system and the ability to include early childhood issues as a component in this discussion.
- CCDBG changes are coming down the pike, and there is no additional funding in the system.
- There is a lack of substantive interest from the administration in human services issues, including child care, as well as constant staff turnover.
- The executive is committed to producing a near-zero growth budget in this upcoming year.

### Contact Information

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# OKLAHOMA

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Develop and implement a pilot Kindergarten Inventory Tool.
- Implement a coordinated data system to capture an unduplicated count of early care and education program participation.
- Support the continuation of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board (State Advisory Council) during the 2017 Sunset Review.
- Maintain and expand state funding for early care and learning programs, home based family support, and health and mental health services during an anticipated second consecutive year of significant state revenue failures.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Develop a policy for data governance that facilitates the sharing and connection of early childhood data currently collected by child-serving state agencies.
- Explore the feasibility of an early childhood Pay for Success model, including considerations of any legislative actions.

## State Budget Updates

The Oklahoma State Legislature addressed a nearly \$1.3 billion revenue shortfall by tapping into one-time revenues, eliminating targeted tax credits and enacting over \$360 million in reductions to state agencies.



The budgets of state agencies providing early childhood health, mental health, parenting, early intervention and early care and education programs were cut between 2.06% and 9.32%.



Many early care and education programs were negatively impacted by these reductions in proportion to their agency reductions.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education made the following changes (at the time of this update, specific agency reductions impacting early childhood programs were not yet available):



Eliminated all remaining funding (\$998,761) for the Parent Education Program Grant (formerly Parents as Teachers).



Reduced funding (\$2,487,197) for the Oklahoma Early Childhood Initiative, a fund to support enhanced quality in selected center-based care centers.



Maintained level funding for Part C Early Intervention programs.

Other budget proposals that failed to pass included:

-  Senate bill proposed to eliminate pre-k in the school-funding formula.
-  Oklahoma State Department of Health proposed elimination of state-funded home-based parenting programs through a child-abuse prevention fund; these programs were reduced, but the system was maintained.

### Recent Policy Changes

-  **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC):** State EITC was adjusted to be nonrefundable effective this tax year (2016), impacting 355,000 low-income Oklahomans.
-  **Tax Credits:** Effective January 1, 2016, a business tax credit for child care facilities was eliminated one year earlier than it was originally set to expire.
-  **Workforce:** [SB 1554](#) created changes in child care center director credentials, allowing an individual with a bachelor's or postgraduate degree to have met the educational requirements to be a director, eliminating previous requirements for credit hours in early childhood and administration.
-  **Health and Safety:** [SB 1273](#), Shepard's Law, created revisions to sleeping environments for infants in family child care homes and large homes beginning July 1, 2016.
-  **Child Care Subsidy:** The child care subsidy benefits were frozen for new applicants from June 1 until July 31, 2016 as a result of state revenue shortfalls.
-  **Child Care Quality:** The Oklahoma State Department of Human Services reduced state funding for CCDF Quality Initiatives that resulted in:
  - Elimination of the REWARD program supporting continuing education for providers.
  - Reduction of contracts for child care mental health consultation.
  - Removal of Environmental Rating Scale observations as a requirement in the Quality Rating and Improvement System.

### Policy Opportunities

- Momentum around Pay for Success and performance outcomes will provide increased opportunity to support early childhood as a wise investment.
- Educare and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs are increasing the recognition that quality early learning opportunities make a difference in child outcomes.
- The CCDF rules will help Oklahoma focus on continuity of care for children and increase quality supports.

### Policy Challenges

- Facing the second consecutive year of 10% or greater monthly revenues below estimated projections.
- The impact of state House and Senate term limits will result in at least 30 new legislators, more if incumbents do not win races, as many face serious opposition.
- There are mounting concerns around increasing child care regulations.
- The infrastructure for early childhood programs has shrunk because of budget cuts, leaving more families without services.

### **Contact Information**

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# OREGON

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Increase the state investment in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) to serve the growing number of eligible children identified by expanded developmental screenings, and increase the number of children receiving the recommended level of service.
- Serve more eligible families with an increased state investment in voluntary home visiting programs that is flexible to respond to community need and incentivizes collaboration, coordination and responsiveness to diverse communities and rural areas.
- Strengthen the coordination among existing home visiting programs in the Early Learning Division and Oregon Health Authority/Public Health with an investment in a home visiting data system.
- Serve more eligible children in high-quality, state-funded preschool programs: Preschool Promise and Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten.
- Increase salaries for Oregon Head Start prekindergarten teachers to ensure salary parity across all state-funded prekindergarten programs and with local kindergarten teacher salaries.
- Strengthen coordination and collaboration between Oregon Head Start and the state's new preschool program, Preschool Promise.
- Support policies and increased investments to expand professional development opportunities across the entire early learning workforce.
- Build intentional pathways to increase preschool teacher qualifications while supporting and maintaining teacher diversity (informed by the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program and Oregon's Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge scholarship investments).
- Maintain Oregon's investment in the Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation Fund that supports building bridges between early learning and the early elementary school grades.
- Continue local birth-to-eight policy work through two local demonstration sites with an emphasis on birth-to-eight system building and strategic planning.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Development of Kindergarten Readiness metrics for Oregon's Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs).
- Development of a flexible infant and toddler fund to increase service coordination and access to high-quality infant and toddler programming to support health and on-track development, including improving access to developmental screening and referral systems and early childhood mental-health consultation models to support the healthy development of young children.

- Refine and make improvements to the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) based on findings from the state's validation study.
- Expand Help Me Grow to more communities statewide.
- Expand local prenatal-through-3<sup>rd</sup> grade (P-3) work by providing technical assistance to two to four districts working to ensure early learning investments are sustained through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Use lessons learned to inform state policy.

### State Budget Updates

-  Secured additional \$5.4 million for EI/ECSE.
-  Secured promised \$5.3 million for Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten.
-  Increase to Oregon's state earned income tax credit (EITC) match for families with children under age 3 from 8% of the federal credit to 11%.

### Recent Policy Changes

**Earned Income Tax Credit:** Two bills passed in 2016:

- 
  - HB 4144A created a task force to improve on Oregon's worst EITC utilization rate in the country. It also asks the Oregon Department of Revenue to promote the EITC.
  - HB 4110 expands the EITC for those with young children by increasing Oregon's state EITC match for families with children under age 3 from 8% of the federal credit to 11%. This boost for low-income families is expected to help approximately 58,000 Oregonians.

### Policy Opportunities

- Governor Kate Brown has given verbal support for the new Preschool Promise program and demonstrated an interest in helping to resolve challenges and expand access for low-income children.
- The Early Learning Council has a new chair who is very strong and experienced.
- Oregon's Early Learning Division is conducting a national search for a new early learning director.

### Policy Challenges

- Loss of key legislative champions for early childhood, new leaders still emerging.
- A potential 10% budget deficit fueled by increased costs associated with Medicaid expansion and courts striking down the legislature's attempt to reform the Public Employee Retirement System.
- An initiative to increase Oregon corporate taxes, Measure 97, is on the November 8, 2016 ballot. This is a highly contentious and high-stakes measure, with an estimated \$6 billion at stake.
- Oregon Head Start Association's concerns with the implementation of the new state preschool program, Preschool Promise, due to lack of coordinated enrollment and disparities in lead teacher salaries. Pushback on the B.A. degree

from some powerful leaders in some communities of color related to concerns that the requirement could decrease diversity in the teaching workforce.

### **Contact Information**

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- Marina Merrill, senior policy and research adviser, Children’s Institute [marina@childinst.org](mailto:marina@childinst.org).

# PENNSYLVANIA

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Improve child care reimbursement rates in order to move toward the subsidizing the cost of high-quality care.
- Increase state investments to support the four evidence-based home visiting models currently funded through Pennsylvania's Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV).
- Work to gain increased investments in high-quality pre-k programs in state FY2017-18.
- Work to increase state investments in basic and special education funding and protect the recently enacted basic education funding formula (Act 35 of 2016).
- Assure that children enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are appropriately screened and provided with all opportunities for their healthy development.
- Improve health coverage outreach, enrollment and renewal practices, including gaining approval to implement continuous eligibility for children in Medicaid.
- Work at the federal level to assure passage of legislation reauthorizing MIECHV, federal CHIP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and increased appropriations for the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Explore other funding methods for evidence-based home visiting programs, including Medicaid and state child welfare dollars.
- Research ways to provide continuity in prenatal-through-3<sup>rd</sup> grade (P-3) education, including, for example, evaluating Kindergarten Entry Inventories and investigating opportunities to facilitate P-3 professional development.
- Begin implementation process of recommendations approved by the administration for integrating early learning licensing, quality improvement and program monitoring; streamlining data tracking; and establishing an integrated payment model.

## State Budget Updates

Pennsylvania finally brought its fiscal year 2015-16 budget to closure in March 2016, making it nine months overdue. While some appropriations were driven out in a partial budget in late December 2015, targeted investments benefitting children ultimately included a \$200 million increase for basic education, a \$20 million increase for special education and a \$30 million increase for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts/Head Start.

Moving into FY2016-17, Pennsylvania once again started its fiscal year, on July 1, 2016, without an enacted state budget. While the Republican-led legislature sent a \$31.6 billion general appropriations bill to the governor on June 30, an agreement on an accompanying revenue package needed to balance the budget (as is constitutionally

required) was not reached until July 13. Only a handful of line items received an increase in this year's budget given limited revenue growth options.

-  \$30 million increase for Pre-K Counts and Head Start programs was included in the general appropriations bill that made it to the governor's desk.
-  \$200 million increase in basic education funding.
-  \$20 million increase for special education.
-  Governor Tom Wolf proposed a \$10 million increase in home visiting services in his FY2016–17 budget. This would have been the first significant state investment in home visiting programs in many years and would mirror Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting in that all four evidence-based home visiting models would be eligible to receive state funds (currently only two of the models receive state dollars). This was not included in the budget bill passed by the legislature in June 2016.

The state legislature is currently wrapping up a very limited fall session, with few policy issues expected to be addressed. Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children is in the process of producing Program Revision Requests (PRRs) for FY 2017-18, which will be used to present to administration officials ahead of the governor's budget address in early 2017. These PRRs will contain our priority budget asks for the upcoming fiscal year on home visiting, child care, pre-k, and basic education/special education funding.

### Recent Policy Changes

-  **Funding Formula:** The state enacted a basic education funding formula for K-12 education across the state. The formula, which was forwarded by the bipartisan Basic Education Funding Commission in 2015, was finally signed by the governor in June 2016.
-  **Children's Health Insurance Program:** The state reauthorized CHIP, which was set to statutorily expire on December 31, 2015. Legislation was enacted to extend the program through 2017. Language was also adopted to implement express-lane eligibility requirements for the CHIP program, which permits using eligibility findings from other public programs to streamline enrollment in CHIP and Medicaid.
-  **Services Alignment:** In 2015, an ongoing collaborative initiative was started to increase access to high-quality early learning services and reduce administrative burden on families and providers. Current improvements include the acceptance of electronic signatures, the alignment of the state's QRIS regional coordinating entities (Regional Keys) and certification regions to improve collaboration between monitoring staff, and the development of a common family application pilot.

### Policy Opportunities

- Strong, bipartisan support for pre-k funding in the state legislature despite limited revenue coming into the state. Several new legislative champions have been cultivated and are enthusiastic about bringing attention to the issue.
- An engaged, diverse and effective coalition of groups is in place to continue advocating for investments in child care, pre-k, and home visiting.
- Strong interest has been garnered in work in developmental screening, bringing increased attention to the issue from interested stakeholders and policymakers.

### **Policy Challenges**

- Continued resistance and inability of the legislature to pass a comprehensive revenue package, which is needed to provide significant increased investments across a variety of program areas in the state budget. Without additional revenue coming into the state, the pot of money allocated for increases will continue to be very limited and there will be competition.
- Throughout his current term, Governor Wolf has prioritized addressing the growing subsidized child care waiting list while ignoring the issue of provider rates, which have not been adjusted since 2008. Significant awareness and education efforts must continue in the administration and the legislature if this issue is to gain traction.
- Following Philadelphia passing a soda tax to fund pre-k in the city, statewide advocacy will need to adapt to anticipated challenges, including combating the perception that the problem has been addressed in that community and additional state funding is not necessary.
- Pursuing additional state investments in home visiting will require continuing momentum built in educating policymakers, including differentiating between this need and other early learning budget asks.

### **Contact Information**

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# RHODE ISLAND

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Make graduated phaseout (cliff-effect) policy permanent for the Rhode Island Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).
- Increase and adopt tiered reimbursement rates for the CCAP by paying higher rates for programs that achieve ratings of 2 through 5 stars in the BrightStars QRIS. Pay high-quality 4 and 5 star programs at or above the 75th percentile of the 2015 Market Rate Survey.
- Expand state funding to support program quality improvement in the BrightStars QRIS and promote participating across child care, Head Start, State Pre-K, and public school systems.
- Expand access to State Pre-K and Head Start.
- Preserve and expand paid family leave policies (Rhode Island is one of 4 states with paid family leave).
- Ensure licensing inspection reports are posted on public website by November 2017.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Wage enhancement strategies to attract and retain qualified and effective staff in under-financed early learning programs serving low-income children.
- Implementing kindergarten entry profile.
- Routine, universal developmental screening from birth through K entry with follow-up, referral, and enrollment in programs to address developmental delays and disabilities.
- Continue to strengthen connections and supports for young children in the child-welfare system, including developmental screening and follow-up, eligibility determination for Early Intervention, high-quality child care, home visiting, access to Head Start and RI Pre-K Program.

## State Budget Updates

-  \$1.2 million increase in state funding for pre-k, which, combined with federal Preschool Expansion Grant funding, will add 414 slots for 4-year-olds in high-poverty communities for 2016–2017.
-  \$2.6 million increase in state funding to ensure access to full-day kindergarten statewide for 2016–2017. Legislation passed in 2015 requires all school districts in Rhode Island to provide universal full-day kindergarten by August 2016.
-  \$8.4 million in new state and federal funding (largest increase in funding in more than 10 years) for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to serve growing numbers of eligible children and to meet the anticipated increase in costs as

Rhode Island implements changes required under reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act.



\$2.5 million in new funding for English-language learners in public schools. Many English-language learners are in pre-k to grade 3, but this extends through all grades.



Increased the state's refundable Earned Income Tax Credit from 12.5% to 15% of the federal credit.



Maintained state funding for Head Start.



Maintained access to the state's paid family-leave program.



\$1.6 million in new funding proposed by the governor to support quality improvement and accountability systems for early learning programs.



\$2 million in new funding to implement the first phase (infants and toddlers) of tiered reimbursement for the CCAP by paying higher rates for programs that achieve ratings of 2 through 5 stars in the BrightStars QRIS.



\$5 million in new funding for the CCAP to restore family income eligibility to 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) from 180%.

### Recent Policy Changes



**Home Visiting:** The Rhode Island Family Home Visiting Act passed, codifying key elements of the state's home visiting system into law. The law requires the Rhode Island Department of Health to work with other state agencies to identify vulnerable families and offer them the opportunity to enroll in voluntary, evidence-based family home visiting programs that improve child outcomes.



**Early Intervention (EI):** Legislation passed that requires health insurance providers to pay for EI services at rates at least equal to Medicaid rates. The \$5,000 cap on billing private health insurance for EI services was removed in the 2015 legislative session.



**Child Care Cliff Effect:** Legislation passed that extends the Child Care Transition Program by one year, allowing participating families to maintain eligibility as their income grows up to 225% of FPL.



**Recess:** The Free Play Recess Act passed, requiring at least 20 consecutive minutes every day of free-play recess for all children attending public elementary schools and discouraging teachers from withholding recess for punitive reasons.



**Literacy:** Legislation passed that adds dyslexia-targeted assistance as a required element of the literacy program for children in elementary school.



**Suspension and Expulsion:** Legislation passed that requires school districts to evaluate the discipline data they already collect annually, identify any racial, ethnic or special-education disparities and develop a plan to reduce any disparities, and restricts the use of out-of-school suspensions to situations when a child's behavior poses a physical risk or serious disruption that cannot be dealt with by other means.

### Policy Opportunities

- Governor's strong interest in early care and education.
- Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership expansion.
- Significant expansion of access to high-quality pre-k recently.

### Policy Challenges

- Child care rates do not support or incentivize quality improvement.
- Wages for early learning professionals, particularly child care staff, are inadequate to attract and retain an effective workforce.
- Inadequate facilities exist for significant expansion of pre-k/Head Start.

### Contact Information

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- Elizabeth Burke Bryant, executive director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, [ebb@rikidscount.org](mailto:ebb@rikidscount.org).

# WASHINGTON

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Support successful implementation of the Early Start Act through administrative advocacy. This includes ensuring that changes to Early Achievers, Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), are driving improved child outcomes; data collection and analysis is sufficient to evaluate impact; the cost of quality is funded; child care subsidy is accessible; and new aligned standards for licensed child care, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Early Achievers support increased access to high-quality, culturally responsive early learning.
- Expand Washington's state pre-k, ECEAP, to make progress toward a statutory commitment to full entitlement for eligible children by 2020. Expansion priorities include additional slots, a slot-rate increase, investment in facilities and support for a mixed delivery system that includes child care centers and family child care homes.
- Commit the Legislature and the Washington Department of Early Learning to a process for developing consensus on compensation in the early childhood educator professional workforce through a legislatively mandated stakeholder workgroup tasked with developing recommendations.
- Fund the cost of quality in child care centers and family child care homes by increasing rates paid to child care providers and fully funding the caseload for child care subsidy.
- Sustain and expand access to evidence-based home visiting programs.
- Enact paid family leave.
- Support new revenue to fund a continuum of early learning from birth-to-five.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- Administrative advocacy to support effective implementation of ECEAP expansion in communities across the state.
- Explore strategies to grow and sustain a highly competent, culturally and linguistically diverse early learning workforce through fair compensation and support for professional development.
- Improving data and evaluation systems to ensure that the state's growing early learning system is achieving improved outcomes for children furthest from opportunity.
- Improving access to behavioral health supports in child care settings.

## State Budget Updates

2016 was a supplemental year in Washington's biennial budget cycle. Revenues were lower than anticipated, and this, paired with a series of unanticipated expenses, created a tough fiscal environment.



\$12.7 million for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for family child care providers. The CBA funds increases to subsidy reimbursement base rates, tiered reimbursement, quality improvement awards, training and coaching, and expanded contracted slot pilots and other quality improvement mechanisms.



\$2.152 million for the Early Childhood Intervention and Prevention Services program (ECLIPSE, formerly known as Medicaid Treatment Child Care). This program provides services and treatment in a child care setting for more than 350 children ages birth to five with significant developmental, behavioral and mental health challenges. Use of federal Medicaid funds for this program was prohibited in 2014.



Prevented the legislature from supplanting state investments with federal funds. Federal appropriations for fiscal year 2016 increased Washington's Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) allotment by \$9.8 million. The budget passed by the Legislature in 2016 supplanted existing state expenditures in early learning with these new federal funds. This would have resulted in a net reduction in early learning spending in this year's budget and in the maintenance-level budget for the Early Start Act in future years. Governor Jay Inslee vetoed the reduction.



Proposals to expand ECEAP, and extend resources provided to family child care providers to those in child care centers and increase capacity in child care caseload were not funded in this session.

## Recent Policy Changes



**CCDBG Reauthorization Implementation:** Washington's new state Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) plan was approved. The plan:

- Implements 12-month authorization of child care subsidy and seasonal child care (July 1, 2016).
- Provides graduated phaseout of subsidy benefits for an additional three months to families earning above the income eligibility ceiling of 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) up to 220% of FPL (July 1, 2016).
- Plans to expand monitoring to license-exempt, nonrelative providers who serve families in the child's home.
- Pilots a model for 316 contracted slots for Early Head Start/Child Care partnerships.



**Early Start Act Implementation:** In 2015, Washington passed a historic \$158 million investment in early learning, which included passage and funding of the bipartisan [Early Start Act](#). Advocates are working to ensure that new resources prioritize a great start for children furthest from opportunity. Progress includes:

- An Early Achievers review process is refining Washington's QRIS with an eye on:

- Barriers to provider participation in Early Achievers, especially those barriers with implications for racial equity.
- Prioritizing those standards most predictive of improved child outcomes.
- The Department of Early Learning has convened a work group to advance professional development pathways that recognize cultural and linguistic diversity to enable providers to meet new education requirements.
- Full implementation of mandatory participation in Washington's QRIS went into effect August 1, 2016. All providers who serve families receiving subsidy will be required to participate in Early Achievers.
  - Standards across Washington's early learning system are being aligned to eliminate duplication and contradiction between licensing, QRIS and state pre-k standards.



**Every Student Succeeds Act:** The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has convened work groups to plan implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, including one to develop recommendations for implementing the early childhood provisions of the law, with a complete draft plan anticipated November 2016.

### Policy Opportunities

- The Early Start Act brought significant new resources and policy improvements to Washington, including increased stakeholder-engagement mechanisms, presenting new pathways and opportunities to improve access to high-quality early learning as implementation continues to roll out.
- Statute requires ECEAP access to all eligible children by 2020, requiring significant expansion of the program. There is momentum for prek expansion across national, state and local levels that provides support for this priority.
- There is growing bipartisan and bicameral consensus around the value of early learning, as evidenced by the passage and funding of the Early Start Act.

### Policy Challenges

- In 2015, the state Supreme Court found the Legislature in contempt for failing to fully fund K-12 education per the McCleary, et al. v. State of Washington ruling. The court required it to address this by 2018, and it has yet to do so. This session will be its last prior to the deadline. Early learning is not part of the definition of basic education.
- There are ongoing budget challenges due to insufficient revenue sources and a legislative culture of budget austerity.
- Significant investment in early learning in 2015 may make it difficult to continue advocating for additional increases with legislators.

### Contact Information

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# WISCONSIN

## Birth-to-Five Policy Priorities

### 2017 Agenda

- Promote smart early childhood investments recommended by the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC).
- Educate and support the newly formed bipartisan Legislative Children's Caucus.
- Expand the number of vulnerable children in high-quality child care settings.
- Improve health of young children and families.

### Ideas or Topics in Development

- **ECAC Recommendations:** Continue a strong role in promoting key issues recommended to the governor by the Early Childhood Advisory Council:
  - Double the number of children in high-quality child care programs rated 4- or 5-star under YoungStar (Wisconsin's QRIS program), with an emphasis on children with high needs
  - Double the number of families with young children in evidence-based home visiting programs.
  - Expand the public-private partnership network that supports local communities in their efforts to leverage resources to support early childhood.
- **Children's Caucus:** Support the Legislative Children's Caucus interest in trauma-informed care and promote early prevention efforts, particularly early care and education, home visiting and early childhood mental health consultation.
- **YoungStar Trends and Policies:** Analyze trends of children in high-quality programs, particularly children from low-income families and with a racial equity lens, and advocate for policies and funding that increase the number of 4-star and 5-star high-quality programs and the number of children that attend them.
- **Obesity Prevention:** A broad coalition will advocate for continued improvement in obesity prevention policies for child care and take leadership in a "farm to early care and education" initiative.
- **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:** An infant-toddler policy workgroup is working on a proposal for a pilot project in two to three communities to demonstrate the impact of effective mental health services for young children.

### State Budget Updates

Wisconsin is in the second year of its 2015–17 biennial budget. Nearly all significant budget decisions occurred in the first half of 2015. There were no significant early childhood budget changes in 2016.



Infant-Toddler Support: A draft bill to change policies to improve the effectiveness of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership did not pass. Its goals

were to increase income eligibility, extend eligibility to 12 months and to eliminate copays for vulnerable families.

## Recent Policy Changes

- P** **Children’s Caucus:** The Legislature established a bi-partisan, bicameral Children’s Caucus, with interest in trauma-informed care, impact of high-quality early learning and the science of early childhood brain development.
- P** **Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT):** Initial steps of EBT in the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program are moving ahead. A pilot is scheduled for fall 2016, with implementation effective in February 2017. EBT policies include paying in advance and paying based on enrollment, eliminating attendance reporting. These policies are likely to improve payments and reduce paperwork for providers, but providers are worried about the transition to parent using electronic options to pay providers.
- P** **EBT Policy Changes Support Highest Quality Programs:** After extensive advocacy by the child care community, a new EBT policy was dropped, to the advantage of high-quality programs. The adjusted policy ensures that quality tiered reimbursement payments will go directly to programs rated 4-Star and 5-Star providers under our QRIS program, YoungStar, rather than going to the EBT card, at least for now. A decision that the current amount of the quality payments going to high-quality programs was sustained, reversing a policy that would have capped quality payments at the level of the private fees charged by each program. The reversed policies maintain funding to sustain high-quality programs.

## Policy Opportunities

- As recent polls show, there is broad bipartisan support of the public for government investments in a range of children’s issues.
- There is a growing understanding that supporting early childhood development is a smart investment.
- A strong set of recommendations by the Governor’s ECAC could have a significant impact on policymakers. Republican leaders have asked to discuss key issues and provide data.

## Policy Challenges

- **Decline in child care subsidy funding:** Despite the ability of the solid YoungStar program to improve the quality of child care, Wisconsin’s child care subsidy program has been in decline for nine years, undermining progress made by YoungStar to build sustainable high-quality programs.
- **Conservative leaders:** The current administration is very conservative, focusing on tax cuts and re-educated expenditures.
- **Discouraged advocates:** The lack of progress at the state level is leaving many advocates tired and discouraged, with minimal hope for positive change.

## Contact Information

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