

Early Care and Education Blueprint for Infant/Toddler Care:

Recommendations to Strengthen the Child Care System for LA County's Youngest Children

The period between birth and age three is critical for child development. During this time, 80 percent of brain development occurs and the foundations for lifelong health, well-being, and success during a child's life are established. Although a parent is a child's first and most important teacher, families often need additional support from early care and education (ECE) providers during these critical years.



According to the 2022 Los Angeles County ECE Needs Assessment, Los Angeles County is home to more than 484,000 infants and toddlers and only has licensed capacity through centers and family child care homes to serve 4 percent of children under 24 months. The lack of access to affordable, quality infant and toddler ECE in Los Angeles County has been a crisis for decades. The Early Care and Education Blueprint for Infant/Toddler Care is a roadmap to fortify the Child Care System for LA County's Youngest Children.

Priority Area 1: Capacity and Infrastructure



Issue: There are not enough licensed early care and education spaces available for infants and toddlers.

Recommendation 1.1: Establish a grant program to support start-up costs and facility development expenses for family child care homes and center-based care that serve infants and toddlers.

Recommendation 1.2: Invest in a study to identify regulatory changes for family child care homes to sustainably operate a predominantly infant and toddler child care program model.

Recommendation 1.3: Increase partnerships between Local Education Agencies and early care and education programs to repurpose school district facility space for use by infant/toddler child care programs.

Recommendation 1.4: Reassess California Community Care Licensing square footage regulations for licensed infant/toddler early care and education centers.

Recommendation 1.5: Require new housing development and commercial developers to either pay a fee that supports the creation of new infant and toddler child care facilities or include infant and toddler early care and education facility space in new development that can be leased at a reduced rate.

Priority Area 2: Access to Affordable Care



Issue: Infant and toddler child care is difficult to locate and expensive for families.

Recommendation 2.1: Launch a County-wide public awareness campaign to promote subsidized infant/toddler early care and education options for low-income families in under-resourced communities including a centralized family friendly website with a universal child care subsidy enrollment application.

Recommendation 2.2: Strengthen the capacity of key Los Angeles County departments and community staff who support parents of infants/toddlers on how to connect families to early care and education resources.

Recommendation 2.3: Explore investment in a locally funded infant/toddler child care voucher program for low income to moderate income families in Los Angeles County.

Recommendation 2.4: Revise regulations to ensure children of the infant/toddler early care and education workforce are categorically eligible for subsidized child care regardless of their household income.

Priority Area 3: Program Operations



Issue: The costs to operate an infant/toddler early care and education program are often greater than the revenue programs generate.

Recommendation 3.1: Invest in business training for family child care homes to strengthen operational practices.

Recommendation 3.2: Establish County and community-based partnerships that connect family child care homes and Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers serving infants and toddlers to resources that reduce operational costs.

Recommendation 3.3: Align infant/toddler age range definitions and ratios across General Child Care, Alternative Payment Programs, and California Community Care Licensing to increase the ability for early care and education programs to blend funding.

Priority Area #5: Workforce Pathways and Qualifications



Issue: Early educators encounter barriers to accessing training and professional development to strengthen their skills, knowledge, and qualifications.

Recommendation 5.1: Establish a centralized Los Angeles County Center of Excellence for early care and education employers and workforce to support the infant/toddler child care system.

Recommendation 5.2: Establish a Los Angeles County Family, Friend, and Neighbor Support Network to provide access to resources, learning opportunities, individualized support, home visitation opportunities, and social connections with other child care providers.

Recommendation 5.3: Expand partnerships between institutions of higher education and infant/toddler ECE programs for apprenticeships, as well as unit-bearing professional development for early educators caring for infants and toddlers.

Recommendation 5.4: Revise California Child Development Associate Teacher and Teacher Permits to require successful completion of at least one infant and toddler development college course.

Priority Area 4: Workforce compensation



Issue: Early educators – a workforce disproportionately comprised of women of color – earn low wages and receive few benefits.

Recommendation 4.1: Establish the state's subsidy reimbursement rates for licensed early care and education providers serving infants and toddlers at 100 percent of the true cost of care which includes compensation at a living wage with benefits.

Recommendation 4.2: Revise Family, Friend, and Neighbor subsidy reimbursement rates to a living wage that includes compensation that is no less than the Los Angeles County's hourly minimum wage.

Recommendation 4.3: Expand guaranteed basic income programs for Family, Friend, and Neighbor child care providers who support infants and toddlers.

Recommendation 4.4: Explore the feasibility of a local ongoing revenue source to subsidize compensation for infant/toddler early care and education providers.

If you have any questions or would like further information please contact OAECE at <https://childcare.lacounty.gov>.

