



Update to the Health Impact Assessment of Kentucky's Child Care Assistance Program: Increasing eligibility for Public Pre-Kindergarten Support

The Center for Health Equity at the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness prepared a Health Impact Assessment of Kentucky's Child Care Assistance Program for the 2021 legislative session. This assessment observed the range of health outcomes associated with early childhood education as well as those associated with employment for both caregivers and parents.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) creates a foundation for the wellbeing of children and families across Kentucky. From children's earliest years, the education and support they receive during critical windows of development influence a lifetime of health outcomes. Early childhood education affects cognitive development, emotional and behavioral health, impulse control, and the skill of working with others.ⁱ High-quality programs provide screening tools for vision, hearing, asthma, and developmental challenges. Additionally, greater access to ECEC programs increases employment and education opportunities for parents, which can contribute to higher lifetime earnings and greater family success.ⁱⁱ Research has observed that for every dollar invested in ECEC in the state of Kentucky, the estimated benefit of return is more than 5 dollars.ⁱⁱⁱ

As recommended in the original CCAP HIA, the Kentucky Division of Child Care will be increasing CCAP eligibility from 160% FPL to 200% FPL with American Rescue Plan Act funds. This expansion increases the number of children with access to ECEC programs, which help meet a child's developmental needs while increasing the opportunity for parents to have time to work. This expansion, however, did not cover public pre-kindergarten (pre-k) programming, which is considered a type of ECEC. The 2022 legislative session poses an opportunity to create this expansion through proposed House Bill 120.

Kentucky's early childhood education system is interdependent. ECEC programs provide families with greater workforce opportunities and

young children with early childhood development enrichment, ultimately increasing the long-term health benefits for Kentucky's youngest generation. While these benefits are paramount for families, Kentucky is experiencing a child care shortage where 50% of Kentuckians are residing in an area considered to be a child care desert and our child care workforce has been substantially reduced in recent years due to poor job quality.^{iv}

Currently, to be eligible for public pre-k as a 3 year-old, a child must have a diagnosed disability. To be eligible as a 4-year-old, a child must have a diagnosed disability or live below 160% FPL. Increasing eligibility to fully match current CCAP eligibility for families would increase overall ECEC access for many children, especially those who may not have an official diagnosis and would benefit from public pre-k programs, which are oftentimes the best equipped to serve children with developmental or learning differences. Establishing consistent eligibility for ECEC programs, including public pre-k, ensures that all families under 200% FPL are eligible for affordable, quality, full-day, full-year care and education. Expanding public pre-k to match CCAP guidelines will also ensure greater family choice and will provide more opportunities for children to receive the positive health benefits of early childhood education programs.

ⁱ Blewitt C, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz M, Nolan A, Bergmeier H, Vicary D; Huang T, McCabe P, McKay T, Skouteris H. "Social and Emotional Learning Associated with Universal Curriculum-Based Interventions in Early Childhood Education and Care Centers: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." JAMA Network Open, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30646283/.

ⁱⁱ State of Washington Department of Commerce. "The Mounting Cost of Child Care, Impacts of child care affordability and access to Washington's employers and economy." Retrieved November 4, 2020

ⁱⁱⁱ Jepsen C, Troske K, Brasher C. Estimates of the Costs and Benefits of Expanding the Early Childhood Education Program in Kentucky. University of Kentucky Center for Business and Economic Research. Oct. 10, 2009. https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.bing.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1006&context=cber_research_reports

^{iv} Center for American Progress. America's Child Care Deserts in 2018. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>, <https://childcaredeserts.org/2018/?state=KY>. Published Dec 2018. Accessed Jan 2021

^v Kentucky Center for Economic Policy. Child Care in Kentucky is Crucial and in Dire Need of Public Investment. <https://kypolicy.org/report-child-care-in-kentucky-is-crucial-and-needs-public-investment/> Published November 2021. Accessed January 2022