





The **Access** category is composed of three indicators including the size of the child care gap, percentage of eligible children served by public early learning programs, and the wages of early educators (a factor deciding availability of staff).





Access			
	Emerging	The state’s efforts to reduce the child care gap, increase access to public programs for eligible families, and improve wages and benefits for early educators (to strengthen this workforce) are in a planning/early phase.	1
	Evolving	The state’s efforts to reduce the child care gap, increase access to public programs for eligible families, and/or improve wages and benefits for early educators are gaining traction.	2
	Expanding	The state’s efforts to reduce the child care gap, increase access to public programs for eligible families, and improve wages and benefits for early educators are consistently broadening their reach.	3
	Excelling	The state’s efforts to reduce the child care gap, increase access to public programs for eligible families, and improve wages and benefits for early educators are approaching scale and demonstrate positive outcomes for children, families, and the state economy.	4

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

To sustainably increase access to child care, policymakers may consider the following strategies:

- Provide incentives to child care providers that will enable them to increase capacity in child care centers and Family Child Care homes.
- Supplement federal funding streams supporting Head Start and Early Head Start to increase the reach of these programs among eligible children.
- Build partnerships with philanthropic and business entities to develop braided funding to augment early educators’ salaries and provide benefits to stanch attrition.

Affordability is measured by three indicators including, price of center-based infant care as a percent of median income of a single-income household, price of center-based infant care as a percent of median income of a two-income household, and the loss to the economy due to the child care deficit.

Affordability			
	Emerging	The state's efforts to make child care affordable for single-income and two-income families and reduce losses to the state economy (because of unaffordable care) are in a planning/early phase.	1
	Evolving	The state's efforts to make care affordable for single-income and two-income families and/or reduce losses to the state economy are gaining traction.	2
	Expanding	The state's efforts to make care affordable for single-income and two-income families and reduce losses to the state economy are consistently broadening their reach.	3
	Excelling	The state's efforts to make care affordable for single-income and two-income families and reduce losses to the state economy are at scale and demonstrate positive outcomes for children, families, and the state economy.	4





POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

To reduce the burden of child care expenses on working families' budgets, policymakers may consider the following strategies:

- Develop cost models at the state and provider levels to reflect the true cost of care to help identify and develop strategies to make child care more affordable.
- With business and philanthropic partners, adopt and scale cost-sharing programs for child care between the state, employers, and working parents.
- Identify existing policies and licensing requirements that serve as cost burdens to providers and FCHs and determine if these requirements are necessary or can be offset by other funding sources rather than impacting the cost of care to families.



Quality is measured by 10 indicators including: percentage of children served by Early Intervention, number of Early Intervention policy levers, early childhood educators to child ratios for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, minimum credentials for directors, teachers, and assistant teachers, and professional development hours for directors and staff.





Quality			
	Emerging	The state’s efforts to improve quality through increasing access to Early Intervention, adopting more Early Intervention policy levers, reducing staff to child ratios, and establishing minimum credentials for early educators are in a planning/early phase.	1
	Evolving	The state’s efforts to improve quality through increasing access to Early Intervention, adopting more Early Intervention policy levers, reducing staff to child ratios, and establishing minimum credentials for early educators are gaining traction.	2
	Expanding	The state’s efforts to improve quality through increasing access to Early Intervention, adopting more Early Intervention policy levers, reducing staff to child ratios, and establishing minimum credentials for early educators are consistently broadening their reach.	3
	Excelling	The state’s efforts to improve quality through increasing access to Early Intervention, adopting multiple Early Intervention policy levers, reducing staff to child ratios, and exceeding minimum credentials for early educators are at scale and demonstrate positive outcomes for children, families, and the state economy.	4

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

To ensure that young children in the state experience optimal conditions for healthy development and learning, policymakers may consider the following strategies:

- Expand the reach of Early Intervention, a proven approach to address developmental delays and disabilities, for eligible children and support early learning and development for all children.
- Adopt standards-based staff-to-child ratios and class sizes to ensure children are safe and have access to age-appropriate interaction and education.
- Implement career lattice and credentialing programs to further develop the quality and capacity of the early education workforce.

Funding is measured by four indicators including, percentage of eligible children served by the Child Care Development Block Grant, Early Head Start, Head Start, and state-funded public preschool.

Funding			
	Emerging	Public programs like child care assistance, Early Head Start, Head Start, and/or public preschool serve ≤25 percent of eligible families.	1
	Evolving	Public programs like child care assistance, Early Head Start, Head Start, and/or public preschool serve 26-50 percent of eligible families.	2
	Expanding	Public programs like child care assistance, Early Head Start, Head Start, and public preschool serve 51-75 percent of eligible families.	3
	Excelling	Public programs like child care assistance, Early Head Start, Head Start, and public preschool serve 76-100 percent of eligible families.	4

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

To expand on promising public programs so that they can reach all eligible children, policymakers may consider the following strategies:

- Utilize cost models and asset mapping strategies to assess which funding streams could be used more effectively and/or combined to provide increased funding to critical public programs like Head Start and Pre-K.
- Draw on successful pilots in other states to create opportunities for braided funding and mixed-delivery models in child care and early learning.
- Develop greater coordination among public agencies governing child care and early learning to reduce inefficiencies and promote greater systemic coherence.

Growth and Impact in Early Learning: State Snapshots

Table 1 summarizes scores for each state in the four categories (and 20 indicators). Overall, the distribution points to the need for strategic investments in the early learning sector.

Critical observations included:

- State scores ranged from 26-48, out of a maximum of 80 points.
- On the four-point scale, there were no states at the Emerging (1) or Excelling (4) levels.
- Ten states were at the Expanding (3) level, and 41 states at the Evolving (2) level.
- The median state is at 37 points, or at the Evolving (2) level; 41 states are at the Evolving (2) level with scores ranging from 26-40 points.