



EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Ensure each child in Pennsylvania has the opportunity to participate in affordable and accessible high-quality early care and education, including infant and toddler child care, as well as pre-kindergarten education. The rapid brain growth during the first few years of life underscores the need to build an early, solid foundation for future success in school, relationships, and life. A coordinated early care and education system is a vital component of the economy, allowing parents to work while knowing their children are receiving high-quality child care and education.

POLICY PRIORITIES:

1. Increase the number of children enrolled in publicly funded, high-quality pre-k.

- a. Increase investments for publicly funded, high-quality pre-k so at least 60 percent of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds can voluntarily participate.
- b. Monitor provider eligibility in Pre-K Counts (PKC) and the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) so high-quality pre-k providers can participate in publicly funded programs and preserve the mixed pre-k service delivery system.
- c. Ensure the availability of a high-quality workforce by reinforcing the need for a pre-k through 4th-grade teaching certification and addressing compensation parity for pre-k and kindergarten teachers.
- d. Monitor the impacts of the state PKC and HSSAP programs to ensure intended positive results.

2. Increase the number of Child Care Works eligible children in high-quality child care programs, specifically infants and toddlers.

- a. Support policies and funding for current Keystone STAR 3 and 4 providers to maintain high-quality programming and for Keystone STAR 1 and 2 providers to reach high-quality Keystone STARS standards, creating a more financially stable and larger pool of high-quality providers for eligible children in the subsidized child care program.
- b. Develop a concept to simplify subsidy payment rates and establish a base rate that includes the

quality level of child care programs, coupled with increasing contracted slots, to provide more stable payment structures for high-quality infant and toddler care.

- c. Collect workforce data to analyze compensation disparities within the sector and advocate for professionals to be paid comparable wages to K-12 teachers with the same degrees or credentials.
- d. Support policies and funding to increase professional development for the child care workforce.

3. Research opportunities to strengthen Infant Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) through collaboration with early childhood education and health systems, including Early Intervention (EI).

- a. Identify opportunities to promote the importance of the social and emotional development and mental health of infants and toddlers.
- b. Promote the inclusion of IECMH topics as professional development training for early care and education providers, including child care, EI, and related professionals.
- c. Investigate opportunities to strengthen the coordination of support and services between mental health providers and early childhood education providers to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions from infant and toddler programs, including an analysis of available data and services through the IECMH consultation program.

4. Support economic policies that benefit children and their families.

- Promote opportunities to implement a state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to provide working families a path to financial stability.
- Monitor advocacy opportunities to advance a state Paid Family Leave policy so every worker can take time to care for their health or child.

SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS IMPACTING POLICY PRIORITIES:

- Annual federal appropriations for early care and education include the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Head Start, and Preschool Development Grants. State appropriations include Child Care Services, Child Care Assistance, Pre-K Counts, and Head Start Supplemental Assistance lines.
- Child Care certification regulations re-write.
- Continued efforts at the federal and state levels to support the child care infrastructure.
- Implementation of Child Care Works exit eligibility increase to 300% FPL.
- Impact of new Child Tax Credit for families.
- Pennsylvania's application for a Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five and proposed impact to the current pre-k system.

DATA POINTS

65,970 children are enrolled in publicly funded, high-quality pre-k; yet **101,500** eligible children remain unserved.

5,075 more classrooms are needed to serve all eligible pre-k children.

65,970 high-quality pre-k providers receive public funds in the state, including **464** high-quality child care providers and **205** school district locations.

39,752 children under age 5 are served in Child Care Works, including **17,490** children being served in high-quality child care programs.

84% of infants and toddlers eligible for the Child Care Works program remain unserved.

The majority of children under age 5 in Child Care Works are Non-Hispanic Black children, yet only **38% RECEIVED HIGH-QUALITY CARE** compared to 53% of White children.

1,883 high-quality child care providers are operating in Pennsylvania.

With nearly **7,000** open child care positions, **91%** of child care providers reported a staffing shortage.

From 2019-2021, **875** children were served through Pennsylvania's Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program.

