

Impact of High-Quality Early Care and Education on Child Health and Well-Being

Public Health and Policy Context

Positive early childhood experiences, particularly those occurring in the [first five years of life](#), help children grow into healthy [adults](#) by impacting [long-term](#) social, cognitive, emotional and physical development. In the United States, most young [children](#) are cared for outside of the home in [early care and education](#) (ECE) programs, including preschool, Head Start, and family child care homes. [ECE programs](#) and staff can play influential roles in fostering the healthy development of young children. In the U.S. in 2019, nearly 12.6 million [children](#) not yet in kindergarten received care in ECE programs each week.

ECE programs vary greatly by type, curriculum and quality, and for many families, high-quality ECE programs can be [cost prohibitive](#). The impact of ECE programs on [child outcomes](#) depends on their curriculum focus and the services they provide (e.g., health care services, nutritious meals). ECE programs can affect a child's physical health, [developmental](#) and [social-emotional](#) health, and other social outcomes.

Federal and [state](#) policies aim to provide families with access to high-quality ECE programs. Key federal programs and policies that promote access to ECE include:

- Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG): [CCDBG](#) provides funding to support grants to state, territorial and tribal agencies to subsidize child care expenses and improve the quality and supply of



