



# HOW THE FIRST YEAR OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION UNDERMINED CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION

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Since taking office on January 20, the Trump Administration has undermined families' access to child care and early education programs, directly targeting families with low incomes and families of color.

**The timeline below documents the administration's biggest changes and threats across various federal agencies to child care and early education since taking office:**

**2025**

**January 20, 2025**

Ended protected areas policy, increasing ICE in child care settings.

**January 27, 2025**

Froze federal funding, disrupting Head Start and CCDBG programs.

**March 14, 2025**

Signed FY25 budget with level CCDBG/Head Start funding (effective cuts).

2025



**KEY TERMS**

**CCDBG** = Child Care and Development Block Grant  
**ICE** = Immigrations and Customs Enforcement  
**DEI** = Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
**NPRM** = Notice of Proposed Rulemaking  
**OHS** = Office of Head Start  
**OCC** = Office of Child Care  
**PRWORA** = Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996  
**SNAP** = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

**February 14, 2025**

Laid off 20% of OHS and OCC staff.

**March 18, 2025**

Banned DEI in Head Start.

Cont...



**April 1, 2025**

Laid off more OHS and OCC employees (elevating total to 50-60% of federal staff); closed five regional offices.

2025  
▼

**April 22, 2025**

Implemented "Defend the Spend" justifications.

**May 2, 2025**

Proposed level funding and program eliminations for early education in President's FY26 budget.

**July 4, 2025**

Signed reconciliation bill, slashing Medicaid/SNAP funding and raising detention funding.

**July 9, 2025**

Proposed restricted eligibility for federal benefits under PRWORA.

**August 22, 2025**

Allowed new CCDBG rule waivers.

**September 30, 2025**

Shut down government, disrupting Head Start funding.

**October 10, 2025**

Laid off additional federal early childhood staff.

**November 1, 2025**

Caused 65,000 children to lose Head Start funding due to the shutdown.

2025  
▲

**January 2, 2026**

Released an NPRM deregulating CCDF policies that had supported affordability and access.

**2026**

**January 5, 2026**

Reinstated "Defend the Spend" in response to a YouTube influencer's accusations of child care provider fraud.

2026  
▼

**January 6, 2026**

Froze child care and family assistance funding to five states.

# THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION HAS WEAKENED PROGRAMS THAT SERVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## Withheld and threatened funding for early childhood programs.

**JANUARY 27,  
2025**

The Trump Administration **froze federal funding**, which locked Head Start providers and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) administrators out of the websites they use to access grants. This contributed to **dozens** of Head Start programs closing temporarily. Though the funds were restored, program administrators received limited to no communication about whether they would be able to access the grants needed to keep their programs open and their providers paid.

**MARCH 14,  
2025**

Congress **narrowly avoided** a shutdown by passing a Continuing Budget Resolution (CR) through the end of fiscal year (FY) 2025. It provided level funding for Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)—the country's primary funding stream for child care assistance that gets determined each year through the Congressional appropriations process. CLASP estimated that approximately **24,000 fewer children** will have had access to child care through CCDBG in FY25 as a result, and that number could **rise to 50,000** if funding remains level through FY26.

**MAY 2,  
2025**

President Trump released his **proposed budget** for FY26, which guides Congress's annual appropriations process. The budget called for level funding for a number of child care and early education funding streams—including CCDBG, Head Start, and the Social Services Block Grant—and proposed cuts to other early childhood programs.

**JANUARY 6,  
2026**

HHS announced that it had frozen access to child care and family assistance funds in California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota and New York, blocking \$2.4 billion in CCDF funds, \$7.35 billion in TANF funds, and \$869 million in SSBG funds from serving children and families in these states.

## RESPONSIVE ACTIONS:

**APRIL 28,  
2025**

A coalition of parents and Head Start providers **filed a lawsuit** with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) challenging the Trump Administration's efforts to dismantle Head Start. The suit explained that by slashing staff, delaying funding, and imposing bans that block programs from fulfilling their mission to support young children from families with low incomes, the administration was defying Congress's mandate to facilitate Head Start services nationwide.

**JANUARY 9,  
2026**

A judge issued a temporary injunction blocking the administration's effort to freeze approved child care and family assistance funding in California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, and New York.

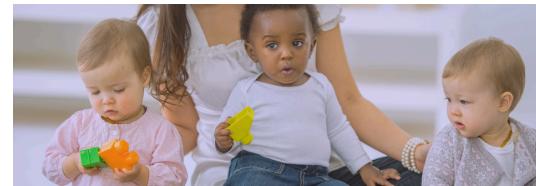
## Laid off a substantial number of staff working on early childhood programs, making it challenging to implement programs with integrity.

**FEBRUARY 14,  
2025**

Probationary staff at the Office of Head Start (OHS) and the Office of Child Care (OCC) were **laid off**, resulting in a reduction of approximately 20 percent of staff.

**APRIL 1,  
2025**

Another round of **mass layoffs** resulted in an overall reduction of 50-60 percent of staff in OHS and OCC and the closure of five regional offices, which provided training, technical assistance, administrative support in ensuring grants reached facilities, and communication between program administrators and the federal government.



## Undermined equity, delayed funding, and weakened program regulations that protect children and support child care providers.

**MARCH 18,  
2025**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) issued a **directive** to Head Start grantees establishing that no funds will be approved for program expenditures that promote or take part in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

**APRIL 22,  
2025**

The ACF **announced** its “Defend the Spend” strategy, which required all grant recipients to include a 1,000-character justification for their program’s funding. The memorandum acknowledged that the new guidance would lead to delays and require additional advance preparation.

**AUGUST 22,  
2025**

OCC **announced** that it would allow states to apply for additional waivers in the implementation of the 2024 CCDF final rule as it works to release a new Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) that will likely undermine positive changes from the 2024 regulations.

**JANUARY 2,  
2026**

OCC released its NPRM for CCDF that proposed rolling back 2024 regulations that supported timely provider reimbursements, paying providers by enrollment, using grants and contracts to expand access to care, and capping the co-payment for families.

**JANUARY 5,  
2026**

The ACF reinstated the “Defend the Spend” policy for all states administering CCDF in response to a YouTube influencer’s accusations of child care provider fraud in Minnesota. The reinstatement will require states to submit additional justification to draw down already allocated federal resources.

# THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION HAS HARMED IMMIGRANT FAMILIES AND THE IMMIGRANT CHILD CARE WORKFORCE

**Increased immigration enforcement, instilling fear and threatening child care providers and families accessing care.**

**JANUARY 20,  
2025**

On the first day of the Trump Administration, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) rescinded the **protected areas policy**, which had limited immigration enforcement actions in places that provide essential services, including early education spaces. This instilled significant fear in families and providers, reduced enrollment in child care programs, and resulted in direct enforcement actions happening in front of children and families in and near child care settings.

## RESPONSIVE ACTIONS:

**JULY 21, 2025**

To protect access to the vast number of programs, including Head Start, that would be impacted by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) notice, twenty states and Washington, D.C. **sued** the Trump Administration for illegally restricting social services through the reinterpretation.

**SEPTEMBER 10, 2025**

The states' lawsuit over the PRWORA reinterpretation reached a **preliminary injunction**, blocking its implementation in the plaintiff states and D.C. In states not covered by the lawsuit, any changes to program eligibility and an implementation timeline are still contingent on additional guidance. However, full access to the Head Start program remains intact through a separate ruling (see September 11).

**SEPTEMBER 11, 2025**

A federal judge granted a nationwide preliminary injunction blocking the PRWORA directive's ability to exclude immigrant children in Head Start across the country. This injunction was a result of ongoing litigation related to Head Start on behalf of a coalition of parents and Head Start providers filed with the ACLU challenging the Trump Administration's efforts to dismantle the program. This litigation had previously been amended to include the PRWORA notice, and the injunction was in response to that amended litigation.



## **Restricted access to critical public programs, threatening the health and well-being of many immigrant children and families as well as their access to early education and services.**

**JULY 9,  
2025**

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) **rescinded** a 1998 interpretation of PRWORA, redefining which programs would be considered “federal public benefits” in order to restrict eligibility for key programs based on citizenship status. This re-definition sought to include Head Start, which would have prohibited immigrant children from accessing the program.

**NOVEMBER 19,  
2025**

DHS proposed rescinding current regulations on “public charge,” which pertain to lawfully present immigrants applying for green cards. While current policy considers whether green card applicants have used cash assistance or have gotten nursing home care through Medicaid, **this proposal** would deny access to green cards based on an applicant’s use of any health or social services program.

## **THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION HAS MANUFACTURED CRISES TO HURT FAMILIES SO BILLIONAIRES CAN BENEFIT FINANCIALLY**

**Passed a reconciliation package that will cause unprecedented harm across the country, particularly to communities with low incomes, people of color, immigrants, workers, women, and children.**

**JULY 4,  
2025**

The President signed Congress' budget reconciliation bill into law, making **historic cuts** to basic needs programs such as Medicaid and SNAP in service of tax breaks for the wealthiest people and corporations in the country. As a result, costs are **projected** to rise for millions of families—including early educators, **43 percent** of whom rely on one or more public benefits to make ends meet. Three provisions were included that expanded pre-existing tax credits related to child care, but the limitations of these tax credits mean that few families—and overwhelmingly those with higher earnings—can benefit from them. The law also increased funding for mass detention and deportation, which will put immigrant families and early educators at risk and undermine the child care system that relies on their work.

## **RESPONSIVE ACTIONS:**

**OCTOBER 28,  
2025**

A federal judge granted a **preliminary injunction** barring the shutdown-related layoffs while a lawsuit challenging them is in motion. This resulted in a temporary pause in layoffs for certain federal employees.

## Manufactured a shutdown that threatened jobs, food assistance, and Head Start and still resulted in increased health care costs.

**SEPTEMBER 30,  
2025**

The government **shut down** after failing to pass a budget by the FY25 fiscal deadline over disputes about extending the enhanced health care premium tax credits that expired on November 1. Though CCDBG funds roll over from previous years, allowing programs to continue during shutdowns, Head Start grants are distributed on a staggered cycle that distributes funding sporadically throughout the year. As a result, some grantees may not receive federal funding if their renewal is expected during a shutdown.

**OCTOBER 1,  
2025**

**Six Head Start** programs in three states that serve over 6,000 children did not receive operational funding due to the government shutdown.

**OCTOBER 10,  
2025**

The Trump Administration carried out **another round** of layoffs as retribution for the shutdown, targeting 4,000 government employees. These firings included ACF staff in the Office of Early Childhood Development and in many related offices. Soon after layoffs were announced, multiple court cases were filed challenging the administration's ability to reduce federal staff.

**NOVEMBER 1,  
2025**

One hundred and thirty-five grantees in 41 states and Puerto Rico that serve over **65,000 children** did not receive operational funding due to the government shutdown. This is about 10 percent of all grantees.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Additional threats remain on the horizon. Pending proposed rules for Head Start and CCDF could undermine children's health and safety and families' access to care, as the federal government continues looking for ways to gut funding and support for key programs. However, understanding the past year's attacks to the early education sector helps provide critical knowledge, which can fuel action. **Consider the following ways to engage in support for child care and early education and to fight back against these attacks:**

- Share your community's story about impact and what your community needs with decisionmakers at the state and federal level.
- Document the harms and challenges and share with other partners, advocates, and members of Congress.
- Advocate for investments in child care and early education programs at the federal and state levels.
- Advocate to local, state, and federal policymakers to oppose harmful proposals and support pro-immigrant policies.
- Understand your constitutional rights and create safe space policies in child care and early education settings should enforcement action take place in or near child care and early education settings.

