



Building a High-Quality Child Care and Early Learning Infrastructure for New York City

 From Crisis to Opportunity
A POLICY AGENDA FOR AN EQUITABLE NYC

ROBIN HOOD 

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For children, the earliest years are critical for healthy brain development and lay the groundwork for future educational achievement, economic productivity, and lifelong health. Equitable access to affordable, high-quality, and culturally responsive child care and early learning opportunities can be life changing, shaping the trajectories of our youngest New Yorkers and equipping them with a strong foundation from which to grow and excel. The benefits of child care also extend to parents.¹ Studies have shown that high-quality child care and early learning programs have a high return on investment for both children and parents. In order to work or participate in educational activities and workforce development that will improve their financial stability, parents need to know their children are in safe, nurturing environments with early educators who are caring and well compensated. Children, in turn, benefit from their parents' and teachers' economic stability. As a result, child care and early learning policies have a significant and overlapping impact on children, their families, and the early educators and child care staff who work in the field.

Over the past year, the pandemic has put the health, well-being, and economic stability of children and families—especially women, low-income families, and communities of color—at risk. In particular, when child care programs and schools closed, working parents lost the supervision they had previously relied on for their children, disrupting their ability to work. Women, who tend to be responsible for the majority of family caregiving, were more likely to be forced out of their jobs or to cut their work hours as a result of the pandemic.² And, families of color had a particularly challenging time finding affordable care: during the worst of the pandemic, 56 percent of Black New Yorkers strongly agreed that there were not enough child care options in the city for working parents, as compared to 47 percent of all New Yorkers.³

While the pandemic eroded New York City's child care sector, it also revealed the deep crisis that preceded it—an inadequate child care infrastructure that has long presented significant challenges for parents, children, providers who own and direct programs, and early educators and other staff. The supply of high-quality

1. "Return on Investment in Birth to Three Early Childhood Development Programs," Heckman Equation, September 6, 2018, https://heckmanequation.org/www/assets/2018/09/F_ROI-Webinar-Deck_birth-to-three_091818.pdf.

2. Julie Kashen, Sarah Jane Glynn, and Amanda Novello, "How COVID-19 Sent Women's Workforce Progress Backwards: Congress' \$64.5 Billion Mistake," The Century Foundation and the Center for American Progress, October 29, 2020, <https://tcf.org/content/report/how-covid-19-sent-womens-workforce-progress-backward-congress-64-5-billion-mistake/>.

3. Robin Hood commissioned Global Strategy Group (GSG) to conduct public opinion polls on priorities for New Yorkers in November 2020 and May 2021. GSG over-sampled low-income New Yorkers to ensure the needs of the highest-impacted community were well represented. See "New York City Issues Research Finding," Global Strategy Group, January 26, 2021, <https://globalstrategygroup.app.box.com/s/wmpmhza15pr3gom7c20qlpx65dom55eq>.

care options has long been insufficient to meet the demand, and at the same time, the options available have been financially out of reach for most families. The child care workforce, which is predominantly made up of women of color and immigrant women, has historically been undercompensated for their essential work, which further strains the sector as it leads to a stressed workforce, high turnover, and challenges in recruitment, which can impact both the availability and quality of care.⁴

The inadequacy and complexity of child care in New York City is evident throughout the system. Child care in the city is funded, administered, and regulated by a complex combination of state and local agencies and structures, including the state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and Department of Education (DOE), with some funding for certain income-contingent programs coming from the federal government. These agencies offer a patchwork of inadequately funded services that fails to ensure all children have equitable access to high-quality care. While OCFS has developed basic health and safety requirements and the DOE has put out a pre-kindergarten (pre-K) early childhood framework for quality (EFQ),⁵ there has been a lack of coordinated investment in and attention to supporting children's social-emotional, cognitive, mental, and physical health across settings—from schools to centers to home-based providers. At the same time, these agencies have not had or devoted the resources to invest in needed professional development and compensation for the child care and early learning workforce. This has increased longstanding racial and economic inequity among New York City providers and the children in their care.

With the influx of federal child care funding through the American Rescue Plan Act and the governor's FY22 budget proposal to use \$2.3 billion⁶ of those funds to expand child care availability, quality, and affordability, New York City's next mayor has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a child care assistance model that works for all New Yorkers. This system must ensure affordable, high-quality care for children, provide better and more equitably paying jobs for all child care workers, and enable parents and other caregivers to rejoin the paid workforce, increase their work hours, and restart their careers.

The next mayoral administration must prioritize a child care and early learning system that provides sufficient public funding to equitably guarantee affordable, high-quality child care to families when and where they need it. This includes infant and toddler care, preschool, after-school, and summer care in a diverse array of high-quality settings. (While this section focuses on the needs of children from birth to age 5, it is important to point out that early care is only part of the picture, and parents and children need after school and summer care through age 12, and for children with disabilities through age 18.)⁷ The next mayor must also ensure early educators and child care staff have access to professional development, mental health supports, and compensation that sustains their families. These investments are crucial to family economic mobility and positive outcomes for children and must be targeted first to those whose well-being depends on them.

4. Julie, Kashen, Halley Potter, and Andrew Stettner, "Quality Jobs, Quality Child Care: The Case for a Well-Paid, Diverse Early Education Workforce," The Century Foundation, June 13, 2016, <https://tcf.org/content/report/quality-jobs-quality-child-care/>.

5. "Parent's Guide to Child Care Options," New York State Office of Children and Family Services, <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/looking/brochure.php>; "Early Childhood Framework for Quality (EFQ)," New York City Department of Education, August 2019, <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/early-childhood-framework-for-quality.pdf>.

6. Governor Andrew Cuomo, "Governor Cuomo Announces Highlights of FY 2022 Budget to Reimagine, Rebuild and Renew New York," April 6, 2021 <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-highlights-fy-2022-budget-reimagine-rebuild-and-renew-new-york>.

7. For additional recommendations for expanding after-school and summer care, see the Campaign for Children's campaign platform, available at <http://www.campaignforchildrennyc.com/a-call-to-action>.

Specifically, the next mayor should:

1. **Expand New York City's supply of high-quality, equitable child care and early learning options** by restoring what was lost during the pandemic and building back a better system by investing in high-quality care and care jobs (defined in the box below) and expanding the supply of diverse child care options for all families.⁸
2. **Support New York City parents' and other caregivers' ability to work, continue their own education, and participate in job training or workforce development activities** by expanding access to child care assistance—slots and vouchers—for all New Yorkers who need it the most.⁹
3. **Support socioeconomic and racial integration in early childhood classrooms** and expand integrated early learning opportunities for children with disabilities and non-disabled children.

Goals

By implementing the recommended policies, the next mayor can more equitably support New York City's parents and caregivers by: helping them return to work and increase their work hours and earnings; ensure New York City's early educators and child care staff have sustainable, quality jobs; and help more young New Yorkers have a strong start in life. The next administration should aim, by the end of the new mayor's first term, to take major steps toward universal child care and early learning by:

- Ensuring that every currently eligible low-income family (up to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line, or \$53,000/year for a family of four) who wants child care assistance receives it; that child care is affordable for middle-income families (up to 150 percent of State Median Income, or roughly \$150,000 for a four-person family, with a phase out up to 175 percent); and that the supply of high-quality child care meets the demand.
- Increasing the overall numbers of children receiving child care assistance by up to 127,000.¹⁰
- Raising the wage floor for 88 percent of early educators and child care staff to the equivalent of \$25 an hour.¹¹

According to an analysis by the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University, the policy recommendations in this paper are predicted to decrease the poverty rate for children under age 3 in New York City by 5 to 8 percent. For children who directly benefit from the policies, there would be a 20 to 25 percent decrease in poverty¹²

8. "Child care desert" was first described by the Center for American Progress to describe areas with an insufficient supply of licensed child care. Specifically, it describes an area with a ratio of more than three young children for every licensed child care slot. See Rasheed Malik, Katie Hamm, Leila Schochet, Cristina Novoa, Simon Workman, and Steven Jessen-Howard, "America's Child Care Deserts in 2018," Center for American Progress, December 6, 2018, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>.

9. Child care assistance refers to subsidies that provide either child care slots or vouchers to eligible families.

10. Analysis by author with support from economist Jessica Milli of Results2Impact.

11. Ibid.

12. Robert Paul Hartley, Irwin Garfinkel, and Laurel Sariscany, "Impacts of Child Care Subsidy Reforms in New York City on Family Income and Poverty," Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University, May 14, 2021 [revised May 18, 2021]. Note that this analysis assumes an 85 percent SMI (\$69,292) rather than 200 percent FPL (\$52,400 for a family of four). The state legislature recently considered and rejected a statutory change to use the federal eligibility threshold of 85 percent SMI instead of the state's current 200 percent FPL. In addition, these numbers assume a broader scope of support that includes after school and summer care for school-age children.

Investing in New York City’s child care system would help reduce poverty, increase family economic stability, ensure healthy child development, and increase the ability of parents and caregivers, especially mothers, to work and earn more, making it a win for all.

Throughout this report, high-quality child care means a program that:

- creates a language-rich learning environment that optimizes children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development;
- engages in developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and linguistically sustaining practices;
- uses curricula, learning materials, and resources that encourage respect for diversity as well as respect for children’s racial identities and cultural heritages;
- fosters consistent relationships with caring, responsible educators and child care staff who are attuned and appropriately responsive to children’s social-emotional needs; and
- recognizes that families are essential to children’s well-being and engages them in an inclusive, supportive way.

Background and Need

To support the well-being of all of New York City’s children today and set them up for success in the future, the city must ensure they have affordable, high-quality child care and early education opportunities. Affordable, high-quality child care supports children’s well-being in two ways: first, by promoting their positive early learning experience and second by enabling parental employment, which increases family income and well-being. As James Heckman puts it: “Child care has a two-generation effect when combined with quality early learning: mothers grow their income while children gain the skills to succeed in school and life.”¹³ Studies have shown that family income impacts children’s cognitive development, physical health, and social and behavioral development because it is connected not only to parents’ ability to invest in goods and services that further child development, but also to the stress and anxiety parents can suffer when faced with financial difficulty, which in turn can have an adverse effect on their children.¹⁴

According to Harvard University’s Center for the Developing Child, “Healthy development in the early years (particularly birth to three) provides the building blocks for educational achievement, economic productivity, responsible citizenship, lifelong health, strong communities, and successful parenting of the next generation.”¹⁵ Inadequate and unstable care can impact children’s physical and mental well-being, preparedness for school, and long-term economic mobility. Unstable care situations can have long-lasting impacts that lead to

13. “Return on Investment in Birth to Three Early Childhood Development Programs,” Heckman Equation, September 6, 2018, https://heckmanequation.org/www/assets/2018/09/F_ROI-Webinar-Deck_birth-to-three_091818.pdf.

14. Kerris Cooper and Kitty Stewart, “Does Money Affect Children’s Outcomes? A Systematic Review,” Joseph Rowntree Foundation, October 2013, https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/_new/research/money_matters/default.asp.

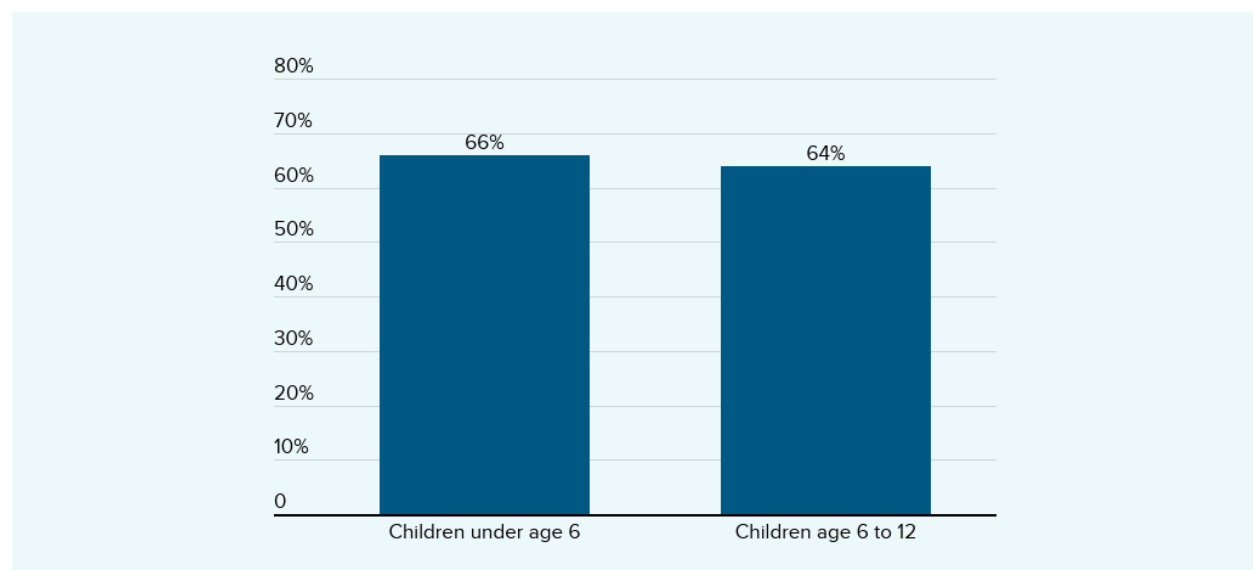
15. “In Brief: The Science of Resilience,” Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, 2015, retrieved from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-the-science-of-resilience/>.

impacts that lead to poverty or economic insecurity in adulthood, just as high-quality, stable care provision can lead to greater rates of high school graduation, greater lifetime earnings, better health, and a host of other positive outcomes.¹⁶ To date, the city has not adequately prioritized ensuring that child care and early learning programs provide high-quality care. As a result, too often, families with greater economic means can pay for quality, while those with less cannot, to the detriment of children and families.

Most Parents Work, but High-Quality Child Care Is Expensive and Hard to Find

In New York City, two-thirds of children under age 6 and almost the same percentage of children ages 6 to 12 (64 percent) have all available parents (either both parents or their solo parent) in the workforce.¹⁷ Yet, most families do not receive any child care assistance, despite the out-of-reach costs of the city's child care programs, which are often more expensive than rent, mortgages, or in-state-tuition at the City University of New York.¹⁸ Based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' definition of affordability (no more than 7 percent of a family's income), child care is unaffordable for about half (52 percent) of New York City families with children under age 4, including 56 percent of lower-income families and 49 percent of higher-income families.¹⁹

FIGURE 1. PERCENTAGE OF NEW YORK CITY CHILDREN WITH ALL PARENTS IN THE WORKFORCE



Source: "Kids Count Data Center," The Annie E. Casey Foundation, retrieved May 27, 2021, <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force?loc=1&loc=1#detailed/3/79/false/1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133/any/11472,11473>.

16. James J. Heckman, "Creating Flourishing Lives: The Dynamics of Capability Formation," Amartya Sen Lecture, Human Development and Capability Association, September 11, 2015, https://heckmanequation.org/www/assets/2017/01/HDCA-SenLecture_091115.pdf.

17. "Kids Count Data Center," The Annie E. Casey Foundation, retrieved May 27, 2021, <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force?loc=1&loc=1#detailed/3/79/false/1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133/any/11472,11473>.

18. "NYC Under 3: A Plan to Make Child Care Affordable for New York City Families," Office of the New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer, Bureau of Policy and Research, Bureau of Budget, May 2019, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nyc-under-three-a-plan-to-make-child-care-affordable-for-new-york-city-families/>.

19. Unpublished data from Kathryn M. Neckerman, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Sophie Collyer, et al., "Child Care Affordability and Accessibility—Challenges Prior to COVID-19, and Disruptions during COVID-19," Early Childhood Poverty Tracker, Robin Hood and the Center for Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University Population Research Center, May 2021.

One advantage New York City's families have over other regions is that the city provides universal pre-K for children age 4 and an expanding 3-K program for children age 3 that serves families for free for the length of the school-day (6.5 hours) during the school year in a variety of settings.²⁰ In addition, New York City's diversity is a strength, including its diversity of child care providers, from home-based care options such as family child care and family, friend, and neighbor care, to center-based care and, public school settings.

In addition, child care assistance is available to some New York City families, funded through federal, state, and city government, but the funding levels do not adequately meet the needs of city families or providers, and navigating administrative hurdles within a highly fractured system makes it challenging to locate and secure high-quality child care. According to new unpublished data from Robin Hood's Early Childhood Poverty Tracker, only one in four income-eligible families with children ages 0 to 3 in New York City receives government assistance.²¹

There are at least five city and state agencies that touch the child care system, overseeing center and home-based care at Early Learn, subsidized child care slots, Head Start, pre-K, and after-school and summer care. (See Appendix for the list of agencies and programs.) Each program has different eligibility requirements for families and separate standards for providers.

The complexity of the child care system leaves a maze for eligible families to navigate when seeking to access all forms of public child care and early learning support for which they are eligible. While the DOE has established a centralized enrollment process to try to address this, it does not include thousands of community-based programs that are not part of its network, including most home-based and many Head Start and Early Head Start providers. In some cases, this centralized process has slowed down families seeking to access care.²²

Meanwhile, there are not enough high-quality, culturally responsive child care programs available when and where families need them, whether they receive child care assistance or not. Before the pandemic, seven out of ten children under age 5 lived in neighborhoods with insufficient child care options.²³ The pandemic made things worse, as child care providers—at child care centers and in home-based, family child care—have struggled to keep their businesses open amid COVID-19 requirements and decreased enrollment. In April 2020, New York City issued an order closing many city child care providers until schools reopened, with an exception for Department of Education programs serving essential workers and other high-need groups and home-based child care providers.²⁴ A May 2020 survey found that one in five child care programs reported that they closed, while 70 percent engaged in remote instruction.²⁵ Those that stayed open for in-person care operated at

20. Mayor de Blasio has included in his budget a plan to finish rolling out 3-K to every community by 2023 mayor's budget.

21. Unpublished data from Kathryn M. Neckerman, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Sophie Collyer, et al., "Child Care Affordability and Accessibility—Challenges Prior to COVID-19, and Disruptions during COVID-19," Early Childhood Poverty Tracker, Robin Hood and the Center for Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University Population Research Center, May 2021.

22. Stephanie Thomson, "Parents Are Desperate for Day Care. Yet N.Y. Centers Have Empty Spots," New York Times, March 30, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/30/nyregion/child-care-vouchers.html>.

23. Rasheed Malik, Katie Hamm, Leila Schochet, Cristina Novoa, Simon Workman, and Steven Jessen-Howard, "America's Child Care Deserts in 2018," Center for American Progress, December 6, 2018, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>.

24. "COVID-19 State Child Care Actions—New York" The Hunt Institute, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://hunt-institute.org/covid-19-resources/state-child-care-actions-covid-19/#state-ny>.

25. Kate Tarrant and Mark Nagasawa, "New York Early Care and Education Survey: Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on New York Early Childhood System," City University of New York New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, June 18, 2020, <https://earlychildhoodny.org/research/docs/NY%20ECE%20Workforce%20COVID%20Survey%20Full%20Report.pdf>.

dramatically reduced capacity, going into debt and forced to lay off or furlough staff.²⁶ The challenges of the pandemic put providers' businesses, employees, and even their families at risk: 60 percent of centers and 82 percent of family child care providers reported charging their personal credit card or dipping into their personal savings accounts to purchase supplies or pay for other costs for providing care.²⁷

Some programs permanently closed during the pandemic, making the longstanding child care supply challenges even worse. This is especially problematic for parents of infants and toddlers and those who work multiple jobs or have nontraditional work hours or long commutes. Almost half of New York City's neighborhoods are considered infant care deserts, with less than 20 percent capacity to serve neighborhood children under age 2. Citywide, the number of licensed seats in home-based and center-based providers covers just 22 percent of the city's infant and toddler population.²⁸

In addition, many parents need child care before and after the traditional school day, throughout the summer when schools close, and options for nights and weekends. Families also have challenges finding programs for dual-language learners and for children with physical and learning disabilities.

For low-income families, difficulty accessing reliable, consistent child care can negatively impact their prospects for economic mobility. Child care disruptions, such as when a child care program is closed or when a babysitter quits, can lead to parents missing work or cutting back on their hours, which can cause them to miss out on hourly wages and negatively impact their long-term employment prospects and earnings. According to Early Childhood Poverty Tracker data, before the pandemic, two-thirds of working parents were absent from work, arrived late to work, or had to leave work early because of disruptions in their child care, over a three month period.²⁹ These disruptions can lead to turnover for working parents, meaning parents are let go by their employer because of absenteeism or parents decide to leave their jobs because it is too difficult or stressful to continue juggling work and child care. Early Childhood Poverty Tracker data finds that before the pandemic, over a twelve-month period, one in ten parents who worked in the past year reported that child care disruptions led to turnover, with 8 percent saying they had quit and 6 percent reporting they had been fired.

More commonly, disruptions to child care hinder parental advancement in the workplace. For instance, many parents may have to go from full-time to part-time work, may be unable to go from part-time to full-time work when they would like to, or may have to turn down a promotion to a more demanding job. These issues can have long-term impacts on parental employment and career advancement. Early Childhood Poverty Tracker data finds that nearly a third of working parents reported experiencing a child-care disruption that hindered work advancement over a twelve month period, prior to the pandemic.³⁰

26. "Am I Next? Sacrificing to Stay Open, Child Care Providers Face a Bleak Future Without Relief," National Association for the Education of Young Children, December 2020, https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey_data.pdf.

27. "State Data: Child Care Providers are Sacrificing to Stay Open and Waiting for Relief," National Association for the Education of Young Children, December 2020, https://illinoisnaeyc.org/assets/uploads/sites/491/2020/12/naeyc_state_data_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey.pdf.

28. "NYC Under 3: A Plan to Make Child Care Affordable for New York City Families," Office of the New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer, Bureau of Policy and Research, Bureau of Budget, May 2019, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nyc-under-three-a-plan-to-make-child-care-affordable-for-new-york-city-families/>.

29. Unpublished data from Kathryn M. Neckerman, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Sophie Collyer, et al., "Child Care Affordability and Accessibility—Challenges Prior to COVID-19, and Disruptions during COVID-19," Early Childhood Poverty Tracker, Robin Hood and the Center for Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University Population Research Center, May 2021.

30. Unpublished data from Elizabeth L. Doran, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Sophie Collyer, et al., "Early Childhood Poverty Tracker: The Extent and Cost of Child Care Disruptions in New York City," Robin Hood and the Center for Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University Population Research Center, June 2021.

The pre-COVID impact on the New York City economy due to child care related work absenteeism and turnover is an estimated \$1.25 billion per year—and this is just for parents with children under 5 years old.³¹ The pandemic and its ensuing health-related concerns reduced child care options even further and increased the impact of child care disruptions on parents and their work, as well as their children. A recent report by the New York City Economic Development Corporation estimates that the city could lose as much as \$2.2 billion per year in tax revenues due to the impact of parents leaving the workforce or downshifting their careers due to COVID-19 and the lack of child care.³²

31. Ibid.

32. “A Crisis for Working Women and Mothers: Making the Case for Childcare at the Core of Economic Recovery in NYC,” New York City Economic Development Corporation, May 2021, <https://edc.nyc/sites/default/files/2021-05/NYCEDC-Childcare-Innovation.pdf>.

Child Care Offerings in New York City

Families with children age 2 and under who meet certain income and asset eligibility requirements or are eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) may receive assistance through one of the city's contracted programs, through Early Head Start, or through a certificate or voucher, which can be used for family day care or an informal provider.³³ Almost half of New York City's neighborhoods are considered infant-toddler care deserts, with less than 20 percent capacity to serve neighborhood children under age 2.³⁴ Those with the biggest capacity gaps are generally in the areas of the city with the highest rates of poverty.³⁵

For preschool, all families with children age 4 are eligible for a slot in a city-run Pre-K for All program, either in a school or community-based program. As of fall 2021, 3-K for All will be available in all community school districts across the city, approaching universal access across the city, with roughly 40,000 3-K slots available out of an estimated 60,000 needed to serve all interested families.³⁶ Pre-K and 3-K typically run on a school year calendar (covering 6 hours, 20 minutes per day, for 180 days a year), but some community-based programs offer extended day and year programs (covering up to ten hours a day, for 225 or 260 days a year) for families who meet Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG)³⁷ or Head Start³⁸ eligibility criteria.

Some families are eligible for Early Learn means-tested slots for extended day periods for children ages 0 to 4 years old.³⁹ In addition, the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) offers school-age child care options before and/or after school, during lunch periods, and on school holidays, as well as periods when schools are not in session, including summer. The out-of-school time programs under the DYCD Comprehensive After School System of NYC (COMPASS NYC) provide care for children enrolled in kindergarten through the end of high school. Families can apply for these programs through their child's school or through DYCD. There is no income eligibility requirement for these programs, but underfunding means that not all families who need slots in these programs receive them.

Low-income New Yorkers, Women, Immigrants, and New Yorkers of Color Are Most Impacted

During the pandemic, low-income New Yorkers, women, immigrants, and people of color were overrepresented as the frontline workers and caregivers who faced the most challenges, including those

33. "Child Care for Infants and Toddlers," EarlyLearn, NYC Department of Education, retrieved March 27, 2021, <https://growingupnyc.cityofnewyork.us/programs/earlylearn/>.

34. "NYC Under 3: A Plan to Make Child Care Affordable for New York City Families," Office of the New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer, Bureau of Policy and Research, Bureau of Budget, May 2019, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nyc-under-three-a-plan-to-make-child-care-affordable-for-new-york-city-families/>.

35. "Comptroller Stringer Proposes Landmark 'NYC Under 3' Plan to Expand Affordable Child Care Access to New York City Working Families," Office of the New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer, Bureau of Policy and Research, May 17, 2019, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-proposes-landmark-nyc-under-3-plan-to-expand-affordable-child-care-access-to-new-york-city-working-families/>.

36. Christina Veiga, "Flush with federal cash, NYC promises preschool for 3-year-olds in every school district," Chalkbeat, May 24, 2021, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/3/24/22348023/nyc-universal-preschool-3k>.

37. This is the federal child care policy that provides money to the states for child care assistance for low-income families.

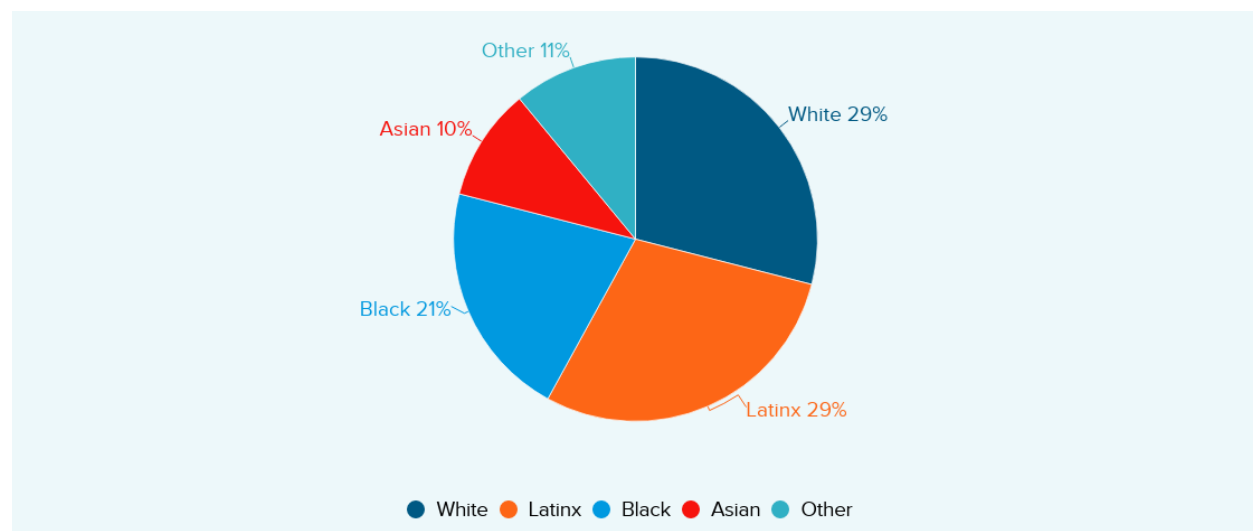
38. Head Start programs offer full-day, year-round care for families for families who meet eligibility criteria—primarily very low-income families.

39. These will be called "Extended Day" instead of "Early Learn" as of September 1, 2021.

working disproportionately in family child care programs that stayed open to serve the children of essential workers. Women were more likely than men to cut back on their work hours or take time off from work for child care responsibilities. A New York City study found that women of color were more likely than white women to have needed to take time off to care for a child (36 percent compared to 29 percent) and less likely to have paid leave available to them.⁴⁰ The lost earnings and job instability have both immediate and long-term repercussions for these individuals and their families, as well as their communities.

In addition, the early childhood workforce in New York City is made up of mostly women and people of color, with 29 percent of such workers identifying as white, 29 percent as Latinx, 21 percent as Black, 10 percent as Asian, and 11 percent as other. This workforce also speaks about thirty different languages in addition to English.⁴¹ This diversity is a strength of the sector. Unfortunately, the chronic underfunding of many child care programs has led to poor pay with few benefits for many workers. While some child care workers have union representation, giving them the opportunity to bargain for the higher wages and benefits that are crucial for valuing the complex work of early educators and child care staff, inequities persist. Jobs in child care programs connected with the Department of Education come with benefits, while positions in many centers and many more home-based options do not. As a result of this uneven and often inadequate compensation, the quality available in child care and early learning has long been undermined by high turnover rates and poor working conditions.⁴² Higher wages and better working conditions are crucial to recruiting and retaining a diverse, talented workforce that can provide the high-quality care that children need and families deserve.

FIGURE 2. EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE IN NEW YORK CITY, BY RACE



Source: "New York State's Infant and Toddler Workforce," New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, March 17, 2021, https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/03/State-of-the-Childcare-Report_F_3.17.2021.pdf.

40. "Our Crisis of Care: Supporting Women and Caregivers during the Pandemic and Beyond," Office of the New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer, Bureau of Policy and Research, March 2021, https://www.abetterbalance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Crisis_of_Care_Report_031521.pdf.

41. "New York State's Infant and Toddler Workforce," New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, March 17, 2021, https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/03/State-of-the-Childcare-Report_F_3.17.2021.pdf.

42. Julie, Kashen, Halley Potter, and Andrew Stettner, "Quality Jobs, Quality Child Care: The Case for a Well-Paid, Diverse Early Education Workforce," The Century Foundation, June 13, 2016, <https://tcf.org/content/report/quality-jobs-quality-child-care/>.

Conditions for Success

In order for a new mayoral administration's policy efforts to succeed for New York City's children, families, and early educators, it is critical that certain baseline conditions for success be in place at the federal and state level.

- **Increased state funding and enhanced state policies to expand eligibility, streamline enrollment, and improve quality.** Through the American Rescue Plan Act, the federal government invested more than \$1.12 billion in New York State for stabilizing the child care sector and an additional \$700 million for child care assistance to families. This is on top of the more than \$600 million in federal relief money invested in 2020, much of which has not yet been spent.⁴³ The governor's FY22 enacted budget includes a \$5 billion investment in child care through both state and federally funded initiatives.⁴⁴ **The state should ensure these increases in funding are continued, whether or not the American Families Plan is passed; and that funds are utilized in line with the recommendations of the state Child Care Availability Task Force,⁴⁵ such as adopting subsidy rates that are aligned with the true cost of quality (including recognizing the higher cost of care necessary for infants and toddlers), making child care more affordable, and paying the early childhood workforce fairly, which will set the stage for longer-term systems change.**
- **Passage of the American Families Plan.** In addition, the president has proposed investing \$425 billion over ten years nationally to build a comprehensive child care and preschool program through the American Families Plan. The proposal would use a sliding scale to ensure that no family earning 150 percent of State Median Income (SMI) would pay more than 7 percent of their income for child care, reflecting legislation proposed by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), chair of the Senate HELP Committee, and Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA), chair of the House Education and Labor Committee. **The passage of the child care provisions in the American Families Plan and the required funding match from New York State would provide the resources New York State needs to expand eligibility and, in turn, guarantee all qualifying families in New York City can receive this assistance.** Without passage of this legislation, New York City can still move ahead and serve as a model for the nation, but the city will need to fund the expansion by raising revenue.

Policy Response

With the influx of federal and state child care funding from the American Rescue Plan Act, the next administration has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a child care assistance model that works for all New Yorkers. Such a system must ensure affordable, high-quality care for children, provide better and more equitably paying jobs for all child care workers, and enable parents and other caregivers to rejoin the paid workforce, increase their work hours, and restart their careers.

42. Julie, Kashen, Halley Potter, and Andrew Stettner, "Quality Jobs, Quality Child Care: The Case for a Well-Paid, Diverse Early Education Workforce," The Century Foundation, June 13, 2016, <https://tcf.org/content/report/quality-jobs-quality-child-care/>.

43. Chris Bragg, "Child care centers closed as New York spent relief funds slowly," Times Union, June 8, 2021, <https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/As-child-care-centers-closed-New-York-spent-16233558.php>.

44. "Governor Cuomo Announces FY 2022 Budget Invests an Historic \$5 Billion in Child Care, Fulfilling Many Recommendations Included in Child Care Availability Task Force Report," Office of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, May 4, 2021, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-fy-2022-budget-invests-historic-5-billion-child-care-fulfilling-many>.

45. "Supporting Families, Employers and New York's Future: An Action Plan for a Strong and Equitable Child Care System: Final Report of the Child Care Availability Task Force," New York State Office of Children and Family Services and Department of Labor, <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/childcare/Child-Care-Availability-Task-Force-Report.pdf>

1. Expand New York City's Supply of High-Quality, Equitable Child Care and Early Learning Options

The next mayor should not only restore the child care capacity that New York City lost during the pandemic but also build back a better system by investing in high-quality child care (defined above). High-quality child care requires intentionally defining and supporting quality across programs and improving job quality and pay parity for New York City's child care workforce. Building capacity requires expanding the supply of diverse child care options for all families, especially for infants and toddlers, as well as options during nontraditional hours and in child care deserts.

High-Quality Care

- **Develop the structure and tools to move from licensing for health and safety to supporting high-quality, equitable care in every setting.** While the current administration has made progress around

91% of New Yorkers and 94% of low-income New Yorkers approve of supporting childcare programs to help them better support the social, emotional, and cognitive development of children and the needs of their families.

defining and supporting quality in 3-K and pre-K, the city's oversight of child care programs via the Department of Health and Mental Health Services still focuses solely on basic health and safety provisions, which are necessary, but not sufficient to ensure that all children are learning in high-quality, equitable contexts that support their social

emotional and cognitive development. A new administration has an opportunity to work closely with a diverse constituency of stakeholders to develop a clear framework for high-quality, equitable care (as defined above) that includes evidence-based measurements, inputs, and an implementation plan to support programs in meeting this standard. This framework should build on and enhance the New York State's Quality Ratings and Improvement System (QRIS) standards (QualityStarsNY) and, as appropriate, draw on the Department of Education's Early Childhood Framework for Quality (EFQ).

The mayor should designate an appropriate entity to lead the effort of developing and implementing this plan, possibly within the context of building out and leading the QualityStarsNY work in the city. Funding and technical assistance to achieve higher levels of quality must precede any requirements or expectations that programs achieve these standards, along with an appropriate timeline that recognizes the intense effort that quality improvement requires. This requires working with the state to achieve subsidy levels and payment policies that cover the true cost of quality care. The NYS Child Care Availability Task Force (CCATF) has recommended that "New York State should adopt subsidy rates that are aligned with the true cost of quality, including recognizing the higher cost of care necessary for infants and toddlers."⁴⁶

In 2019, Raising New York— a diverse statewide coalition focused on school readiness—worked with the Center for American Progress to estimate the true cost of providing quality child care for children under age 5 in New York State, including specific data for New York City. They defined quality as including adequate staffing and staff-to-child ratios, equitable salaries and benefits, resources for professional

46. "Supporting Families, Employers and New York's Future: An Action Plan for a Strong and Equitable Child Care System: Final Report of the Child Care Availability Task Force," Office of Children and Family Services, New York State Child Care Availability Task Force, 2021, <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/childcare/Child-Care-Availability-Task-Force-Report.pdf>.

development, and materials. They looked at child care centers and family child care homes and did not include school-based pre-K or 3-K settings. Table 1 shows their calculations of what the per-child subsidy rate for high-quality care in New York City should be to truly cover the cost of high-quality care.⁴⁷

TABLE 1. ESTIMATED PER-CHILD SUBSIDY RATE NEEDED FOR HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE IN NEW YORK CITY

Age Group	Cost per child of providing quality center-based care, including K–12 salary parity cost per child	Gap between 2019 subsidy and true cost of quality care
Infant	\$37,540	\$(16,428)
Toddler	\$30,500	\$(14,120)

Family Child Care Home	Cost per child of providing quality family child care home care, including K–12 salary parity	Gap between 2019 subsidy and true cost of quality care for toddlers
Small family child care home	\$28,960	(\$18,889)
Large family child care home	\$33,080	Data not available

Source: Simon Workman and Steven Jessen-Howard, “New York State Cost of quality child care study,” Center for American Progress, November 2019, <https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/12/NY-Cost-of-Quality-Report-Raising-NY.pdf>.

- Provide equitable compensation to child care workers and adequate funding for programs.** Providing equitable compensation will help recruit and retain diverse talent to provide high-quality care to children and ensure that early educators are economically stable and feel well supported in their work. The city has made progress providing equitable compensation through its union contracts. More needs to be done to ensure that home-based providers are not left behind; that compensation accounts for the length of the work year and longevity pay; and that all child care workers have benefits.⁴⁸ At a minimum, no one working in child care should be paid less than \$25/hour, and the city must work with the unions who represent child care workers to raise wages higher than that to reflect the true value and complexity of this work, including pay parity with the K–12 sector; to provide benefits, including health, dental, vision, paid time off, and retirement contribution; and to use cost escalators in multi-year contracts to cover predictable cost increases over a longer period of time. As the Campaign for Children recommended, the next mayoral

79% of New Yorkers and 85% of low-income New Yorkers support guaranteeing that child care providers earn a wage of at least \$25 an hour.

47. Simon Workman and Steven Jessen-Howard, “New York State Cost of quality child care study,” Center for American Progress, November 2019, <https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/12/NY-Cost-of-Quality-Report-Raising-NY.pdf>, 4.

48. James Parrott, “The Road to and from Salary Parity in New York City: Nonprofits and Collective Bargaining in Early Childhood Education,” The New School Center for New York City Affairs, January 2020, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/5e222c2ab457e7527ddc6450/1579297836053/SalaryParity_Parrott_Jan2020_Jan17.pdf.

administration should also fully fund indirect cost rates—which include personnel, rent or mortgages, and supplies—for child care providers contracting with the city (and all human services contracts).⁴⁹

- **Support professional development.** To build a consistent supply of well-supported early educators to provide high-quality care in diverse settings, educators should receive improved training and professional development that goes hand in hand with equitable compensation. Pay scales must incentivize and reward training, education, and demonstrated competencies. Professional development must be offered at free or low cost and include best practices that will allow educators and programs to meet the definition of high-quality care laid out in this paper; allow for models that combine coursework with on-site coaching and training and cohort models held at times and locations that are accessible (especially for home-based providers, who often work long hours); ensure access to credit-bearing coursework that is relevant to child care educators' needs, and the use of registered apprenticeships. In addition, specialized training for educators who work with infants and toddlers must be made available as a central part of this effort. The city should work directly with CUNY on improved preparation and training for child care providers.
- **Establish an empirically validated mental health consultation program to help providers better support the mental health of the children they serve.** The New York State FY22 child care assistance plan includes a rollout of a partnership with Youth Research, Inc. (YRI), an OCFS affiliate agency, Robin Hood, and The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University (Yale Zigler) to improve the lives of young children through providing Mental Health Consultation (MHC) models for educators. YRI will conduct its pilot Achieving Equitable Mental Health Consultation Statewide project to measure the impact of the Climate of Healthy Interactions for Learning & Development (IT-CHILD) approach on improving the socio-emotional environment in child care settings (with the support of Robin Hood, Yale Zigler, and OCFS).⁵⁰ These types of models have yielded promising results in states such as Ohio, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Colorado. The new mayoral administration should leverage this pilot program to roll out these tools across the city in zip codes with the highest incident rates of child poverty.

Expanding Capacity

- **Ensure providers have the funds they need to operate and provide high-quality care that is safe and healthy for children.** City officials should use federal and state dollars to help providers offset their debts and other issues caused by the pandemic, by subsidizing payroll and covering the cost of rent, mortgage, and utilities. The city should also leverage rental assistance funds to prevent the loss of housing among home-based child care providers. Over time, the city should work with the state to—per the CCATF recommendation—“move to an enrollment-based system that relies on contracts with high-quality providers instead of vouchers based on day-to-day attendance to increase stability in the system and simplify access for families.”⁵¹ Vouchers should remain an available option for families who prefer them, but the majority of funding should be provided through contracts.

49. “A Call To Action: The Campaign For Children’s Plan for Incoming City Leaders to Achieve Universal Access to Early Care and Education and Youth Services,” Campaign for Children, 2021, <http://www.campaignforchildrennyc.com/a-call-to-action>.

50. “Child Care Development Fund Plan for New York FY2022–2024,” Office of Children and Family Services, <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/stateplan/assets/2022-plan/FFY2022-2024-CCDF-Plan.pdf>.

51. “Supporting Families, Employers and New York’s Future: An Action Plan for a Strong and Equitable Child Care System: Final Report of the Child Care Availability Task Force,” Office of Children and Family Services, New York State Child Care Availability Task Force, 2021, <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/childcare/Child-Care-Availability-Task-Force-Report.pdf>.

- **Expand infant and toddler care capacity.** The city should invest in expanding the number of child care slots available to 60,000 to 127,000 infants and toddlers, including increased support for home-based providers. According to All Our Kin, “family child care reaches the children of families that face the greatest barriers to accessing care, including infants and toddlers, low-income children, children of color, children in rural communities, and children whose parents work nontraditional hours.”⁵² Yet, home-based programs are struggling to stay afloat economically. New York should ensure that home-based providers have the resources they need to provide care that meets community needs: contracting with more home-based child care providers, investing in home-based child care networks, providing support for shared services and other sustainability practices, and providing resources to support family, friend, and neighbor care. In addition, the city should offer direct technical assistance and leverage the expertise of community-based organizations, building on relationships with home-based child care networks, to provide help navigating any relevant requirements of zoning, licensing, child and adult care food programs, subsidies, and quality improvement systems. Grants should also be made available to home-based providers to cover costs associated with these requirements and options.
- **Provide additional resources for child care programs that serve underserved populations.** These populations include families with children needing care during nontraditional hours and/or in underserved geographic areas, as well as multilingual learners and children, especially younger children, with disabilities. The city should increase the base payments to providers who meet these needs to 15 percent above the current rates and provide professional development aimed at these purposes as well as grants for specialized equipment.

Expected Impact

Improving the quality of care and rebuilding and expanding capacity in New York City’s child care sector as proposed above would:

- ensure that all young children served by child care programs in New York City (over 100,000 infants and toddlers) would benefit from these recommended policies; and
- ensure that all educators in home- and center-based child care programs (nearly 60,000 educators) would also benefit from increased pay, benefits, and professional development.

2. Support New York City Parents and Other Caregivers’ Ability to Work, Continue Their Own Education, and Participate in Job Training or Workforce Development Activities

The next mayor should support New York City parents’ and other caregivers’ ability to return to work or pursue their own education or job training by expanding access to child care assistance—slots and vouchers—for all New Yorkers who need it the most.⁵³ Over the long term, the city should guarantee universal access to all early care, education, and youth programs—including those serving children ages 0 through 2 years old year round, universal pre-K for children ages 3 and 4 years old, and afterschool and summer care for school-age children who need it. In the shorter term, the next mayoral administration should work with the City Council to:

- **Serve every currently eligible family.** The city should first use the influx of funding from the state and

52. “A Strong Economy Needs Strong Family Child Care: Principles and State Policy Recommendations,” All Our Kin, accessed April 22, 2021, <http://www.allourkin.org/sites/default/files/A%20Strong%20Economy%20Needs%20Strong%20Family%20Child%20Care%20-%20All%20Our%20Kin.pdf>.

53. Child care assistance refers to subsidies that provide either child care slots or vouchers to families.

federal government to serve every family that wants assistance and to meet the needs of low-income New Yorkers. In order to meet this goal, the city must improve outreach so families are aware of the options available to them, making sure informational materials are translated into multiple languages. In addition, the city should get creative about outreach—going to where people are rather than relying on people to come to them. Post-pandemic, this could include using traditional organizing techniques—in partnership with child care resource and referral agencies and other community-based organizations—such as door knocking and phone calls to inform families about their options. To make it easier to enroll, the city should create an option for local enrollment in community programs so that providers can leverage relationships in their communities and families can easily access conveniently located care.⁵⁴ Simplifying enrollment also requires fortifying connections between city agencies and systems to create more seamless information, application, and enrollment programs, better linking the work of all of the entities that address child and family well-being. Finally, the recently approved state budget approved a change to ensure that once a family receives assistance, they receive it for an entire year regardless of changes in income or work.⁵⁵ The city should extend this policy on a permanent basis because losing child care suddenly due to a shift in income can be deeply disruptive for both families and individual children—including negatively impacting employment or other parental engagement, and child development.⁵⁶ As one participant in a roundtable discussion held by The Century Foundation and Robin Hood said: “Simplifying the process of getting assistance is important—but not just simplifying. The continuity of care is important; if families apply but are only guaranteed three months, it’s frustrating to navigate. They don’t have time to come back and follow through.”⁵⁷

- **Prioritize assistance for families for whom the need is greatest.** Every income-eligible New Yorker participating in job training or workforce development programs should receive child care assistance by automatically screening and enrolling eligible workers in child care subsidy programs or connecting workers to available child care slots at care settings of the parent’s choice. This will help ensure reliable child care for those who are unemployed and participating in job training or workforce development programs. In addition, certain populations, including those who already meet standard income criteria to receive child care, should receive child care assistance with no copayments until their children age out, including immigrant children who are undocumented; children experiencing homelessness; children with incarcerated parents; children in foster care; children of parents who have been unemployed for more than three months and are actively seeking work, retraining, or pursuing higher education; children in families experiencing domestic violence; and children with disabilities. The city should also test ways to automatically

83% of New Yorkers and 88% of low-income New Yorkers support ensuring that vulnerable families with undocumented immigrant children, children of incarcerated parents, and homeless children are automatically eligible for financial assistance to help pay for childcare.

54. “Call to Action: The Campaign for Children’s Plan for Incoming City Leaders to Achieve Universal Access to early Care and Education and Youth Services,” Campaign for Children, accessed April 26, 2021, <http://www.campaignforchildrennyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/call-to-action-c4c-2021-platform.pdf>.

55. “Governor Cuomo Announces Highlights of FY 2022 Budget to Reimagine, Rebuild and Renew New York,” Office of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, April 6, 2021, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-highlights-fy-2022-budget-reimagine-rebuild-and-renew-new-york>.

56. Unpublished data from Elizabeth L. Doran, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Sophie Collyer, et. al, “Early Childhood Poverty Tracker: The Extent and Cost of Child Care Disruptions in New York City,” Robin Hood Foundation and the Center for Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia Population Research Center, June 2021.

57. Mary Cheng, Director of Childhood Development Services, Chinese American Planning Council, “Stakeholder Engagement: Child Care and Early Learning Infrastructure,” The Century Foundation and The Robin Hood Foundation Child Care and Early Learning Roundtable, March 2021.

provide assistance to these families without them having to enroll and, instead, give them a chance to opt-out.

- **Expand access to financial assistance programs that help families pay for child care.** In years two and three of the first term, in addition to serving every currently eligible family who wants assistance for their infants and toddlers, the city should get out in front of and model national efforts to expand child care assistance based on Biden administration and congressional proposals by investing an additional \$500 million to \$1 billion to serve both low- and middle-income families in one seamless system. Under current law, the city will have to spend its own money on this expansion unless the federal or state policy changes first, a change for which the city should advocate.

87% of New Yorkers and 90% of low-income New Yorkers support expanding who is eligible for City-funded child care assistance, so that low-income families do not have to pay, and those making more also receive some assistance.

The city should phase-in this additional spending by serving infants and toddlers first and gradually reaching all children who are not fully served by the city's universal pre-K and 3-K programs. The policy should ensure that no family with income up to approximately \$150,000 for a family of four (150 percent of SMI)⁵⁸ pays more than 7 percent of their family income for child care—the affordability benchmark created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.⁵⁹ It should provide more assistance to families with lower incomes, using a sliding scale based on income to determine copayments where those with the lowest incomes pay nothing. In addition, this assistance should phase out gradually between 150 percent and 175 percent of SMI to eliminate a benefits cliff, whereby reaching a specific income level simply cuts off your benefits. (See Table 2.)

TABLE 2. PROPOSED SLIDING SCALE FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE COPAYMENT

FAMILY INCOME	COPAYMENT (% OF FAMILY INCOME)
\$0–75% SMI	\$0
>75%–100% SMI	2%
>100%–125% SMI	4%
>100%–125% SMI	7%
>150%–175%	10%

Source: Department of Health and Human Services, “Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program; Proposed Rule,” Federal Register 80, no. 247 (December 24, 2015), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2015-12-24/pdf/2015-31883.pdf>.

58. The state Child Care Availability Task Force recently made a similar recommendation using the Federal Policy Level (FPL) instead of State Median Income (SMI). The federal poverty level is an outdated measure of poverty, whereas the state median income is a measure of the middle level of income in the state. Using SMI will ensure a more generous benefit that supports low-income and middle class families, bringing them together as stakeholders in one system that serves children across class.

59. Department of Health and Human Services, “Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program; Proposed Rule,” Federal Register 80, no. 247 (December 24, 2015), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2015-12-24/pdf/2015-31883.pdf>.

Expected Impact

Expanding access to child care assistance to low- and middle-income families on a sliding scale based on income and focusing on making it easier to access and find appropriate care would:

- provide assistance for 60,000 to 127,000 additional infants and toddlers;
- support the increased employment of 44,500 mothers (43,000 from not working to working, and 1,500 from part-time to full-time work);⁶⁰ and
- help many more parents be able to afford and find child care so that they can work, search for jobs, or participate in other work-related activities while ensuring that their children are nurtured and safe.

3. Support Socioeconomic and Racial Integration in Early Childhood Classrooms

The socioeconomic and racial diversity of early childhood classrooms can be a key component of their quality. Children, on average, learn more in socioeconomically and racially diverse contexts.⁶¹ And perhaps even more importantly, diverse enrollment in child care and early learning settings can help reduce prejudice among young children.⁶² Children typically develop awareness of racial and social categories by kindergarten, and exposure to peers helps shape these perceptions. Unfortunately, parents who seek an integrated early childhood environment for their children—in New York City and across the nation—typically have a hard time finding one. Nationwide, early childhood settings are among the most racially segregated educational spaces in our country,⁶³ and this is true in New York City, where pre-K classrooms have much higher levels of segregation than kindergarten classrooms⁶⁴—which are themselves among the most segregated in the system. To tackle this segregation in early learning contexts, alongside the K–12 system (see the section on Education for this project), a new administration should:

- **Launch an Early Education Diversity Advisory Group** within the first year of the new administration to make actionable and sustainable recommendations for supporting integration across race, socioeconomic status, language, and disability in early childhood classrooms. As in the K–12 context, tackling an issue as complex as integration in early learning contexts takes careful engagement with stakeholders, including providers, teachers, families, community members, and researchers. A new administration should pull together an Early Education Diversity Advisory Group (including providing adequate funding to support staffing of the group) akin to the School Diversity Advisory Group⁶⁵ that recently analyzed elementary and secondary school enrollment to study the current context, the policy levers, and the data

60. One study noted that as of January 2021, over half a million people were still out of the workforce due to caregiving issues. This assumes that at least half of those would get back to work as a result of these policies. See “A Crisis for Working Women and Mothers: Making the Case for Childcare at the Core of Economic Recovery in NYC,” New York City Economic Development Corporation, May 2021, https://women.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2021-ChildcareInnovation-SOTE_report.pdf.

61. One study noted that as of January 2021, over half a million people were still out of the workforce due to caregiving issues. This assumes that at least half of those would get back to work as a result of these policies. See “A Crisis for Working Women and Mothers: Making the Case for Childcare at the Core of Economic Recovery in NYC,” New York City Economic Development Corporation, May 2021, https://women.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2021-ChildcareInnovation-SOTE_report.pdf.

62. Adam Rutland, Lindsey Cameron, Laura Bennett, and Jennifer Ferrell, “Interracial Contact and Racial Constancy: A Multi-site Study of Racial Intergroup Bias in 3-5 Year Old Anglo-British Children,” *Applied Developmental Psychology* 26 (2005): 699–713, <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/26168/4/rutland%20et%20al%20JADP.pdf>; and Jeanne L. Reid and Sharon Lynn Kagan, “A Better Start: Why Classroom Diversity Matters in Early Education,” The Century Foundation and the Poverty & Race Research Action Council, April 2015, <https://tcf.org/content/report/a-better-start/>.

63. “Segregated from the Start Comparing Segregation in Early Childhood and K–12 Education,” Urban Institute, October 1, 2019, <https://www.urban.org/features/segregated-start>.

64. Halley Potter, “Creating Integrated Early Childhood Education in New York City,” The Century Foundation, October 28, 2019, <https://tcf.org/content/report/creating-integrated-early-childhood-education-new-york-city/>.

65. See “School Diversity Advisory Group Recommendations,” NYC Department of Education, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/vision-and-mission/diversity-in-our-schools/school-diversity-advisory-group-recommendations>.

and make recommendations to improve diversity in early childhood programs for children up to age 5. Using a framework like the “5 Rs of Real Integration,”⁶⁶ developed by the youth advocacy organization IntegrateNYC, the group would consider not just enrollment demographics but also other aspects of the early care and education experience—such as resource equity, strong relationships among children and teachers, diversity of the early childhood workforce, and culturally responsive pedagogy—that are required for programs to reflect the diversity of the city and meet the needs of diverse families.

- **Require and provide support to blend funding for early childhood programs.** Supporting early childhood programs in their blending of different public and private funding streams—such as universal pre-K funding, extended year pre-K for eligible low-income families, Head Start and Early Head Start funding, CCDBG-funded EarlyLearn programs for infants and toddlers, and private tuition—is a powerful tool to create early childhood classrooms that enroll students of different socioeconomic backgrounds, and frequently of different racial backgrounds as well. Right now, it is administratively complicated for many early childhood providers in the city to receive different types of public and private funding. In some cases, the city discourages programs from doing so by highlighting the administrative burden of blending funding and encourages providers that do take on multiple funding streams to keep children in separate classrooms based on funding type.⁶⁷ City officials should instead require and fully support blended funding in EarlyLearn, city-contracted Head Start and Early Head Start,⁶⁸ 3-K, and pre-K classrooms, shifting much of the administrative burden for blending funding from individual programs to the DOE and requiring programs that do blend funding to ensure that classrooms mix students across funding types.⁶⁹
- **Expand programs that integrate children with disabilities** and non-disabled children. Building off of some of the recommendations from the Early Education Diversity Advisory Group detailed above, the city should expand the number of classrooms that serve children with and without disabilities in the same classroom (typically called a Special Class in an Integrated Setting), with one general education teacher and one special education teacher, create more of these classrooms that serve children age 3, and increase the funding that is available to community-based organizations to run these classrooms.⁷⁰ A large body of research shows that inclusive educational settings, in contrast with segregated classrooms, provide many benefits for children with disabilities, including greater cognitive and language development, increased social competence, and stronger academic and employment outcomes in the long run. And children without disabilities in these settings can also develop empathy and reduce bias by interacting with peers of diverse abilities.⁷¹

66. “Real Integration,” IntegrateNYC, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://integratenyc.org/mission>.

67. DOE operates with a default assumption that Head Start or Early Head Start takes place in separate classrooms, and it will allow providers to blend city-contracted Early Head Start or Head Start programs with CCDBG-funded EarlyLearn programs, 3-K, or pre-K only if the providers request specific permission. Furthermore, DOE cautions providers about the additional administrative burden that individual programs that choose to blend will have to absorb. See Halley Potter, “Creating Integrated Early Childhood Education in New York City,” The Century Foundation, October 28, 2019, <https://tcf.org/content/report/creating-integrated-early-childhood-education-new-york-city/>.

68. Programs with direct Head Start or Early Head Start contracts will need to work with the federal Office of Head Start in order to blend funds. As part of the city’s work to facilitate blended funding in city-contracted Head Start and Early Head Start, it should also raise this issue with the federal Office of Head Start to help programs with direct federal contracts use some of the same strategies for blending.

69. Starting in fall 2021, the DOE will require providers that are awarded both extended day and year seats for eligible low-income children and school day and year universal pre-K or 3-K seats to blend classrooms, but it cautions providers that doing so will replace additional administrative requirements on individual programs and says that “proposers are advised to consider their organizational and staffing capacity before deciding to pursue this option.” See Halley Potter, “Creating Integrated Early Childhood Education in New York City,” The Century Foundation, October 28, 2019, <https://tcf.org/content/report/creating-integrated-early-childhood-education-new-york-city/>.

70. “Information for Families About Preschool Special Class in an Integrated Setting (SCIS) Classes in DOE District Schools and Pre-K Center,” NYC Department of Education, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/information-for-families-about-scis.pdf>.

71. “Policy Statement On Inclusion Of Children With Disabilities In Early Childhood Programs,” U.S. Department of Health And Human Services and U.S. Department Of Education, September 14, 2015, <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf>.

Expected Impact

Supporting socioeconomic and racial integration in early childhood classrooms as proposed above would:

- increase the number of children served by pre-K and 3-K programs that offer integrated classrooms with both universal seats and extended day and year seats for eligible low-income families (currently just 4 percent of pre-K enrollment, or roughly 8,000 children);⁷²
- increase the number of pre-K and 3-K children enrolled in racially diverse programs (currently just 25 percent of pre-K enrollment, or roughly 17,000 children);⁷³ and
- support early childcare providers in ensuring that more of the roughly 8,600 infants and toddlers currently in EarlyLearn or city-contracted Early Head Start programs⁷⁴ are in integrated settings that bring together eligible low-income children with non-eligible children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds who are fee-paying or who gain access through new programs with higher income eligibility.

72. Halley Potter, "Creating Integrated Early Childhood Education in New York City," The Century Foundation, October 29, 2019, <https://tcf.org/content/report/creating-integrated-early-childhood-education-new-york-city/>.

73. As of 2018–19, 16,682 pre-K children were enrolled in racially diverse pre-K programs, defined as those in which no racial or ethnic group comprises more than 50 percent of the enrollment. See Halley Potter, "Creating Integrated Early Childhood Education in New York City," The Century Foundation, October 28, 2019, <https://tcf.org/content/report/creating-integrated-early-childhood-education-new-york-city/>.

74. Marija Drobnjak, "NYC's Early Childhood Education Landscape: Where Children and Families Receive Early Care and Educational Services," Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, March 2019, https://www.cccnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CCC_NYC%E2%80%99s-Early-Care-and-Education-Landscape.pdf.

Appendix

TABLE A1. AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR FUNDING AND ADMINISTERING NEW YORK CITY CHILD CARE SERVICES

AGENCY	RESPONSIBILITY
NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS)	ACS manages vouchers for eligible low-income working families that may be used at licensed child care centers and (home-based) family child care homes that accept them, as well as on informal care arrangements. (HRA administers subsidies for TANF families.)
NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)	DOHMH enforces state health and safety requirements, inspecting all licensed child care centers and (home-based) family child care programs to meet licensing requirements. ⁷⁶
NYC Department of Education (DOE)	DOE oversees all EarlyLearn programs, which provide free or low-cost child care and educational options for children from birth to age 2 from eligible families in center-based and some home-based settings (funded using CCDBG funds and Early Head Start subgrants). DOE also oversees and funds 3-K and pre-K for children ages 3 and 4, with options for extended day and year programs for eligible low-income families who meet CCDBG or Head Start requirements. Parents apply for these options through the DOE. ⁷⁷
NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)	OCFS administers the CCDBG, establishing licensing guidelines, provider payment rates, family eligibility, and subcontracting certain functions including licensing to NYC. OCFS also subcontracts with a network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies to assist parents and caregivers in applying for subsidies and finding care.
NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)	DYCD oversees city-funded after-school programs.
Office of Head Start	While some Early Head Start and Head Start programs in NYC are funded through subgrants from DOE, others have contracts directly with the federal Office of Head Start.

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76. "Subsidized Child Care," Day Care Council of New York, accessed, April 18, 2021, <https://www.dccnyinc.org/families/what-to-look-for-in-a-program-provider/subsidized-child-care/>.

77. "EarlyLearn," NYC Department of Education, accessed, April 18, 2021, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/earlylearn-nyc>.



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