



Investing in Young Children

A Fact Sheet on Early Care and Education Participation, Access, and Quality

Stephanie Schmit and Hannah Matthews
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Sheila Smith and Taylor Robbins
National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)

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Introduction

High quality early care and education can play a critical role in promoting young children’s early learning and success in life, while also supporting families’ economic security.¹ Young children at highest risk of educational failure – those experiencing poverty and related circumstances that may limit early learning experiences – benefit the most from high quality early care and education programs.² This fact sheet provides information about the percentages of young children in each state experiencing risks related to poor educational outcomes. It then shows trends in federal and state investments in early care and education programs and state policies related to both access and quality.



Young Children At Risk

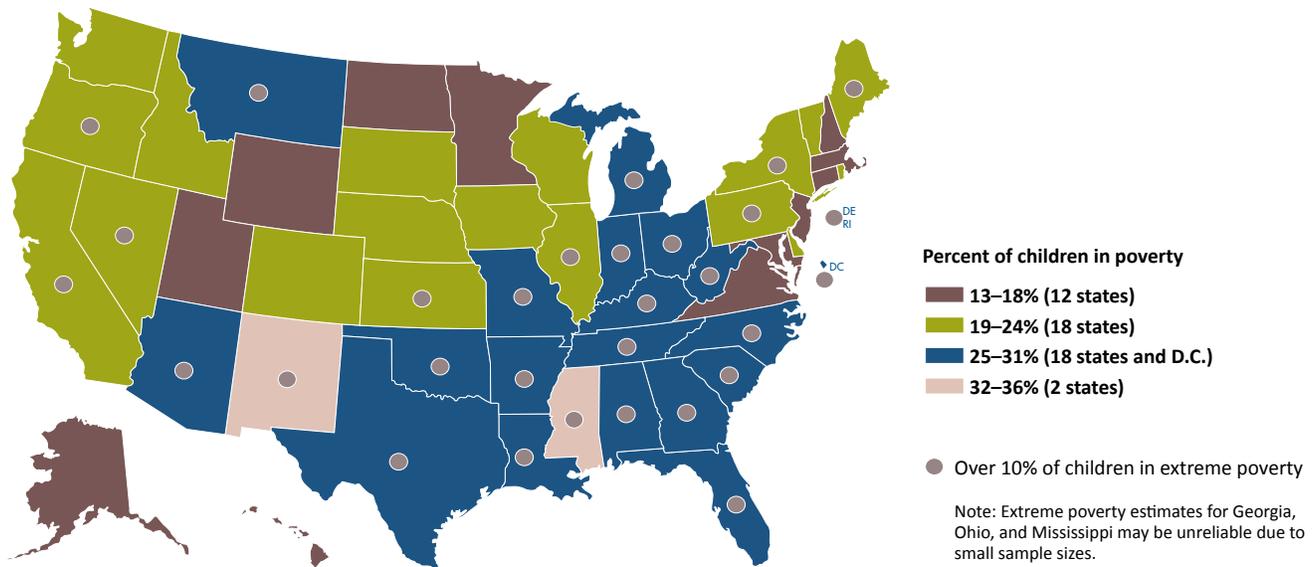
Across the U.S., large numbers of young children are affected by one or more risk factors that have been linked to academic failure and poor health.³ Chief among them is family economic hardship, which is consistently associated with negative outcomes in these two domains.⁴ State poverty rates for children under age six range from a high of 36 percent to a low of 13 percent.⁵ Nationally, 25 percent of children under age six live in poverty and 12 percent live in extreme poverty. **Figure 1** shows state variation in family economic hardship. (See box for definitions of poverty levels.)



**National Center for
Children in Poverty**

Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University

Figure 1: Children under age 6 living in poverty and extreme poverty, 2011



Source: American Community Survey, 2011.

Most states have young child poverty rates at or above 19 percent and extreme poverty rates over 10 percent:

- ◆ In 20 states and the District of Columbia, the young child poverty rate is 25 percent or higher.
- ◆ In 29 states and the District of Columbia, more than 10 percent of young children live in extreme poverty.

Many low-income children also experience other risk factors, including living with a teen mother, in a household without English speakers, or with parents who lack a high school degree. Children affected by several adverse circumstances – three or more risk factors – are the most likely to experience school failure and other negative outcomes, including maladaptive behavior.⁶ **Figure 2** shows the percentages of young children in each state who are affected by selected and multiple risk factors. (See box for description of risk factors.)

- ◆ Texas and California have the highest percentages of young children who are low income and living in households without English speakers (12 and 13 percent, respectively).
- ◆ States with the highest percentages of young children who are low income and have a teen mother are Arkansas (9 percent), New Mexico (8 percent), and Kentucky (8 percent).

Definitions

Extreme poverty: Less than 50% of the Federal Poverty Level*

Poverty: Less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Level

Low-income: Less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level

*For a family of three in 2011, the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) was \$18,530.

Households without English speakers: Children in households where all members over age 14 years speak a non-English language and are not proficient in English.

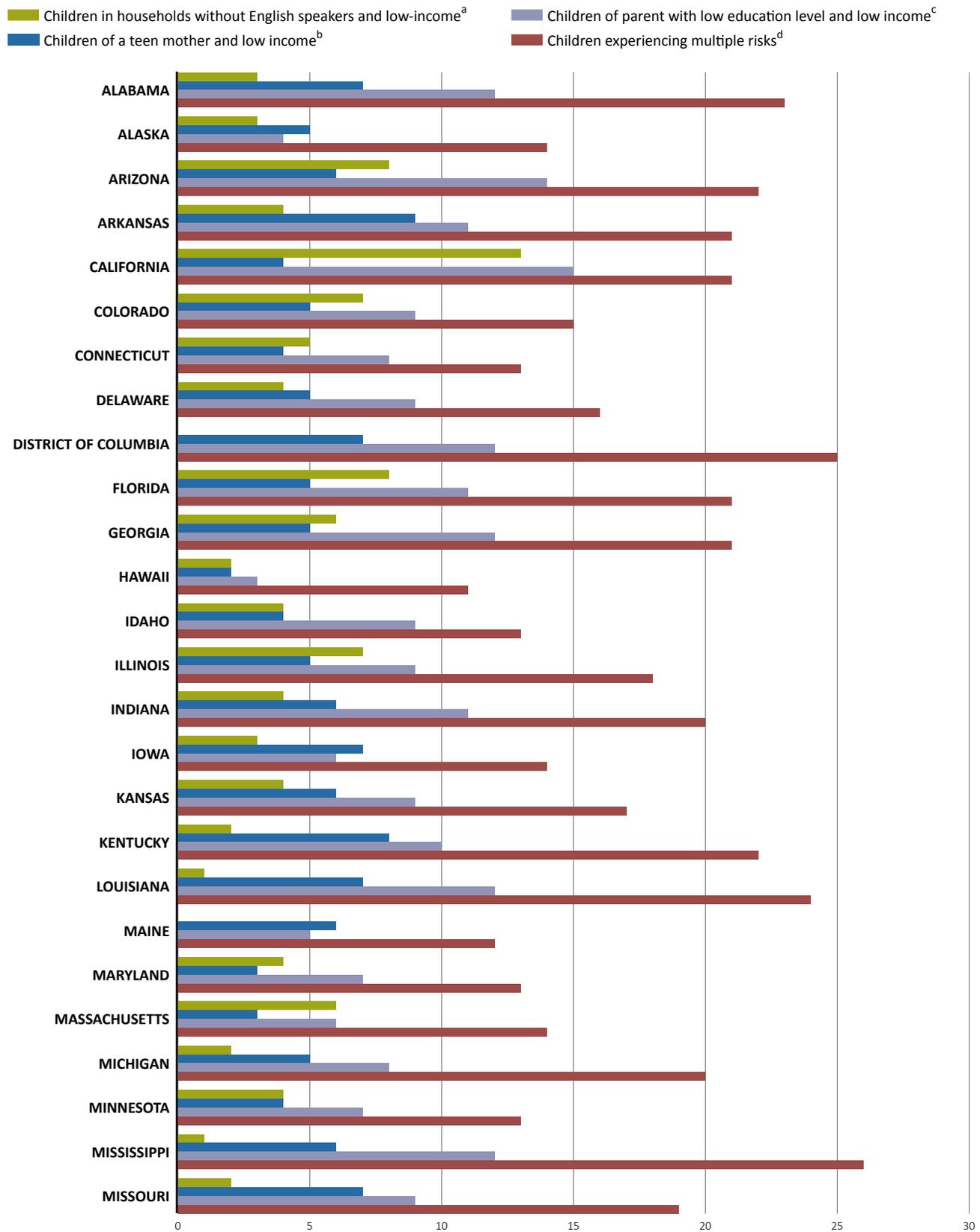
Low parental education: Children whose parents both lack a high school degree.

Teen mother: Children whose mothers were teenagers when the child was born.

Multiple risks: Young children experiencing three or more risks, including: households with no English speakers; low parental education; teen mother; residential mobility; single-parent; non-employed parents; and poor.

- ◆ States with the highest percentages of young children who are low income and have parents lacking a high school degree are Texas (16 percent), New Mexico (15 percent), Nevada (15 percent), California (15 percent), and Arizona (14 percent).
- ◆ In 48 states and the District of Columbia, at least 11 percent of young children experience multiple risks.

Figure 2: Percent of children under age 6 experiencing selected and multiple risk factors, 2011

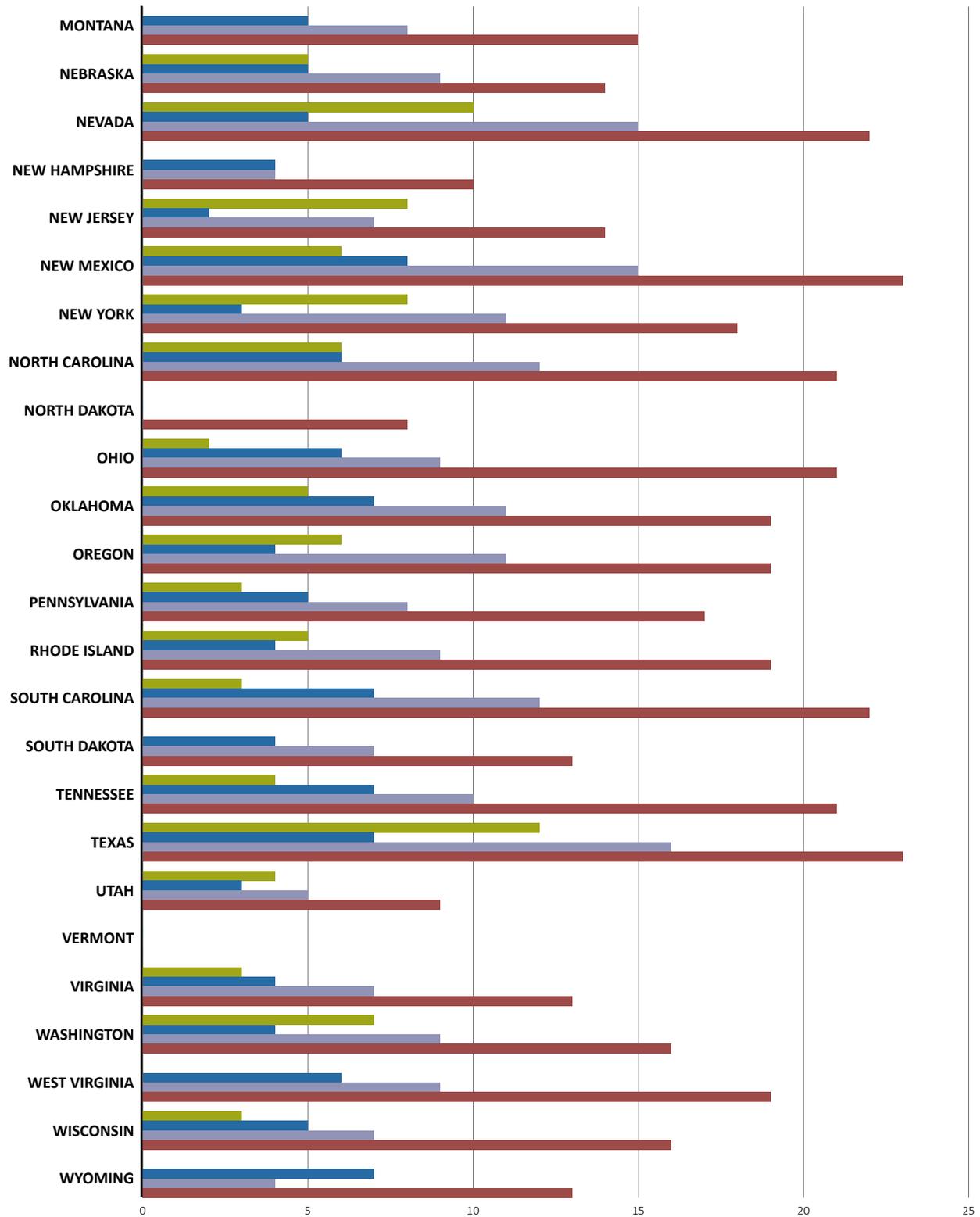


Note: a. Due to very small sample sizes of low-income children living in households without English speakers, no bar appears for the following states: MT, VT, WV, DC, ME, NH, ND, SD, VT, WV, WY. Estimates in these states may be unreliable due to a small sample size: AL, DE, and HI.
 b. Due to very small sample sizes of low-income children living with a teen mother, no bar appears for the following states: ND, and VT.
 c. Due to very small sample sizes of low-income children of a parent with low education level, no bar appears for the following states: ND and VT. Estimates in these states may be unreliable due to a small sample size: AL, DC, HI, and WY.
 d. Due to very small sample sizes of children experiencing multiple risks, no bar appears for the following state: VT.

Source: American Community Survey, 2011.

Figure 2 (continued): Percent of children under age 6 experiencing selected and multiple risk factors, 2011

■ Children in households without English speakers and low-income^a
■ Children of parent with low education level and low income^c
■ Children of a teen mother and low income^b
■ Children experiencing multiple risks^d



Note: a. Due to very small sample sizes of low-income children living in households without English speakers, no bar appears for the following states: MT, VT, WV, DC, ME, NH, ND, SD, VT, WV, WY. Estimates in these states may be unreliable due to a small sample size: AL, DE, and HI.
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 d. Due to very small sample sizes of children experiencing multiple risks, no bar appears for the following state: VT.

Source: American Community Survey, 2011.

Children of Immigrants and Early Care and Education

One in four young children in the U.S. has a parent who was born outside of the country.⁷ Nearly all (96 percent) of these children are U.S.-born citizens. While being an immigrant is not itself a risk factor, and many immigrant families demonstrate strong resilience, children of immigrants are more likely to be poor, live in large families, have parents with low education levels and live in households where adults do not speak English. These circumstances place young children of immigrants at higher risk of school failure. Young children of immigrants are also less likely to access child care and early education including licensed child care of all types, preschool programs and child care assistance.⁸ State policies related to access and quality influence whether immigrant families participate in and benefit from early childhood programs.⁹

Federal and State Investments and Participation in Early Care and Education

The three largest federal child care and early education programs are: the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Head Start. States also invest in CCDBG and in some cases in prekindergarten and Head Start, including Early Head Start programs. Cumulative investments in these programs are significant, but still leave large numbers of young children unserved.

Child Care Assistance

CCDBG provides child care assistance to low-income families and requires state matching and maintenance of effort (MOE) funds.¹⁰ In addition to cash assistance and other services for low-income families, states are permitted to spend TANF funds directly on child care assistance and/or transfer up to 30 percent of their grant to CCDBG. State TANF MOE funds may also be spent on child care.

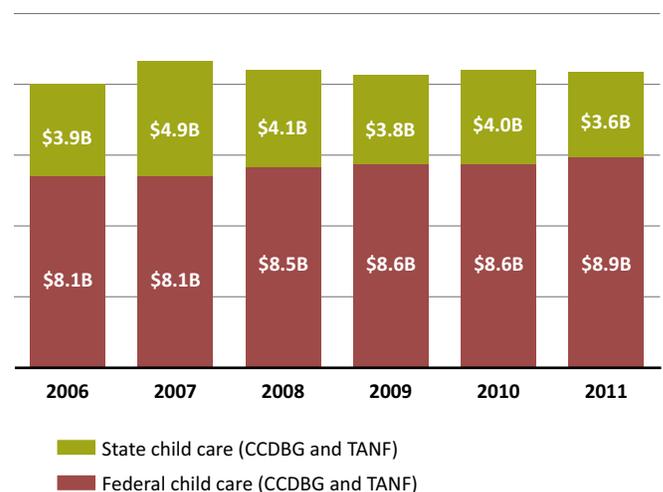
From 2007-2011, total spending on child care assistance (including federal and state CCDBG and federal and state TANF funds) declined from \$13 billion to \$12.5 billion (see **Figure 3**).¹¹

Figure 4 shows the average monthly number of children served in CCDBG as reported by states. Participation data on children who received child care assistance through TANF are not available.

Funding for child care assistance has not kept pace with inflation or growing need:

- ◆ Since 2006, approximately 150,000 fewer children have access to child care subsidies.
- ◆ As a result of sequestration – automatic budget cuts that went into effect in January 2013 – an additional 30,000 children are expected to lose child care assistance.¹²

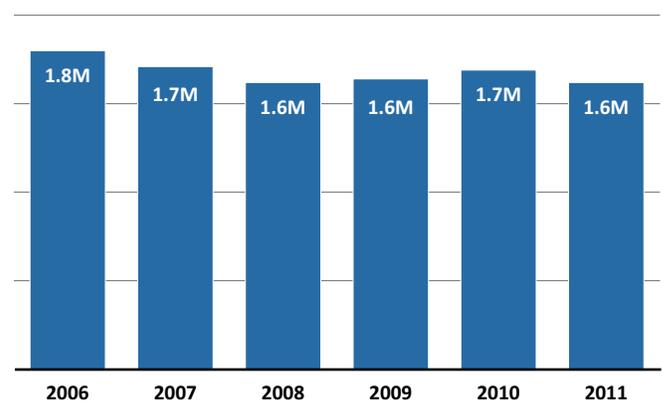
Figure 3: Annual child care spending, FY 2006–2011 (in billions)



Note: In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided a one-time appropriation of \$2 billion in funding for CCDBG. These funds were spent from 2009-2011.

Source: CLASP Analysis of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, CCDF Expenditure Data, FY 2006-2011.

Figure 4: Average monthly number of children served in CCDBG, FY 2006–2011 (in millions)



Source: CLASP Analysis of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, CCDF Statistics, FY 2006-2011.

Head Start and Early Head Start

Head Start is the country's comprehensive early education program for poor children. Funding for Head Start (which includes Early Head Start funds) increased by \$1.2 billion from 2006 to 2012 (see **Figure 5**).¹³ Participation also rose during this period (see **Figure 6**).

Unmet Need in Federal Programs

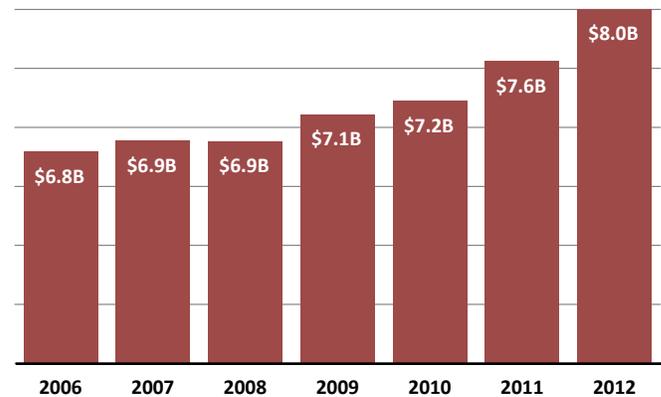
Figure 7 shows the percentage of eligible young children served by CCDBG, Head Start and Early Head Start.

Current investments in CCDBG, Head Start, and Early Head Start leave large numbers of eligible children without access to these programs:

- ◆ Even as Head Start participation rose from 2009 to 2012, the growth in child poverty left large numbers of eligible children unserved.
- ◆ Only 42 percent of eligible children are served in Head Start preschool and less than 4 percent of eligible children are served in Early Head Start.¹⁴ As a result of sequestration, 57,000 children have lost access to Head Start services.¹⁵
- ◆ Only 26 percent of children under age 6 from low-income families who are federally-eligible for child care receive assistance.¹⁶

Information about waiting lists for enrollment in child care programs provides further evidence that current investments in early care and education are not meeting families' needs. The National Women's Law Center reports that 19 states have waiting lists or frozen intake for child care assistance in 2013. Many states have a policy of not keeping waiting lists, but may still not serve all children whose families are seeking child care. Waiting lists range in size from 75 children (Colorado) to 60,259 (Florida). Eleven states have more than 5,000 children on waiting lists for child care.

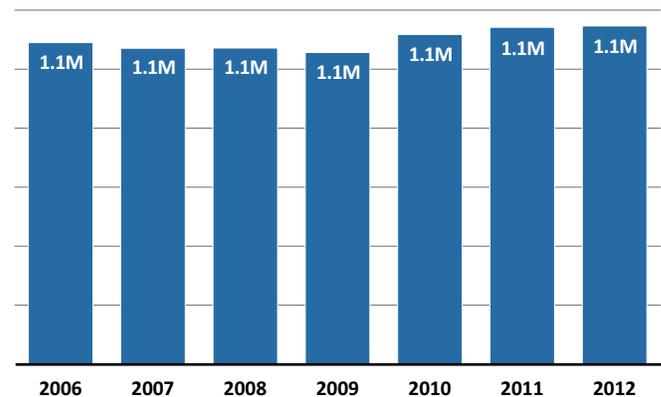
Figure 5: Annual Head Start appropriations, FY 2006–2012 (in billions)



Note: In 2009, the ARRA provided a one-time appropriation of \$2.1 billion in funding for Head Start (of which \$1.1 billion was allocated for Early Head Start). ARRA funds are not included in the chart above.

Source: Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, Head Start Program Fact Sheets, FY 2006-2012.

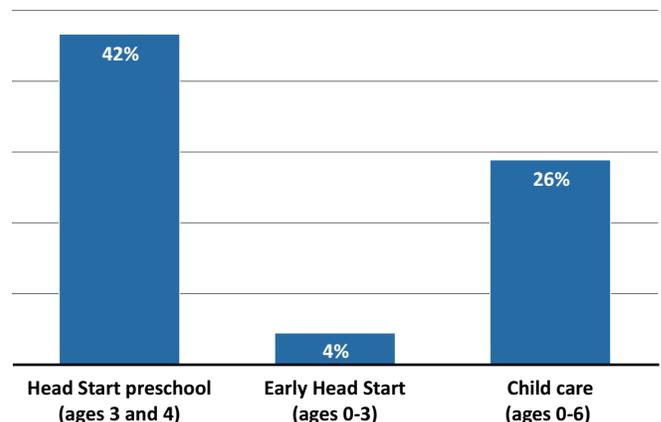
Figure 6: Number of participants served by Head Start and Early Head Start, FY 2006–2012 (in millions)



Note: While all participant totals round to 1.1 million, there are slight variations from year to year ranging from a few hundred participants to 61,000.

Source: Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) Data, FY 2006-2012.

Figure 7: Percent of eligible young children served in federal programs



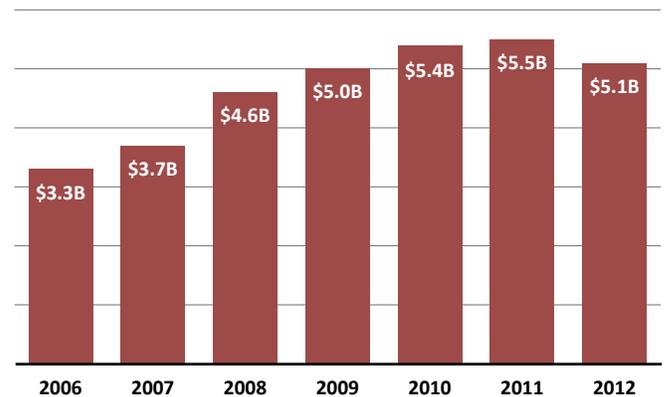
Source: National Women's Law Center (NWLC) estimates for Head Start and Early Head Start, and Health and Human Services (HHS) estimate for child care.

State Pre-Kindergarten

In 2012, 40 states operated state run pre-kindergarten programs.¹⁷ **Figure 8** shows total state pre-kindergarten spending from 2006 to 2012 and **Figure 9** shows total state preschool program enrollment during this same period.

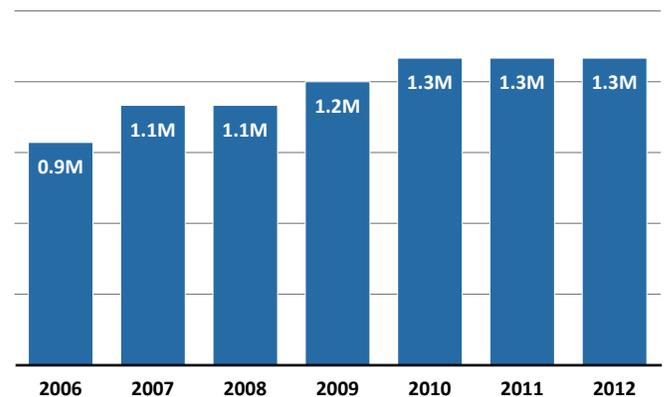
- ◆ Total state pre-kindergarten spending steadily increased from 2006 to 2010, with the largest increase in spending (\$900 million) occurring between 2007 and 2008, and the only decrease in spending (\$400 million) from 2011 to 2012.
- ◆ Since 2010, total state pre-kindergarten enrollment has remained near 1.3 million children per year, with enrollment increasing by less than 10,000 children from 2011 to 2012.

Figure 8: Total state pre-kindergarten spending, FY 2006–2012 (in billions)



Source: Adaptation from NIEER State Preschool Yearbooks, 2006-2012.

Figure 9: Total state pre-kindergarten enrollment, FY 2006–2012 (in millions)



Note: The chart shows children enrolled in state funded pre-kindergarten programs. Due to limitations in the data, some of these children may also receive services through other funding sources, including Head Start and child care.
Source: Adaptation from NIEER State Preschool Yearbooks, 2006-2012.

Policies that Affect Access to Early Care and Education Programs

In addition to states' levels of investment in child care and pre-kindergarten programs, several other state policy choices can help families with young children gain access to early care and education. **Figure 10** shows whether states have adopted six policies that help provide access to early care and education.

- ◆ 19 states have an initiative to expand Early Head Start.
- ◆ 42 states and the District of Columbia fund a pre-kindergarten program and/or supplement Head Start.
- ◆ 29 states and the District of Columbia keep copayments for child care subsidies at or below 10 percent of family income for families at 150 percent FPL.
- ◆ 9 states and the District of Columbia set the income eligibility limit for child care subsidies at or above 200 percent FPL.
- ◆ 37 states make child care subsidy applications available in other languages.
- ◆ 15 states and the District of Columbia have lead agencies that accept applications for child care assistance at local community-based locations.
- ◆ Only 15 states have adopted at least four of the six policies.

Figure 10: Policies that affect access to early care and education

STATE	State has initiative to expand Early Head Start ¹⁸	State funds a pre-kindergarten program and/or supplements Head Start ¹⁹	State child care subsidy copayments are below 10 percent of family income for families of three at 150 percent FPL ²⁰	States sets income eligibility limit for child care subsidies at or above 200 percent FPL ²¹	State makes child care subsidy application available in other languages ²²	State accepts applications for child care subsidy at local community-based locations ²³
ALABAMA		✓			✓	
ALASKA		✓	✓	✓		
ARIZONA		✓	✓		✓	
ARKANSAS		✓			✓	✓
CALIFORNIA		✓	✓	✓		
COLORADO		✓			✓	
CONNECTICUT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
DELAWARE		✓			✓	
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA		✓	✓	✓		✓
FLORIDA		✓	✓		✓	✓
GEORGIA	✓	✓			✓	
HAWAII				✓		
IDAHO	✓	✓			✓	
ILLINOIS	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
INDIANA			✓			✓
IOWA	✓	✓			✓	
KANSAS	✓	✓	✓		✓	
KENTUCKY		✓				✓
LOUISIANA		✓	✓		✓	✓
MAINE	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
MARYLAND	✓	✓			✓	
MASSACHUSETTS	✓	✓		✓		✓
MICHIGAN	✓	✓			✓	
MINNESOTA	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
MISSISSIPPI			✓			
MISSOURI	✓	✓			✓	
MONTANA					✓	
NEBRASKA		✓			✓	
NEVADA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NEW HAMPSHIRE				✓	✓	✓
NEW JERSEY	✓	✓	✓		✓	
NEW MEXICO		✓	✓		✓	
NEW YORK		✓			✓	
NORTH CAROLINA		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NORTH DAKOTA		✓	✓			
OHIO		✓	✓		✓	
OKLAHOMA	✓	✓	✓		✓	
OREGON	✓	✓			✓	
PENNSYLVANIA	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
RHODE ISLAND		✓	✓		✓	✓
SOUTH CAROLINA	✓	✓	✓		✓	
SOUTH DAKOTA						
TENNESSEE		✓	✓		✓	
TEXAS		✓			✓	
UTAH			✓		✓	
VERMONT		✓				✓
VIRGINIA		✓	✓			
WASHINGTON		✓	✓		✓	
WEST VIRGINIA		✓	✓			
WISCONSIN	✓	✓	✓		✓	
WYOMING			✓		✓	

Policies That Support Quality Early Care and Education

For child care and early education to be effective in promoting positive learning outcomes for at-risk children, it must be of high quality.²⁴ The policies highlighted here show several ways states can support early care and education quality.

Child Care Ratios and Group Size

States regulate adult-child ratios and group size in child care through licensing requirements. Smaller group sizes and fewer children per teacher help keep children safe and allow more frequent interactions between teachers and children. These features set the stage for higher quality adult-child interactions, a key predictor of children's learning in early care and education settings.²⁵ As shown in **Figure 11**, recommended benchmarks for adult-child ratios and group sizes are not widely met.²⁶

- ◆ Only four states (CT, ND, OR, VT) meet benchmarks for both class size and adult-child ratios.
- ◆ 33 states meet neither benchmark.

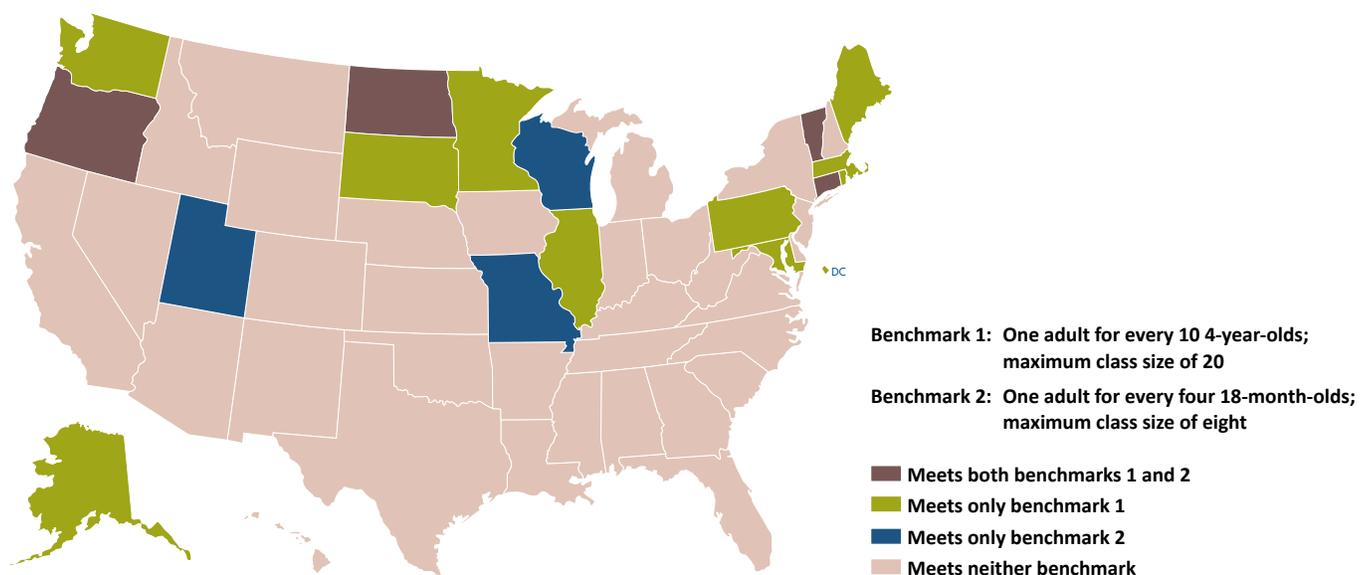
Figure 12 shows whether states have adopted additional quality benchmarks related to infant-toddler care, QRIS, subsidy policy, and children's home language.

Infant-Toddler Care

Several policies can support the quality of infant-toddler care in ways that help promote early experiences that are essential to growth in very young children's cognitive, language, and social-emotional capacities. These include states' use of infant-toddler specialists to help child care providers use effective practices in early care settings; infant and toddler credentials that specify the skills and experiences that early learning professionals should have in order to deliver and promote high quality care; and, early learning standards that specify important learning and development outcomes for infants and toddlers and can be used to guide quality improvement initiatives.

- ◆ 26 states fund infant-toddler specialists to provide technical assistance to child care providers.
- ◆ 22 states offer or require infant-toddler credentials for early learning professionals.
- ◆ 44 states and the District of Columbia have developed early learning standards for infants and toddlers.

Figure 11: States meeting child care group size and ratio benchmarks



Source: Child Care Aware, We Can Do Better Report, 2013.

Figure 12: Policies that support quality early care and education

STATE	States that fund a network of infant-toddler specialists ²⁷	States that have an infant-toddler credential ²⁸	States using direct contracts tied to quality/comprehensive services for child care ²⁹	States that include tiered reimbursement in their Quality Rating and Improvement System ³⁰	States that have implemented a statewide Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) ³¹	States that have early learning standards or developmental guidelines for infants and toddlers ³²	States that include supports for a child's home language development in their early learning guidelines ³³
ALABAMA						✓	
ALASKA						✓	✓
ARIZONA					✓	✓	
ARKANSAS	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
CALIFORNIA	✓	✓				✓	✓
COLORADO	✓	✓		✓	✓		
CONNECTICUT		✓				✓	
DELAWARE					✓	✓	
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA			✓	✓	✓		
FLORIDA	✓			✓ (Miami-Dade)		✓	✓
GEORGIA	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
HAWAII						✓	✓
IDAHO					✓	✓	
ILLINOIS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
INDIANA	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IOWA	✓	✓			✓	✓	
KANSAS	✓		✓		✓	✓	
KENTUCKY	✓			✓	✓	✓	
LOUISIANA				✓	✓	✓	✓
MAINE	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
MARYLAND	✓			✓	✓	✓	
MASSACHUSETTS		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
MICHIGAN	✓				✓	✓	
MINNESOTA				✓	✓	✓	
MISSISSIPPI			✓	✓	✓	✓	
MISSOURI			✓			✓	
MONTANA	✓	✓			✓	✓	
NEBRASKA						✓	
NEVADA			✓		✓	✓	
NEW HAMPSHIRE					✓	✓	
NEW JERSEY	✓	✓	✓			✓	
NEW MEXICO				✓	✓	✓	✓
NEW YORK	✓	✓			✓	✓	
NORTH CAROLINA	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
NORTH DAKOTA	✓				✓	✓	
OHIO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
OKLAHOMA		✓		✓	✓	✓	
OREGON		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
PENNSYLVANIA	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
RHODE ISLAND					✓		
SOUTH CAROLINA	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
SOUTH DAKOTA	✓	✓					✓
TENNESSEE	✓			✓	✓	✓	
TEXAS					✓		✓
UTAH	✓				✓	✓	
VERMONT				✓	✓		
VIRGINIA	✓	✓				✓	
WASHINGTON	✓				✓	✓	
WEST VIRGINIA						✓	
WISCONSIN		✓	✓		✓	✓	
WYOMING		✓				✓	

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) – a potential vehicle to improve families’ access to high-quality child care – assess the quality of child care programs, offer incentives and assistance to programs to improve their ratings, and give information to parents about the quality of child care.

- ◆ 37 states and the District of Columbia have a statewide QRIS, three states have a pilot QRIS and two states have a regional QRIS.
- ◆ 7 states are planning a QRIS.

Child Care Subsidy Policy

Many states have established child care subsidy policies aimed at enhancing child care quality, including the use of direct contracts that establish quality requirements and higher reimbursements for child care settings that receive higher QRIS ratings.

- ◆ 14 states and the District of Columbia use direct contracts tied to quality or the provision of comprehensive services for child care.
- ◆ 16 states, the District of Columbia, and one county include tiered reimbursement in their QRIS.

Early Learning Guidelines Related to Home Language

For English language learners, growth in children’s home language promotes positive English language and literacy outcomes.³⁴

- ◆ Early Learning Guidelines in thirteen states require that early care and education programs promote the development of children’s home language.

Head Start Comprehensive Services

Head Start and Early Head Start provide comprehensive early education and support services that focus on the “whole child,” including early education addressing cognitive and social-emotional needs; medical and dental screenings and referrals; nutritional services; mental health services; parent involvement activities; and, referrals to social service providers for the entire family.

- ◆ Seventy-six percent of Head Start families received at least one family service. **Figure 13** shows the family services most commonly accessed in Head Start.

Figure 13: Most commonly accessed Head Start services

Family services	Percent accessed
Parenting education	52 percent
Health education	48 percent
Emergency/crisis intervention	21 percent
Adult education	15 percent

Source: CLASP Calculations of Program Year 2011-2012 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) Data.

Summary and Resources

A complex mix of federal and state investments and policies shapes low-income families’ access to quality early care and education. Currently, these investments and policies are too weak to benefit large numbers of young children experiencing economic hardship and other circumstances that can pose serious risks to their healthy development and school success. Both NCCP and CLASP have a rich set of resources and tools available for state policymakers and advocates. Staff can provide information and expert guidance concerning ways to strengthen early care and education investments and policies and both organizations invite readers to request assistance.

Resources

NCCP Early Childhood Profiles:

Use this resource to see your state’s policy choices in the areas of early care and education, health, and parenting/family economic supports.

www.nccp.org/profiles/early_childhood.html

NCCP Young Child Risk Calculator:

Use this tool to calculate the prevalence of young children experiencing various risks in your state.

www.nccp.org/tools/risk

For additional information about income related to poverty levels for families of different sizes, go to:

www.nccp.org/tools/converter

CLASP DataFinder is a custom, easy-to-use tool developed to provide select demographic information as well as administrative data on programs that affect low-income people and families.

www.clasp.org/data

Child Care Assistance and Head Start State Factsheets present state-reported information on child care spending through CCDBG and TANF, children and families participating in CCDBG, and state data on Head Start programs. www.clasp.org/in_the_states

Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care is CLASP's project highlighting key infant-toddler child care child care subsidy, licensing, and quality enhancement policies. www.clasp.org/babiesinchildcare

Expanding Access to Early Head Start: State Initiatives for Infants and Toddlers At Risk presents information on state-funded Early Head Start programs. www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/ehsinitiatives.pdf

Contact Information:

Hannah Matthews
Center for Law and Social Policy
hmatthews@clasp.org

Sheila Smith
National Center for Children in Poverty
sheila.smith@nccp.org

Endnotes

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11. To calculate total child care spending in a federal fiscal year, we sum state and federal CCDBG funds (including liquidated TANF transfers to CCDBG and CCDBG funds appropriated in prior years but liquidated in the given year); TANF funds spent directly on child care; and additional state TANF MOE. State TANF MOE spent on child care included in the sum of total child care spending excludes funds that may have been counted towards CCDBG MOE. For further explanation of these categories, see http://www.clasp.org/publications/ccspending_notes.pdf. Because CCDBG funds are available for several years after they are awarded, annual CCDBG spending is often higher than annual funding as states spend funds from several years' appropriations. Analysis of state fiscal year expenditures may differ.
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Citations for Figures

Figure 1: National data were calculated from the 2011 American Community Survey, representing information from 2011. State data were calculated from the 2009-2011 American Community Survey, representing information from the years 2009 to 2011.

Figure 2: See endnote for figure 1.

Figure 3: CLASP Analysis of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, CCDF Expenditure Data. (FY 2006-2011). Retrieved from: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/ccdf-expenditure-data-all-years>.

Figure 4: CLASP Analysis of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, CCDF Statistics. (FY 2006-2011). Retrieved from: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/ccdf-statistics>

Figure 5: Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (FY 2006-2012). Head start program fact sheets. Retrieved from: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/mr/factsheets>.

Figure 6: Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) Data, FY 2006-2012.

Figure 7: National Women’s Law Center calculation of Department of Health and Human Services Head Start Data and American Community Survey Data; Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, estimate of Child Care Eligibility and Receipt for Fiscal Year 2009, 2012. Retrieved from: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/12/childcareeligibility/ib.cfm>

Figure 8: National Institute for Early Education Research (2006-2012). Annual state pre-k reports: State preschool yearbooks. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from: <http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2012.pdf>.

Figure 9: See endnote for figure 8.

Figure 10: See endnotes 18-23.

Figure 11: Child Care Aware. (2013). *We can do better: Child care aware of America’s ranking of state child care center regulations and oversight*. Retrieved from: <http://www.naccrra.org/node/3025>.

Figure 12: See endnotes 27-33.

Figure 13: CLASP Calculations of Program Year 2011-2012 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) Data.

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