

PLAN FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

All Maine Children Enter Kindergarten Prepared to Succeed

The Children's Cabinet will implement key strategies to promote the healthy development of all young children in Maine and ensure that all children grow up in healthy, safe and supportive environments. The Cabinet will strive to engage the voice of parents in a culturally and linguistically accessible way as we further develop and implement our strategies.

Areas of Focus

Children's Cabinet will implement strategies that will:

1. Increase access to affordable early care & education, preventive and early intervention services for young children and their families.
2. Raise the quality of our early care and education system and support families to access quality programming.
3. Recruit, prepare and retain a diverse early childhood workforce.

- Provide min-grants to child care programs to improve quality and rating on the QRIS.
- Expand professional learning opportunities that support inclusive and trauma informed practices in early care and education (ECE) settings.
- Build the infrastructure for an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS).

Intermediate strategies: 2020 – 2023

- Streamline, simplify and raise awareness about the eligibility process for the Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP).
- Implement the early childhood mental health consultation pilot sites to help parents and educators support the social and emotional development of young children, particularly children with special needs.
- Revise the QRIS system to be a five-star system to bring all licensed child care programs into the state's quality rating system.
- Support families to navigate Child Find, Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment in MaineCare, and Child Development Services to ensure children receive necessary health and intervention services.
- Ensure that substance use screening, treatment and support for recovery is available for pregnant mothers through the child's infancy.
- Offer a professional learning series on early childhood education to school administrators, particularly for those with ECE programs.

Children's Cabinet Strategies

Short term strategies: 2020 - 2021

- Provide start-up mini-grants to existing or new child care programs to create new slots, particularly in rural areas.
- Offer weekly stipends of \$100 to infant caregivers receiving CCSP to recognize the high cost of providing infant care.
- Increase the quality bump to child care programs on the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) serving infants and toddlers.
- Provide scholarships to help students with low and moderate income attain associates and bachelor's degrees in early childhood education.

Long-term strategies: 2020 – 2025

- Expand public pre-K for 4 year olds and fund start-up grants to incentivize partnerships between schools, Head Start and child care programs.
- Expand the early childhood mental health consultation program statewide.
- Support opportunities and strategies for increasing wages for early childhood educators.
- Increase access to, expand and strengthen early childhood programming at Career and Technical schools.
- Ensure no wrong door for families to access services, such as SNAP, MaineCare and WIC, and establish a centralized entity around developmental screening and care coordination for early intervention services.
- Ensure access to and utilization of high-quality preventive services for young children and their families.
- Increase professional development and coaching opportunities for early educators in center-based and family child care programs.
- Establish an Early Childhood Integrated Data System to track progress on early childhood goals and to analyze impact of policy decisions.

