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Enhancing the Provision of Early Care and Education in the Time of COVID-19

Introduction

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, families, particularly those who are economically vulnerable and from historically marginalized backgrounds, have had their resources strained. Some families have endured becoming impoverished, likely due to reduced working hours and prolonged unemployment, threatening their access to food, healthcare, housing, and utilities.¹²³ Simultaneously, early childhood programs are now facing declining enrollment due to their lowered enrollment capacity and limited service hours, which trends with national patterns for declining student enrollment.⁴⁵ Some centers have closed altogether, disrupting the provision of social services often offered, such as intervention referrals and health examinations.⁶⁷⁸ Across the United States, kindergarten enrollment has fallen an average of about 14% (Goldstein & Parlapiano, 2021).⁹ These urgent circumstances could be addressed using funds recently allotted

¹ Bryan, K.A., Buajitti, E., Rosella, L.C., & Goel, V. (2020). The economic and long-term health consequences of Canadian Covid lockdowns. *Canadian Public Policy*, (online). <https://doi.org/10.3138/cpp.2020-134>

² Feeding America. (2021). The impact of Coronavirus on food insecurity. *Feeding America*. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/coronavirus-hunger-research>

³ Zaroli, J. (2020, August 10). *A 'homeless pandemic' looms as 30 million are at risk of eviction*. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/10/900766719/millions-of-americans-are-in-danger-of-being-evicted-during-pandemic>

⁴ Haspel, E. (2021, May 26). *There's a massive child-care worker shortage and the market can't fix it*. Washington Post. Retrieved August 1, 2021, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/05/26/child-care-center-worker-shortage/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=957178b9-9d4b-450a-b458-74ea55dcb29e>

⁵ Kamenetz, A. (2020, October 9). *Enrollment is dropping in public schools around the country*. National Public Radio. Retrieved August 1, 2021 from <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/09/920316481/enrollment-is-dropping-in-public-schools-around-the-country>

⁶ Murray, J. (2020) In a time of COVID-19 and beyond, the world needs early childhood educators. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 28(40), 299-302). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2020.1839830>

⁷ Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K.A., Hodges, K.S., Weisenfeld, G.G., & Gardiner, B.A. (2021). *The state of preschool 2020: State preschool yearbook*. National Institute for Early Education Research. https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/YB2020_Full_Report.pdf

⁸ Gillispie, C. (2021). *Our youngest learners: The impact of COVID-19 on early intervention: Survey of states*. The Education Trust. <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Early-Intervention-Survey-of-States-May-2021.pdf>

⁹ Goldstein, D., & Parlapiano, A. (2021, August 7). *The Kindergarten Exodus*. The New York Times. Retrieved August 19, 2021 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/07/us/covid-kindergarten-enrollment.html>

by the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act (CARES) Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-136), Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) Act (P.L. 116-136), and the American Rescue Plan (P.L. 117-2) (see Table 1).¹⁰¹¹¹² Thus far, for American households, the American Rescue Plan has relieved food insufficiency by 17%, housing instability by 19%, and raised 6 million children out of poverty through Child Tax Credit payments.¹³ One of the most important ways to develop resilience in communities is to invest in children and families through service provision via ECE programs.

Growing caregiving responsibilities alongside widespread job loss among adults in the United States necessitates a two-generational approach to child care.¹⁴ This brief maintains three strategies for supporting family resilience and improving quality of care and service provision across early care and education (ECE) programs (i.e., Early Head Start, Head Start, state-funded pre-kindergarten, family or home-based child care, infant and toddler care): (i) supporting the well-being of teachers, (ii) bolstering wraparound services within ECE programs, and (ii) supporting family engagement. Head Start and Early Head Start serve as models of comprehensive care provision. These federally funded programs are organized to provide services to pregnant women, children under the age of 3, migrant populations, and American Indian/Alaskan Native populations. Recipients of TANF, children in foster care, and children who are without stable housing qualify for enrollment. Federal and state investments in culturally

¹⁰ Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, P.L. 116-136, 116th Cong., 6th Sess. (2020).

¹¹ Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), P. L. 116-260, 116th Congress, 2nd Sess. (2020).

¹² American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, P.L. 117-2, 117th Cong., 1st Sess. (2021).

¹³ Maloney, C. B. (2021). Select subcommittee analysis shows American Rescue Plan helped alleviate poverty and provide equitable relief to the American people. House Committee on Oversight and Reform. <https://oversight.house.gov/news/press-releases/select-subcommittee-analysis-shows-american-rescue-plan-helped-alleviate-poverty>

¹⁴ Sampson, L., Ettman, C. K., Abdallaa, S. M., Colyere, E., Dukes, K., Laneh, K. J., & Galeaa, S. (2021). Financial hardship and health risk behavior during COVID-19 in a large US national sample of women. *SSM-Population Health*, 13.

responsive approaches to fostering outcomes for children and families should contribute to families' ability to thrive during current and ongoing adversity.¹⁵

The Value of Early Childhood Education

Over the course of a lifetime, ECE program participation has been linked to increased likelihood of higher educational attainment (i.e., diploma, degree, certification), and better health (e.g., less obesity).¹⁶¹⁷¹⁸ Furthermore, programs that provide wraparound services (e.g., referrals to social services, health examinations, nutrition programs), such as the Perry Preschool Program, Abecedarian Project, and Chicago Child-Parent Centers are linked to less participation in crime, mothers' participation in the workforce.¹⁹²⁰²¹ In the wake of COVID-19, all ECE programs should look to expand their services and refer to the Head Start Early Learnings Outcome Framework (Figure 1), as well as the complementary Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework (Figure 2), for organizational guidance to coordinate staff, family, and community care in order to improve overall quality of program structure and impact on child and family outcomes.²² With a budget of nearly \$10 billion dollars annually, Head Start serves

¹⁵ Bethell, C., Solloway, M., Guinosso, S., Hassnik, S., Srivastav, A., Ford, D., & Simpson, L. (2017). Prioritizing possibilities for child and family health: An agenda to address adverse childhood experiences and foster the social and emotional roots of well-being in pediatrics. *Academic Pediatrics, 17*(7), S36-S50.

¹⁶ Ludwig, J., & Miller, D. L. (2007). Does Head Start improve children's life chances? Evidence from a regression discontinuity design. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (February, 2007).

¹⁷ Bauer, L., & Schanzenbach, D. W. (2016). The long-term impact of the Head Start Program. *The Hamilton Project*. https://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/files/long_term_impact_of_head_start_program.pdf

¹⁸ Lumeng, J. C., Kaciroti, N., Sturza, J., Krusky, A. M., Miller, A. L., Peterson, K. E., Lipton, R., & Reischl, T. M. (2015). Changes in body mass index associated with Head Start participation. *Pediatrics, 135*(2), 449-456. www.pediatrics.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2014-1725

¹⁹ Reynolds, A. J., Ou, S., & Topizes, J.W. (2004). Paths of effects of early childhood intervention on educational attainment and delinquency: A confirmatory analysis of the Chicago Child-Parent Centers. *Child Development, 75*(5), 1299-1328. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2004.00742.x>

²⁰ Campbell, F. A., Pungello, E. P., Kainz, K., Burchinal, M., Pan, Yi., Wasik, B. H., Barbarin, O., Sparling, J. J., Ramey, C. T. (2012). Adult outcomes as a function of an early childhood educational program: An Abecedarian Project follow-up. *Developmental Psychology, 48*(4), 1033-1043. doi: 10.1037/a0026644

²¹ Masse, L. N., & Barnett, S. W. (2002). *The benefit cost analysis of the Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention*. National Institute for Early Education Research. <https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2002/11/AbecedarianStudy.pdf>

²² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. (2021d). *Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework*. Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-parent-family-community-engagement-framework>

approximately 1 million children and pregnant women.²³ Head Start participation predicts significant improvements in language and literacy (e.g., letter-word identification, letter naming), writing, math, and vocabulary skills. Head Start enrollees also demonstrate less hyperactive behavior (i.e., difficulty maintaining attention to tasks).²⁴ Notably, children who do not speak English as their first language show significant improvements in school readiness.²⁵

²³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021c). Head Start program facts: Fiscal year 2019. *Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center*.

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/hs-program-fact-sheet-2019.pdf>

²⁴ Zill, N., Resnick, G., Kim, K., McKey, R. H., Clark, C., Pai-Samant, S., Connell, D., Vaden-Kiernan, M., O'Brien, R., & D'Elio, M. A. (2001). *Head Start FACES: Longitudinal findings on program performance. Third progress report*. Administration for Children & Families.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/head-start-faces-1997-longitudinal-findings-program-performance-third-progress-report>

²⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (January 2010). *Head Start impact study: Final report, executive summary*. Washington, DC.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/head-start-impact-study-final-report-executive-summary>

	Infant / Toddler Domains	Preschooler Domains
Approaches to Learning	Approaches to Learning	Approaches to Learning
Social and Emotional Development	Social and Emotional Development	Social and Emotional Development
Language and Literacy	Language and Communication	Language and Communication Literacy
Cognition	Cognition	Mathematics Development Scientific Reasoning
Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

Figure 1. Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework²⁶

²⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2015). *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework*. Office of Head Start. <https://www.ohcac.org/HeadStart/EarlyLearningOutcomesFramework.pdf>

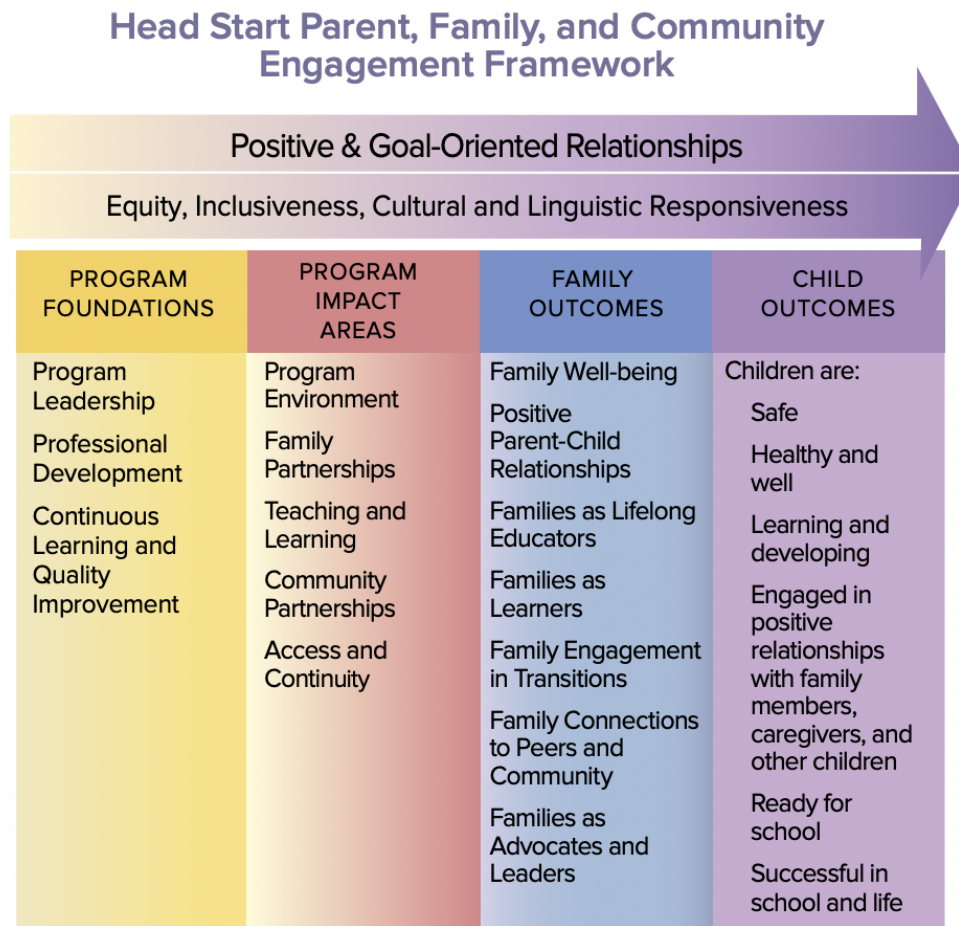


Figure 2. Head Start, Family, Community Engagement Framework²⁷

Outcomes for families

Investments in comprehensive child care is imperative to the financial and psychological well-being of caregivers who are experiencing unprecedented financial stress and psychological strain (e.g., increase in depressive symptoms), particularly among those who are low income and dealing with other life stressors.^{28,29} The post-traumatic stress, anger, and confusion that are

²⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. (2021). *Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework*. Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center.

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-parent-family-community-engagement-framework>

²⁸ Ettman, C. K., Abdalla, S. M., Cohen, G. H., Sampson, L., Vivier, P. M., & Galea, S. (2020). Prevalence of depression symptoms in US adults before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *JAMA Network Open*, 3(9), doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.19686

²⁹ Congressional Research Service (2021). *Unemployment rates during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Congressional Research Service Reports. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46554>

related to prolonged stress experienced by adults, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, may manifest as health risk behaviors, such as increased substance use, less sleep, and less healthy eating habits, which could be harmful to the children in their care.³⁰³¹³²³³ For American families with children under age 5, financial and material hardship (i.e., inability to pay for food, housing, or utilities) was related to caregiver distress (i.e., anxiety, stress, depression), which is predictive of the kind of toxic stress that inhibits healthy biological and social development in children.³⁴ Comprehensive early care programs like Head Start may function as a psychological and social support for parents, improving their positive parenting practices (e.g., frequent read alouds, reviewing the alphabet, offering praise, spending quality time together), as well as their overall physical and psychological well-being (e.g., fewer depressive symptoms, less distress).²⁴¹⁶³⁵

Valuing Teachers

Over the duration of the pandemic, it has become more clear than ever that ECE professionals, availability of care, and affordability of care are necessary not only for children and family well-being, but for broader economic sustainability as an essential support that allows American adults to be able to participate in the labor full-time. The lack of funding provided to

³⁰ Brooks, S. K., Webster, R. K., Smith, L. E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G. J. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. *Lancet*, 395, 912-920. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30460-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8)

³¹ Sampson, L., Ettman, C. K., Abdallaa, S. M., Colyere, E., Dukes, K., Laneh, K. J., & Galeaa, S. (2021). Financial hardship and health risk behavior during COVID-19 in a large US national sample of women. *SSM-Population Health*, 13.

³² Bethell, C.D., Gombojav, N., & Whitaker, R.C. (2019). Family resilience and connection promote flourishing among US children, even amid adversity. *Health Affairs*, 38(5), 729-737, DOI:10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05425

³³ Felitti, V.J., Anda, R.F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D.F., Spitz, A.M., Edwards, V., Koss, M.P., & Marks, J.S. Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 1998;14(4):245-258.

³⁴ Center for Translational Neuroscience (2020, August 25). Bearing witness: Family voices that we can't ignore. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/rapid-ec-project/bearing-witness-family-voices-that-we-cant-ignore-9e64b9bfb41>

³⁵ Parker, F. L., Piotrkowski, C. S., & Peay, L. (1987). Head Start as a social support for mothers: The psychological benefits of involvement. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57(2), 220-233. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1987.tb03532.x>

early childhood education has contributed not only to teachers' widespread turnover and intention to quit, but also the exposition of the labor force as exploited and woefully underpaid compared to K-12 teachers.³⁶³⁷ During the pandemic, due to concerns related to cost and safety, many parents have opted for their children to instead participate in family and relative care.³⁸ Despite this shift in preferences, when students are in the classroom, early childhood educators play a crucial role in shaping children's development and have emotionally and physically demanding job tasks.³⁹⁴⁰³⁴⁴¹ Teachers have had to adapt to virtual learning, differentiate instruction, monitor student well-being, and assess learning in innovative ways.

Workplace support and resources (e.g., professional supports, growth opportunities, benefits) are linked to better health outcomes for teachers, higher work engagement, greater motivation, and improved job performance.³⁷⁴²⁴³⁴⁴ Regardless of the potential longstanding consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the American workforce, maintaining an early

³⁶ Kwon, K., Malek, A., Horm, D., & Castle, S. (2020a). Turnover and retention of infant-toddler teachers: Reasons, consequences, and implications for practice and policy. *Children and Youth Services Review, 115*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105061>

³⁷ Whitebook, M., King, E., Philipp, G., & Sakai, L. (2016). *Teacher's Voice: Work environment conditions that impact teacher practice and program quality*. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. University of California at Berkeley. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/2016-Alameda-SEQUAL-Report-FINAL-for-Dissemination-v2.pdf>

³⁸ Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020, October). *Child care in 25 states: What we know and don't know*. Bipartisan Policy Center. Retrieved August 1, 2021 from https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BPC_Working-Family-Solutions_FinalPDFV4.pdf

³⁹ Denham, S. A., Bassett, H. H., Mincic, M., Kalb, S., Way, E., Wyatt, T., & Segal, Y. (2012). Social-emotional learning profiles of preschoolers' early school success: A Person-centered approach. *Learning and Individual Differences, 22*(2), 178–189. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2011.05.001>

⁴⁰ Kwon, K., Ford, T. G., Salvatore, A. L., Randall, K., Jeon, L., Malek-Lasater, A., Ellis, N., Kile, M.S., Horm, D. M., Kim, S.G., & Han, M. (2020b). Neglected elements of a high-quality early childhood workforce: Whole teacher well-being and working conditions. *Early Childhood Education Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-020-01124-7>

⁴¹ Jeon, L., Buettner, C., & Grant, A. (2018). Early childhood teachers' psychological well-being: Exploring potential predictors of depression, stress, and emotional exhaustion. *Early Education and Development, 29*(1), 53-69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2017.1341806>

⁴² Pogodzinski, B., Youngs, P., & Frank, K. A. (2013). Collegial climate and novice teachers' intent to remain teaching. *American Journal of Education, 120*(1), 27–54. <https://doi.org/10.1086/673123>

⁴³ Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne, 49*(3), 182–185. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a001280>

⁴⁴ Bakker, A. B., & Bal, M. (2010). Weekly work engagement and performance: A study among starting teachers. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 83*(1), 189- 206. doi.wiley.com/10.1348/096317909X402596

child care system will be predicated upon the presence of well-compensated and healthy educators being present in the classroom. Without state and federal overhaul to teacher compensation strategies, educators may continue their mass exodus from classrooms, leaving centers without staff, and families with more permanently limited options for care for their children. If educating young children is generally considered to be a public good, then it should be upheld by substantial public support.

Teacher Pay

All early childhood educators are not compensated equally. While preschool teachers are compensated an average of \$30,520 annually, child care workers (e.g., infants and toddlers) only earn \$24,230, less than \$15/hour. For Black early childhood educators, this penalty in compensation is even more profound because they are more likely than their White counterparts to work in settings with infants and toddlers. Public funds are the primary financial support for 15% of centers serving infants and toddlers and, thus, should be allocated to the improvement of work conditions. The rate of poverty among early childhood educators is 7.7 times higher than that of teachers in the K-8 system.⁴⁵ Ultimately, the issue of paying teachers hinges upon addressing the historical issue of compensating marginalized women, particularly women of color, for their labor.

Supporting Family Resilience

Schools can act as protective factors, aiding in the provision of and access to care, in order to promote family resilience.⁴⁶ Attributes of family resilience include parents being able to

⁴⁵ McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., Whitebook, M., & Olson, K.L. (2021). *Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2020*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. University of California, Berkeley.
<https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/report-pdf/>

⁴⁶ Banyard, V., Hamby, S., & Grych, J. (2017). Health effects of adverse childhood events: Identifying promising protective factors at the intersection of mental and physical well-being. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 65, 88-98.

cope with demands of parenting, sharing an emotional connection to their children, and being able to talk with their children about difficult circumstances.²⁹ Protective factors for resilience, or the capacity to adapt to threats and adversity, include family support, school support, and peer support. In order for children to demonstrate resilience in their development, they need connections to caring adults, and they need stable and nurturing relationships with caring adults and effective teachers and schools.⁴⁷

Material hardships (inability to pay for food, eviction, foreclosure, inability to pay utility bills) were highest in Black (59%), Latinx (61%), and single-parent households (60%), as well as in households with children who have disabilities.³¹ Investing in ECE programs so that they emulate Head Start would begin to address the ongoing economic and social challenges of the pandemic, which disproportionately impact the most marginalized across the nation. In the section below is information about recent state and federal funds for education that could be used to contribute to this effort.

Recent Federal Funding for ECE

Legislation	Allocation
American Rescue Plan of 2021 (Public Law 117-2) ⁴⁸⁴⁹	The ARP appropriates funding for child care via three funding streams. ⁵⁰⁵¹ These include: • Section 2201. Funding available until September 30, 2024 in the amount of \$14,990,000,000 for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Supplemental Discretionary Funds.

⁴⁷ Yule, K., Houston, J., Grych, J. (2019). Resilience in children exposed to violence: A meta-analysis of protective factors across ecological contexts. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 22(3), 406-431. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-019-00293-1>

⁴⁸ The White House. (2021, January 20). *President Biden announces American Rescue Plan*. Briefing Room. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/legislation/2021/01/20/president-biden-announces-american-rescue-plan/>

⁴⁹ American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, P.L. 117-2, 117th Cong., 1st Sess. (2021).

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. (2021). *American Rescue Plan*. Administration for Children & Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/american-rescue-plan>

⁵¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. (2021). *Information Memorandum ARP ACT Child Care Stabilization Funds*. Administration for Children & Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/CCDF-ACF-IM-2021-02.pdf>

	<p>The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9857 et seq.; 45 CFR Parts 98 and 99) creates flexibility for states to use funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 2202. Funding available until September 30, 2023 in the amount of \$23,975,000,000 for Child Care Stabilization Grants • Section 9801. An annual appropriation of \$3,550,000,000 in Mandatory and Matching funding for CCDF <p>The ARP allocates \$1 billion for Head Start to increase program access, foster school readiness for children (birth to preschool age) from low-income households. These funds may be used to support summer prommaging, collaboration with community resource partners, health services, nutrition, mental health support, accommodate changes to operations for COVID safety, and support for parents (housing, social service assistance, utilities). Funds may also be used to hire staff and offer workforce support (e.g., professional development, mental health, vaccine assistance).</p> <p>COVID-19 Educational Equity Challenge Grants to support the development of equity focused evidence based policies to respond to challenges in education related to the pandemic. Grants can support partnerships between stakeholders, parents, teachers and governments (tribal, local, state).</p> <p>Governors receive \$5 billion to support education, including early childhood programs</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> The additional funding is being allocated to states, territories, and tribal communities in order to provide financial relief to child care providers, ensure the stability of child care markets, and to provide additional assistance to TANF recipients. Providers can use funds for operations, utility payments, wages and benefits for staff, technical assistance, administrative activities, and sanitation or other preventative health practices.</p>
<p>Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES)</p>	<p>\$3 billion provided to governors can utilize funds to support early education program, K-12 schools, and higher education systems</p>

<p>Act (H.R. 748)⁵²⁵³</p>	<p>\$3 billion allocated to the CCDBG</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> The CARES ACT provides funding in response to the impact of COVID-19 on businesses, individuals, state and local governments, the economy, and public health systems.</p>
<p>Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act (P.L. 116-260)⁵⁴⁵⁵</p>	<p>\$4.05 billion provided to governors (Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund) to support early education program, K-12 schools, and higher education systems</p> <p>\$10 billion for CCDF supplemental funding</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> The CRRSA Act aids states, territories and tribal communities in their response to COVID-19, including prevention, preparation, and response.</p>
<p>Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC)⁵⁶</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$40 billion ● \$350 billion for state and local fiscal relief to support education <p><i>Purpose</i> CDCTC funds provide families with a tax credit for up to 50% of the cost of child care for children up to age 13. For households making less than \$125,000 the tax credit funds up to \$4000 for one child and \$8000 for at least two children under age 13. Partial credit can be utilized by families making between \$125,000 and \$400,000 a year. For families with low or no taxable income, the credit helps the affordability of childcare.</p>
<p>Other Provisions⁵²</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$1 billion to states for (TANF) recipients, developed as a

⁵² Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, P.L. 116-136, 116th Cong., 6th Sess. (2020)

⁵³ EducationCounsel. (2021, January 15). *EducationCounsel’s Overview of President-Elect Joe Biden’s American Rescue Plan*. EducationCounsel. <http://ib5uamau5i20f0e91hn3ue14-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/EducationCounsel-Summary-of-Biden-American-Rescue-Plan-1.14.2021-v1.1-FINAL.pdf>

⁵⁴ Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), P. L. 116-260, 116th Congress, 2nd Sess. (2020).

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. (2021c). *Planned use of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSA) Funds Report*. Office of Child Care. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/policy-guidance/planned-use-child-care-and-development-fund-ccdf-coronavirus-response-and>

⁵⁶ The White House. (2021). *American Rescue Plan: The American Rescue Plan Helps Reduce Child Poverty*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ARP-Fact-Sheet-Child-Poverty.pdf>

	<p>Pandemic Emergency Assistance Fund to aid families in paying their expenses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) also provided funds for extending unemployment, as well as funding for women, infants, and children (WIC) food and nutrition assistance.
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Table 1. An overview of recent federal legislation allocating funds to early childhood programs

The proposed American Families Plan American Families Plan is expected to provide over \$2 trillion for investment in universal preschool, healthcare, and family leave. The plan is anticipated to help families so that no more than 7% of household incomes is spent on child care and invests in tax credits for families, including the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. Also, the plan expands support for family and medical leave, which contributes to maternal health and well-being. In addition to the investments made similar to that which is outlined above, proposed investments include an increase of \$1.5 billion towards the CCDBG, an increase of \$1.2 billion investment in Head Start. For children with disabilities in preschool through grade 12, there is a \$2.7 billion increase in funding for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (The White House, 2021).⁵⁷

⁵⁷ The White House. (2021). *Budget of the U.S. Government*. Office of Management and Budget. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/budget_fy22.pdf

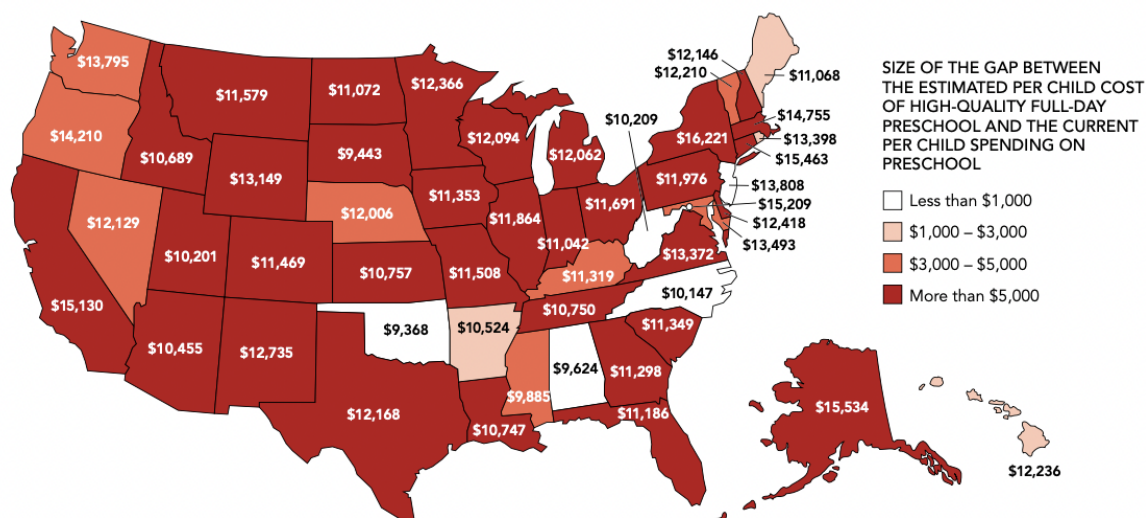


Figure 3. The Cost of Full-Day Pre-K and the Gap in Per-Child Spending⁵⁸

States already have varying funding allocations to their ECE programs, which could leave children in some states more vulnerable than others when they need additional help and assistance.⁵⁹ University of California at Berkeley has calculated the cost of developing a high quality ECE systems for each state, alongside estimates of how much teachers should be compensated for their labor. Otherwise, with little direct guidance, states will not have an opportunity to identify their current needs, reform their programs, support family resilience and well-being, and support the well-being of teachers. Given that the COVID-19 could provide long-term multi-generational consequences, a more robust approach is necessary to reach

⁵⁸ The National Institute for Early Education Research. (2020). *The state of preschool 2020: State preschool yearbook*. Rutgers Graduate School of Education. https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/YB2020_Full_Report.pdf

⁵⁹ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. (2020). *Financing early educator quality: A values-based budget for every state*. CSCCE. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/financing-early-educator-quality-a-values-based-budget-for-every-state/>

families in need consistently or long-term, is necessary at the state level. Head Start’s framework for early outcomes and parent, family, and community engagement could provide guidance for states in these times when children and families face unprecedented personal and financial stress.

Recommendations for Federal & State Spending on ECE Programs

In addition to the responsibilities of everyday parenting, the pandemic has made clear that in order to help children, their parents and guardians may also be in need of assistance. Upon returning to early care and education (ECE) programs, families with low incomes and few resources may be in need of support beyond education services and instruction.

In order to ensure family resilience in the time of COVID, there are a number of steps that states can take with their newly allocated funds. The Biden Harris Administration recently signed two executive orders (i) [Executive Order on Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers](#) and (ii) [Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#).⁶⁰⁶¹ In order to implement these executive order and In order to shape ECE program service provision after the Head Start Model and the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework, policy recommendations include:

1. Developing strategies for monitoring the well-being of families in ECE settings

⁶⁰ The White House. (2021). *Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>

⁶¹ The White House. (2021). *Executive Order on Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/21/executive-order-supporting-the-reopening-and-continuing-operation-of-schools-and-early-childhood-education-providers/>

- a. First, programs could *survey families at the beginning of the school year* to understand their needs, such as with the [Whole Child Assessment Screen for Adverse Childhood Experiences](#).⁶²
- b. Furthermore, programs would benefit from *improving their capacity from ongoing monitoring of student progress*. Due to the heterogeneity across states in how they monitor children's development and outcomes, it is also necessary to account for the social, emotional, and behavioral development of children. Taking this action includes *improving measurement and standards*. Evaluating the growth and behavior of students in different contexts requires an equity lens. Commonly used measurement tools are developed and validated using samples of middle-class white children who speak English as their primary language. States should consider validating measures to their targeted student populations.
- c. Additionally, the classroom observers who evaluate the quality of practice of teachers are often White or may not reflect the demographics of the students being observed. Therefore, programs should consider anti-racist and anti-bias training to teachers and classroom observers who report on student progress in order to assure a more accurate reflection of student experience and make for a more equitable classroom experience.
- d. *Funding*: States can utilize flexible funds from the CCDBG provided by the ARP to fund the development of monitoring systems, improvement of measurement and standards, and teacher professional development.

⁶² Marie-Mitchell, A., Watkins, H., Copado, I., & Distelberg, B. (2020). Use of the Whole Child Assessment to identify children at risk of poor outcomes. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 104, 104489.

2. Implement strategies for cross-sector collaboration to promote family resilience

- a.** Studies on adverse childhood experiences (e.g., abuse, neglect, poverty, substance abuse in the home) and resilience suggest that nurturing relationships help to buffer against the effects of trauma, including chronic stress (Bethell et al., 2017). The long-term effects of adversity can be mitigated by supporting the social, emotional, and physical well-being of individuals, families, and communities by coordinating partnerships between health services, social services, and even other ECE programs.
- b.** Programs could sustain cross-sector partnerships by investing in data improvement systems, incentivizing local social support agencies to partner with schools, and rewarding programs that are successful at sustaining effective parent, family, and community engagement practices.⁶³ States could incentivize different ECE programs to work together to share resources, personnel, or even classrooms to increase access to quality care and services.
- c.** *Funding:* As provided by ARP, CCDBG funds or state funds for TANF recipients can be used to reward programs for coordinating resources with one another and community resources to support family well-being.

3. Promote effective parent, family, and community engagement

- a.** Additionally, states could invest in community service partnerships to progress access to medical and dental care and food assistance programs and liaisons. It may be beneficial to organize and develop service provision alongside state and

⁶³ Bethell, C., Solloway, M., Guinosso, S., Hassnik, S., Srivastav, A., Ford, D., & Simpson, L. (2017). Prioritizing possibilities for child and family health: An agenda to address adverse childhood experiences and foster the social and emotional roots of well-being in pediatrics. *Academic Pediatrics, 17*(7), S36-S50.

local partners, including community health organizations, local businesses, and universities that are available to participate in and develop long-term partnerships for service provision.

- b.** *Funding:* Funds from the Child Care Stabilization Grants allotted by ARP can be allocated to programs in need of staff or training to support family engagement staff and partnerships or programs can support care and nutrition provision.

4. Hire staff, counselor or liaison roles for family services

- a.** Programs could also *hire family services staff* and/or allocate funding for programs to create a specific role for assisting families who are in need of additional assistance and expand care provision (e.g., nutrition/food assistance, dental health/health examinations, assistance with housing, mental health counseling, and food subsidy programs).
- b.** *Funding:* ARP has allotted Child Care Stabilization Grants that could provide funding for additional full-time staff members to centers with high demands from families for services. Providing the position of the family service worker could alleviate the stress and workload of ECE teachers who often feel overwhelmed with their responsibilities and may be adversely affected by the trauma their students experiences (i.e., secondary traumatic stress) (Kwon et al., 2020). The complimentary research brief on family service provision makes the case for hiring staff focused on families material, service, and health needs.

5. Promoting the well-being of the ECE workforce

- a. Therefore, in order to ensure the well-being of children and families, it will be necessary to *ensure the well-being of the workforce*. The ECE workforce is mostly women, and, compared to the K-12 workforce, teachers in ECE classrooms are more likely to be women of color and live in poverty (Whitebook et al., 2020).
- b. All states must seek to improve the working conditions of teachers/support the ECE workforce in order to prevent turnover, burnout, and uphold high quality care and instruction. They could begin by introducing *benefits*, including higher wages, paid time off, paid sick days, systems of support for substitutes/aids when teachers have to miss work, scheduled breaks during the day, and counseling or mental health support for teachers.
- c. *Funding*: States must find a way to sustainably fund higher wages for teachers and other ECE staff members. Perhaps, states will consider increases in taxes or their funding formulas to implement this change in the long-term. In the short term, funding from Child Care Stabilization Grants and CCDBG could fund moderate pay increases for the ECE workforce in order to support their well-being and prevent staff turnover.

6. Paying teachers a living wage

- a. Title I funding legislation should be amended to include a larger proportion of allocation to preschool programs in order to create a reliable and sustainable fund for teacher pay. Currently, Title I allocates funds for preschool eligible students instead of programs. Thus, a program such as a Head Start receives Title I funds based on the enrollment of students who are eligible for enrollment (e.g., from

low-income households, experiencing homelessness, participating in foster care).

⁶⁴ By amending Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Section 1113[c][5] to require local education agencies to provide funds for preschool programs, there is the potential to create an ongoing and sustainable stream of revenue to support fairly compensated wages for teachers.

- b.** Currently, the burden cost of program operation for early childhood programs, including workforce compensation is spread amongst different funding streams. The consequence for this has been severe for families who have shouldered the burden of increasing child care costs and is complicated by the inconsistent standards for quality instruction and service provision across program types. Implementing universal pre-k, provides the opportunity to develop a nationalized early childhood system with consistent quality standards for children. It is estimated that the cost of high quality early childhood education for all children would be at least \$140 billion.⁶⁶ Given ongoing concerns about increasing government spending on public services contributing to increasing inflation, state and federal agencies might consider allocation some portion of these funds into appreciating assets, such as cryptocurrencies, which may not only hedge against

⁶⁴ California Department of Education. (2020). *Title I, Part A Preschool Programs*. Title I Policy, Program, and Support Office. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/sw/t1/titleIpreschool.asp>

⁶⁵ U.S. Department of Education. (2018). *Improving basic programs operated by local educational agencies*. Office of State Support. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>

⁶⁶ The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *Transforming the financing of early care and education: Consensus study report highlights*. The National Academy of Sciences. https://www.erikson.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/TransformingECEFinance_ExecSummary.pdf

long-term inflation, but also provide a growing and sustainable funding source for teacher salaries, pensions, and other operating expenses for programs.⁶⁷

Available Resources

State and Federal Funding

- [ARPA Supplemental Stabilization and CCDF Discretionary Funding Allocation](#)
- [American Rescue Plan](#)
- [\(CRRSA\) 60 Day Reports for States and Territories](#)

Supporting children and family well-being

- [Strategies for addressing family well-being and children’s adverse childhood experiences through research, policy, and practice](#)
- [Perry Preschool: Intergenerational Effects Toolkit](#)
- [Memphis Nurse-Family Partnership Program](#)
- [Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program](#)
- [The Impact of COVID-19 on Early Invention: Survey of States](#)

Understanding the state of children and families

- [How well is your state serving its Black and Latino 3- and 4-year-olds?](#)
- [State of Babies Yearbook 2021](#)
- [The State of Preschool 2020: State Preschool Yearbook](#)

Indicators of quality and other important outcomes

- [Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework](#)
- [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework](#)
- [NIEER Quality Benchmark Standards](#)

Supporting the well-being of the ECE workforce

- [Resilience over Burnout: A Self Care Program](#) (The Self-Care Institute)
- [Self-Care Assessments, Exercises and Activities](#) (University of Buffalo)

⁶⁷ Cifuentes, A.F. (2018). Bitcoin in troubled economies: The potential of cryptocurrencies in Argentina and Venezuela. *Latin American Law Review*, Issue 3. <https://doi.org/10.29263/lar03.2019.05>

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