



National Policy Digest

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Highlights

Education Department Merge

The White House released a lengthy publication in mid-June proposing the merge of the United States Department of Education and the United States Department of Labor. This publication, outlining a massive restructuring of the federal government, would require congressional approval and would consolidate both departments in to one larger department with four sub-branches. The Office of Management and Budget announced this merger as part of a plan last year aimed to eliminate redundancy across agencies. More details on the merger from [the Washington Post](#), [National Public Radio](#) and [Education Week](#).

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Policy Trends & Analysis

Family First

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) provides increased federal investments in prevention and would allow funds under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to be used for quality mental health, substance abuse prevention and treatment services, and in-home parent based skills in order to keep children safely in their families and communities. While it was signed into law in February, the Department of Health and Human Services is soliciting comments through July 22, 2018. This is an opportunity to advocate that the mental health, substance abuse and parenting services that are used to help prevent children entering care should be included in the Federal FFPSA Clearinghouse and also to flag anything about the department's prioritization for review that might make it difficult to get a key service reviewed and included. More information on the legislation and request for comments can be found on [ACF's website](#).

The Impact Project

The Office of Child Care is calling for applicants to participate in the Impact Project, which assists states and territories as they develop and expand their capacity for planning, investing in, and implementing quality early childhood (EC) systems, policies, and practices. Participants will design projects, new or already under way, that are meaningful to them and that are based on their particular context, vision, and goals for the development of a strong EC system. The Impact Project offers intensive consultation and assistance from the Child

Care State Capacity Building Center. Consultants with extensive state-based experience will be available to each participating state and territory over a 24-month period.

For more information, or to learn about the eight states and one territory participating in the first round of the Impact Project, [review the application packet](#), which includes information about their experiences. Applications are due on August 1.

Parental Addiction

Throughout the nation, more states are adopting the practice to keep the mother and child together while the mother participates in a drug rehabilitation treatment. [The Hill discusses](#) that some states do not automatically consider drug exposure as child abuse. Therefore, these states have more flexibility in serving the family unit. These policies are aimed at reducing the number of children entering foster care systems, and focus on allowing children to be physically present at the location where parents get treatment, especially considering that every 15 minutes a baby is born with [Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome](#).

Immigration

As a response to the Trump Administration's "zero tolerance" immigration policy, [USA today highlights](#) last year's finding from the American Academy of Pediatrics that children seeking safe havens should not be placed in detention centers. USA today looks at the opinion of several pediatricians, including Colleen Kraft, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, who cites prior research when suggesting that children placed in these centers could experience irreversible harm in brain development and trauma when separated from their families. On Wednesday (20 June, 2018), President Trump signed an [executive order](#) that allowed families under certain circumstances to stay together while detained. This was made possible by allowing the Secretary of Homeland Security to maintain custody of individuals crossing the border instead of immediately transferring custody of adult detainees to the [Department of Justice](#).

Workforce Index

The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) at the University of California, Berkeley published the second edition of the [Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018](#). This biennial report [provides information](#) at the state-level on wages, working conditions and policies in the early childhood field. The data is not only presented in a report format, but also visually through an [interactive map](#). The CSCCE encourages policymakers, businesses, labor leaders and educators to use the data as well as the policy solutions suggested in the Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018 to inform state and federal-level policy decisions in the workforce.

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New Research

Paid Family Leave

[The Better Life Lab](#), a partnership of Slate and New America, [highlights new research](#) from Promundo and Dove Men+Care suggesting that the lack of paid leave for parents, in conjunction with pressures of social stigma, prevents fathers from caring for their children as much as they would like to. This study found that 73% of fathers agreed about the paucity of workplace support for fathers, 69% indicated that they would change their workplace if they could spend more time with their family, and also that men reported more satisfaction with their lives when they are allowed to be the caregivers that they wish to be.

Early Child Services

[Education Week looks at](#) the important role that research, in particular, research on Judy Centers, plays in expanding access to child care. The article cites recent research from the Baltimore Education Research Consortium, which looked at these centers improving kindergarten readiness and decreasing achievement gaps in Baltimore, with an aim for these findings to improve kindergarten services all over the world.

Child Development

[New research from Purdue University](#) looks at block play in the context of child development. The researchers indicate that block play among preschool-aged children has the potential to advance two skills--mathematics and executive functioning--that are critical to kindergarten readiness.

Child Well-being

The Annie E. Casey Foundation published the [2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book](#), which uses four domains (i.e. economic well-being, health, education and family and community factors) to rank all states' efforts in helping children thrive in life. The data is also available through an [interactive database organized by state](#).

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News and Resources

Child Development

[The 30-million-word gap](#), the idea that children in low-income households have, on average, 30 million fewer words spoken to them than children in high-income households, has been up for debate following a [replication study](#) published by Douglas Sperry, Linda Sperry and Peggy Miller. Sperry et. al. claim that because of the significant limitations to the original Hart and Risley study, like the unrepresentative sample, the observation time, and most critically, the definition of the verbal environment, the study does not accurately represent the variation in experiences among low-income children. Though some researchers fear that "[debunking](#)" the [word gap](#) may lead to disinvestment from programs that seek to fill this gap through language building, the true importance of this new research is that it shows that families are not bound by their socio-economic status and that children have the capacity to learn across all environments.

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News From The States

[CA](#) | [FL](#) | [GA](#) | [IL](#) | [IN](#) | [LA](#) | [ME](#) | [MD](#) | [MO](#) | [NY](#) | [TN](#) | [DC](#) | [WI](#) |

California

- Governor Brown [signed the 2018-19 California State Budget](#), capping months of work by early childhood education advocates and champions in the Legislature. The nearly \$1 billion ECE budget package over the next four years includes: a \$26 million investment in quality improvement initiatives, including a \$5 million investment for

The Licensed Child Care Teacher Professional Development Program to improve practices to support dual language learners; adds 13,407 additional child care spaces; provides 2,959 full-day preschool slots, bringing the 3-year total to nearly 9,000 additional full-day slots; fulfills a multi-year agreement to increase provider reimbursement rates and increases the reimbursement rate adjustment factor for infants, toddlers and children with special needs; and a \$167 million investment in facilities, equipment and professional development for ECE programs in low-income areas with a focus on serving children with special needs.

Florida

- The Florida legislature [passed a bill](#) to put accountability measures in place for the Office of Early Learning, the state's lead agency for administering the federal Child Care and Development Fund. Supported by \$6 million to implement the program assessment and effective July 1, the state will be required to work with about 8,000 agencies involved in the school readiness program to measure the quality of the teacher and child interactions using research-based tools; measure accountability through a minimum threshold for contracting purposes, a process for program participation and improvement plan; assess the development of children through level of growth, progress of in performance standards and provide appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities and those learning English; and coordinate performance standards for the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program and provide the necessary data in a compatible format for a single statewide information system.
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Georgia

- [Highlighted in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), a local teacher voices her support for Georgia's state HOPE scholarship. An additional report from [WALB news highlights](#) the 25 year anniversary of the program.
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Illinois

- [WRMJ looks at](#) the impact of Illinois' recent funding cuts on local early childhood education programs.
 - Local State Senator Chuck Weaver hopes to reverse cuts to area early childhood education funding, [reports WRMJ](#).
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Indiana

- Indiana families are looking towards the state to assist with the cost of child care, and provide resources to guide them through this process, [reports WIBC](#).
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Louisiana

- Educare, one of the most progressive early education programs in the nation, is effectively helping New Orleans children thrive in class, [reports WDSU](#).
- [The Advocate reports](#) on the expected 80 percent decrease of Louisiana's child care wait list as the Child Care Assistance Program's federal dollars allow new slots for

children from birth to age four to enroll in early child care programs.

Maine

- The legislature approved LD 1321, "An Act to Promote Social and Emotional Learning and Development in Early Childhood" to provide child care providers and preschool teachers with the resources and support children struggling with challenging behaviors. The act creates the Early Childhood Consultation Program pilot project, training a group of behavior experts available to assist teachers and child care providers with these issues before they result in expulsion. Requests for consultation are entirely voluntary and are designed to help keep children in a learning environment. [LD 1321 will now head to the governor](#), who has 10 days to sign it, veto it, or allow it to become law without his signature.
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Maryland

- The Governor of Maryland, Larry Hogan, announces a \$19 million boost in education funding, [reports The Associated Press](#).
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Missouri

- [The St.Louis Post-Dispatch reports](#) on Missouri's paucity of investment in child care, and how this lack of funding impacts child care providers, families, and staff in early education programs.
 - [Kansas City's KCTV comments](#) on a push by Kansas City officials and the Kansas City Health Department to make Pre-K, rather than kindergarten, the earliest funded level of education for children.
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New York

- [Labor Press focuses](#) on New York's early childhood education teachers and their quest for pay parity.
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Tennessee

- [Chalkbeat spotlights](#) Tennessee's Shelby County, whose pre-K committee has recommended delaying additional spending until 2020, in contrast to Commissioner Steve Basar's recent proposal which adds an additional \$2.5 million for pre-k. This initiative is part of the state's \$40 million plan to improve and expand early childhood in Memphis.
 - [The Tennessean critically examines](#) Nashville's child care, as parents have reported on long wait periods, exorbitant costs and a lack of places to care for their child.
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Washington, DC

- [The Washington Post discusses](#) DC's motion to dismiss a lawsuit over its controversial education requirements, specifically the requirement for lead teachers to have an associate degree, for child-care workers.

Wisconsin

- Governor Scott Walker approved recent changes to Wisconsin Share's child care subsidy program, [reports Fox 6](#). This change facilitates an additional \$10 million dollars annually in the pockets of low-income families who need affordable child care to maintain and support employment.

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The [Ounce national policy team](#) partners with and supports early childhood leaders in states as they advance a comprehensive agenda for at-risk children and families. We do this by providing individualized strategy and policy consultation and resources; facilitating peer-to-peer learning and networking across states; and supporting Educare schools and the Educare Learning Network in the development of their policy and advocacy work.

The National Policy Digest is a bi-monthly newsletter that shares up-to-date and noteworthy developments in state and federal early childhood news, policy and funding changes, research, policy trends and analyses, upcoming events, etc. culled from diverse sources in the field. To subscribe, please visit our [website](#).



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