

**The Department of Health and Human Services and the Department
of Education Joint Interdepartmental Review of All Early Learning
Programs for Children Less Than 6 Years of Age**



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Introduction

Congress required the Secretaries of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education (ED), in consultation with all federal agencies, to identify “all early learning and care programs for children less than six years of age,”¹ provide specific recommendations for eliminating overlap and fragmentation among federal early learning and care programs, and make recommendations for streamlining all such programs.² The Secretaries appreciate the opportunity to present an overview and analysis of the primary federal early learning programs and to offer recommendations on how to address the needs of children and families. This report also discusses the Administration’s efforts to maximize our current and future investments to increase the quality of and access to early learning for children from birth to kindergarten and how HHS and ED (the Departments) are fostering coordination and collaboration at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure a more effective, efficient, and high-quality system of early learning.

Over time, the Federal Government has supported early learning programs to prepare children for school and life success and support working parents. Federal involvement in early learning is long-standing, deep-rooted, and varied – from the Lanham Act, which provided child care that allowed women to work during World War II, to the creation of Head Start in the 1960s to help the nation’s most vulnerable children and families improve their odds for school success. The Child Care and Development Block Grant, first authorized in the 1990s, helps low-income families work, while their children learn, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides critical early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and special education and related services to preschool children with disabilities. Multiple Congresses and Administrations have supported investments in these programs; however, none have been of sufficient size or scope to meet the diverse needs of children and families.

¹ We use the term “early learning” throughout the report to refer to all programs that provide early care, education, and development for children birth to age six.

² Congress included this Congressional directive in the bipartisan Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 (S. 1086; P.L. 113-186) and the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2014 (Explanatory Statement regarding House Amendment to the Senate Amendment on H.R. 83).

America's families have diverse needs, particularly in their children's early years. Federal programs with a focus on early childhood development and learning share a common goal of serving children, but have some differences that allow states, communities and providers to meet the diverse needs of families and children. In developing this report, HHS and ED reviewed the 2012 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report,³ a 2015 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report on early learning programs titled *Early Childhood Care and Education: Background and Funding*,⁴ and conducted our own analysis. While each used different methodologies, one common theme is that there is only a handful of programs that represent the core federal investments in early learning. As a result, we think the most effective strategies for improving the delivery of early learning services, should focus on eight core programs: Child Care and Development Fund;⁵ Head Start; Early Head Start; Preschool Development Grants; Department of Defense Child Development Program; Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); Part B, section 619 of the IDEA; and Family and Child Education (FACE).

As Congress noted in its request for this report, the GAO identified federal programs that provide or may support related services to children under age six, as well as five tax provisions that subsidize private expenditures in this area, whether the option of providing early childhood services to children under six actually resulted in states and local entities providing services. The GAO examined the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) to identify programs that: (1) fund or support early education or child care services; (2) are provided to children under age five; and (3) deliver services in an educational or child care setting. GAO determined 12 programs had an explicit purpose of delivering early learning services. Per GAO's evaluation, most of them obligated less than \$500 million each in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012. Head Start was the largest and obligated approximately \$8 billion in FY 2012. Of the 12 programs GAO identified, only half provided early learning or child care services exclusively for children under

³ 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue, GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2012).

⁴ Early Care and Education: Background and Funding, Lynch, K.E. and McCallion, G., Congressional Research Service (Washington, DC: June 23, 2015).

⁵ The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is authorized by the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act and Section 418 of the Social Security Act. CCDF is the combination of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) discretionary funding and mandatory funds. FY2013 numbers are from:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/fy-2013-ccdf-data-tables-final>

age five. In the list of programs GAO determined as explicit early learning programs, two were funded only one time, and the Child Care and Development Fund program was counted as two programs because it receives both mandatory and discretionary funds. The 2015 CRS report identified a more limited list of programs and tax provisions targeted to early learning and care, as well as related programs that allow early learning as a permissible use of funds. As both GAO and CRS have noted, while some programs allow spending on early learning, there is no requirement that funds in such programs be spent on early learning, and, given the multiple demands on these funds, no assurance that grantees will use funds for early learning. In this report, we discuss the federal programs identified by GAO, including the eight programs we identified with the primary purpose of promoting early learning for children from birth to age six. These early learning programs receive far less funding than is needed to serve all or even a fraction of eligible children or provide the level of resources needed to support and sustain high-quality services.

I. HIGH-QUALITY, AFFORDABLE EARLY LEARNING REDUCES THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP AND HELPS PARENTS WORK

Child development researchers, neuroscientists, and economists agree that high-quality early learning programs are a compelling investment for the nation's economic and educational success. Research demonstrates that, in particular, low-income children benefit from attending high-quality, well-resourced early learning programs prior to entering kindergarten.⁶ Notable economists, including the President's Council on Economic Advisors and a Nobel Laureate, find the expansion of access to high-quality early learning programs to be among the smartest investments that we can make as a nation for our economic and social well-being.^{7,8} A strong continuum of federal support for children's early learning and development can provide an

⁶ Gormley Jr., William T., Gayer, T., Phillips, D. and Dawson, B. (2005), The Effects of Universal Pre-K on Cognitive Development. *Developmental Psychology*, 41: 872-884.; Weiland, C., and Yoshikawa, H. (2013), Impacts of a prekindergarten program on children's mathematics, language, literacy, executive function, and emotional skills. *Child Development*, 84: 2112-2130; Yoshikawa et al. (2013) Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education. The Society for Research in Child Development and The Foundation for Child Development.

⁷ The Council of Economic Advisors. (2014), "The Economics of Early Childhood Investments". The White House Office of the Council of Economic Advisors, Washington, DC.

⁸ Heckman, J. J., Moon, S. H., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P. A., & Yavitz, A. (2010), The Rate of Return to the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1-2), 114-128; Barnett, W. Steven, and Leonard N. Masse. 2007, "Comparative Benefit-Cost Analysis of the Abecedarian Program and its Policy Implications." *Economics of Education Review* 26, no. 1: 113-125.

opportunity for all children to grow up to be healthy, successful in school, and productive, thriving members of our society.

Starting Early Benefits Children and Maximizes Federal Investments

This year, nearly 4 million children will be born in the United States,⁹ and according to the 2014 Current Population Survey Estimate, 23.81 percent of children under five are living in poverty. Neuroscientists have shown that the brain's most rapid growth and architecture for learning and social skills occur in the first five years of life. These years represent a critically important window of opportunity to develop a child's full potential and shape key academic, social, and cognitive skills that determine a child's success in school. Too many children, however, are born into families without enough resources to secure high-quality early learning opportunities. Additionally, some children are born with medical conditions, disabilities, or developmental delays that require specialized attention and intervention early in order to maximize their potential. The gap in development between low-income and more economically advantaged children is detectable as early as nine months of age, and by kindergarten entry there is a full standard deviation gap between these children's early literacy and math skills.¹⁰ Together, these findings point to the importance of expanding access to a continuum of high quality early learning experiences for our most vulnerable children, in order to bridge opportunity gaps and prevent achievement gaps before they form.

Affordable, Quality Early Learning Programs Remain a Significant Need for Poor and Low-Income Working Families

In addition to helping prepare children for success in school, early learning programs make it possible for parents and caregivers to remain employed. Today, children increasingly need financial support from both parents, whether or not they live in the same household.¹¹ In 2014, among families with children under age six, both parents were employed in 59 percent of

⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, FastStat Births and Natality.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/births.htm>.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, *The Early Achievement and Development Gap*. March, 2014.

¹¹ Nine Facts About American Families and Work,-. The Council of Economic Advisors. June 2014
https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nine_facts_about_family_and_work_real_final.pdf

married-parent households, and 62 percent of single mothers were employed.¹² Given these findings, many infants, toddlers, and preschoolers need high-quality early care and learning programs, both to ensure their safety and security while their parents work, and to help them develop strong social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Approximately half of infants and toddlers in 2012 were in some form of non-parental care settings, and this proportion increases with age.¹³

For millions of parents, affordable early learning programs are critical to maintaining a stable job. Low-income single mothers are more likely to have a job, and to work full-time, when they have child care subsidies.¹⁴ Low-income mothers with preschool-age children are more likely to work nonstandard hours, due at least in part to the high cost of non-parental child care.¹⁵

However, early learning programs, particularly high-quality programs, are expensive and low-income families often cannot afford them without subsidies. Even with these programs there are many children that do not have access to the early learning programs they need to succeed.¹⁶ Studies show that the cost of child care, particularly high-quality child care, accounts for an enormous proportion of family income that families must balance with other basic needs, such as housing and food. In 2011, families in poverty spent on average more than 30 percent of their income on child care.¹⁷ The annual average cost of full-time, center-based infant child care – not taking into account the cost of quality – is more than the cost of public college tuition and fees in most states, ranging from \$4,822 per year in Mississippi to \$17,062 per year in

¹² Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015). Retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.t04.htm>

¹³ <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013029rev.pdf>.

¹⁴ Coley, R.L., McPherran Lombardi, C. (2012). Does Maternal Employment Following Childbirth Support or Inhibit Low-Income Children's Long-Term Development? *Child Development* 84(1); Johnson, A.D., Ryan, R.M., and Brooks-Gunn, J. (2012) Child-Care Subsidies: Do They Impact the Quality of Care Children Experience? *Child Development*. 83 (4).

¹⁵ Enchaetegui, Maria. (2013). "Nonstandard Work Schedules and the Well-Being of Low-Income Families." Urban Institute, Washington, DC.

¹⁶ Characteristics of Center-based Early Care and Education Programs: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE). OPRE Report #2014-73a, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/characteristics_of_cb_ee_programs_111014.pdf

¹⁷ Laughlin, L. (2013). Who's minding the kids? Child care arrangements: Spring 2011 (Current Population Reports, P 70-135). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Massachusetts.¹⁸ The cost of child care fees for two children exceeds annual median rent payments in every state, and exceeds mortgage costs for homeowners in 24 states and the District of Columbia.¹⁹ Child care subsidies can help defray these high costs of child care, but the average subsidy – just more than \$5,000 a year per child under age six - is far less than the cost of a quality program. Due to funding limitations, only one in six eligible children receives a child care subsidy. Head Start serves fewer than half of the income eligible children. While Head Start helps fill in some of that gap, millions of eligible low-income children who need help to afford high quality early learning programs do not receive any federal assistance. Simply put - high quality early learning experiences are out of reach for too many working families, which not only harms their work stability, but also puts their children at a disadvantage, well before the first day of kindergarten, that is difficult to recover from in the school years.

Children in Poor and Low-Income Families Can Benefit the Most from High-Quality Early Learning, but Access is Out of Reach for Too Many

A significant percentage of children in the United States are living in poor or low-income families, and live under conditions associated with economic hardship. For example:

- Roughly one-in-five children under age six are living in poor households.²⁰ Almost half of children under age six live in low-income (at or below 200 percent of poverty) households.²¹
- In the 2013-2014 school year, an estimated 1.4 million children were homeless, 39 percent of whom were between the ages of one and five.²² Among families with children under age six, the risk for homelessness is highest; children under age one are the most likely to experience homelessness.²³

¹⁸ Child Care Aware of America. (2015). Parents and the high cost of child care.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ DeNavas-Walt, Carmen and Bernadette D. Proctor, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-249, Income and Poverty in the United States: 2013, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2014.

²¹ Data derived from American Fact Finder, table B17024: factfinder2.census.gov/

²² Child Trends Databank. (2015). *Homeless children and youth*. Available at: <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=homeless-children-and-youth>

²³ Culhane, D.P., & Metraux, S. (1999). One-year rates of public shelter utilization by race/ethnicity, age, sex and poverty status for New York City (1990 and 1995) and Philadelphia (1995). *Population Research and Policy Review*, 18, 219-236.

- In 2013, about 21 percent of children lived in food-insecure households.²⁴

While high quality early education is beneficial for all children, it benefits low-income families and at-risk children even more than other groups. The gaps in access to early learning services exacerbate the uneven foundation on which children from poor and low-income families will build their knowledge and skills as they enter kindergarten, which leads to more costly “catch up” interventions later in school. It also means poor and low-income families struggle to maintain employment and enrollment in job training programs and ensure that their children are cared for. Investments in federal early learning programs have helped millions of children, but an even greater percentage of eligible children under age six still do not have access, and as such experience an unfair opportunity gap before their first day of kindergarten, due to current funding levels. For example:

- There were 14.2 million children potentially eligible for assistance under the Child Care and Development Block Grant in the average month in 2012.²⁵ The average number of children receiving federal child care assistance through CCDF each month in 2012 was only 10 percent of those eligible, or 1.5 million.^{26,27}
- Only four percent of income-eligible infants and toddlers are receiving Early Head Start services and only 40 percent of income eligible preschool-aged children are enrolled in Head Start.²⁸

²⁴ Reference from indicator ECON3: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2015*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

²⁵ Estimates of Child Care Eligibility and Receipt for Fiscal Year 2012. November 18, 2015. U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/pdf-report/estimates-child-care-eligibility-and-receipt-fiscal-year-2012>

²⁶ The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is authorized by the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act and Section 418 of the Social Security Act. CCDF is the combination of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) discretionary funding and mandatory funds. FY2013 numbers are from: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/fy-2013-ccdf-data-tables-final>

²⁷ Child Care and Development Fund Statistics, available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/ccdf-statistics>

²⁸ The estimates of income eligible children served include those at or below 100 percent of the poverty line according to 2010 Current Population Survey. These estimates do not factor in other eligibility criterion, including children in foster care or experiencing homelessness, as well as children who may be eligible under the Head Start Act's authority to serve up to 10 percent of children above the percent line and an additional 35 percent of children whose families earn 100 to 130 percent of the federal poverty line.

To Succeed in School and Life, Children’s Health, Nutrition, and Individualized Needs Must Be Addressed

Young children’s cognitive and academic achievements do not develop in isolation; they depend on positive health (including mental health or social-emotional and behavioral health) and good physical development. Early learning programs promote children’s progress across each of these critical areas through comprehensive services. For example, the Head Start Act requires programs to provide comprehensive services to children and families. Programs provide services in the areas of health, oral health, mental health, and nutrition, as well as individualized services for children with disabilities. Specifically, children in Head Start must receive a screening within 45 days of enrollment to identify their unique medical, dental, mental health and developmental needs. Programs connect families with any needed follow-up services, provided either directly or through coordination with a community provider. In addition, Head Start programs provide children with regular nutritious meals, a critical component of physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development and learning. Such services are important to the overall well-being and development of the child and family and ensure that children receive the individualized supports they need. Unfortunately, many other early learning programs, including some child care programs and preschool programs, do not have the resources they need to provide a similar set of comprehensive services to the young children they serve, many of whom are at similar income levels and face similar challenges as the children and families served in Head Start.

Children with or at risk for developmental delays and disabilities, or special health care needs, often require individualized services and supports to participate fully in early learning programs, meet developmental and learning milestones, and be ready for school. Studies show that one in four children ages birth through five is at moderate or high risk for developmental, behavioral, or social delays.²⁹ Children in poverty in particular are at a greater risk for developmental delays. Children who have developmental delays are at greater risk for later emotional and behavioral problems and poor educational achievement. In addition,

²⁹ National Survey of Children’s Health, 2011-12. With funding and direction from MCHB, these surveys were conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics.

approximately one in seven children has a special health care need.³⁰ Providing services as early as possible through federal early learning programs such as Early Head Start, Head Start, Part C of the IDEA and Part B, section 619 of the IDEA can help mitigate risks, increase children's rate of developmental growth, and support children in achieving positive developmental and learning outcomes.

Unfortunately, not all children with disabilities and delays have access to the critical services and supports they need to thrive, due to various barriers. For example, limited federal funding for IDEA Part C services has resulted in some states narrowing or restricting the eligibility criteria for services, making some children, who would otherwise benefit from services, ineligible. Although Part C of the IDEA allows each state to define the eligibility criteria for infants and toddlers with disabilities in the state, the differences in state definitions for services means that some infants and toddlers would be eligible for and receive services in one state, but would not be eligible to receive services in another state. While nationally, 2.8 percent of all infants and toddlers received IDEA Part C services in 2013, this ranged from 1.2 percent to 7.9 percent across states which could be due, in part, to the differences in eligibility definitions.³¹ Reaching all young children early who could benefit from the services under Part C and Part B, section 619 of the IDEA could help reduce the need for more costly services in school and ensure that children and families have access to the supports and services they need as early as possible.

Another important comprehensive service in early learning is access to nutritious snacks and meals. Good nutrition is a critical component of a child's physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development and learning whether at home or in an early learning program.³² The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), administered by the Department of Agriculture, reimburses child care, Head Start, and after-school providers to ensure that children have nutritious snacks and meals during the day and that providers receive training and nutrition education. CACFP complements early learning and care services, providing nutrition and

³⁰ Child Trends. (2015). <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=children-with-special-health-care-needs>

³¹ 2013 IDEA Part C Child Count. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/index.html>

³² The Link between Nutrition and Cognitive Development in Children. Tufts Univ., Medford, MA. Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy. (2004)

nutrition education to improve health and wellness for more than 3.56 million children receiving child care each day.

II. EIGHT FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOCUS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN UNDER AGE SIX AND EACH IS UNDER-RESOURCED

Congress required that the Departments review the GAO 2012 report and this section reports on that analysis as well as federal efforts on early childhood education. The GAO report identified 45 federal programs and five tax provisions in the CFDA that have the potential to be used for early learning regardless of whether their primary purpose is early learning, whether and to what extent they are actually used to fund early learning in states and local communities, or what proportion of program funding is expended for early learning. In its report, GAO acknowledged that “the majority of the 45 programs GAO identified do not have the explicit purpose of delivering early learning or child care services, but rather permit use of funds for this purpose or provide supportive services to facilitate such care.”³³ As a result, GAO’s list of identified programs includes those for which early learning is optional and often a rarely used funding source.

In its report, GAO did not include the Department of Defense Child Development Program – one of the primary programs that the Departments identify as providing early learning and care services. However, the 2012 GAO report also identified programs that are not currently funded or for which the Administration has not requested funding for new grants (listed in Appendix A) for several years as they were designed for a specific purpose that has been met, such as the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), and the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF). The GAO report also includes five tax provisions, none of which exclusively benefit families with children under age six.

The Departments also analyzed a 2015 CRS report, which conducted an independent review of federal programs that are either targeted or related to early childhood education or no

³³ 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue, GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2012) at page 195.

longer funded. While GAO and CRS used different methodologies in their respective reviews, each determined that there are only a few programs with the primary purpose of supporting early learning for children under age six.

Our analysis finds that there are eight federal programs with a primary purpose of providing early learning for young children including supports for their families, each serving a unique target population or meeting a particular service need: Child Care and Development Fund; Head Start; Early Head Start; Preschool Development Grants; Department of Defense Child Development Program; Part C of IDEA; Part B, section 619 of the IDEA; and FACE.³⁴ As acknowledged by GAO and CRS, other federal programs may allow expenditure on early learning and care at the state or local level, but the use of funds for this purpose is not the primary focus and is often optional. For example, at ED, less than three percent of students supported by Title I, Part A funds are in preschool, and approximately one percent of children ages three through eight are supported from Indian Education - Grants to Local Educational Agencies funds.

Each of the eight programs, described in detail below, provide needed services for children and families, and they often work together to help meet the diverse needs of children, providing a continuum of services from birth through age five. For example, programs such as Early Head Start and IDEA Part C serve children birth to age three, whereas Head Start, Preschool Development Grants, and IDEA Part B section 619 serve preschool-aged children. Also, while some federal early learning and care programs serve a similar age span, they have different purposes and offer different services, such as child care and interventions for children with disabilities. Furthermore, programs such as FACE and the Department of Defense Child

³⁴ The Race To The Top – Early Learning Challenge grant program is jointly administered by the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The 20 states that were awarded grants must address five key areas: (1) successful state systems built on broad-based stakeholder participation and effective governance structures. (2) high-quality accountable programs based on a common set of standards aligning Head Start, CCDF, IDEA, Title I of the ESEA, state-funded preschools, and similar programs to create a unified statewide system of early learning and development; (3) promoting children’s early learning and development outcomes through state early learning guidelines in all domains and comprehensive assessment systems for improvement of program quality; (4) high-professional development, career advancement opportunities, differentiated compensation, and incentives to improve knowledge, skills, and abilities of the early childhood workforce to promote the learning and development of young children; and (5) kindergarten entry assessments and data systems to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. We did not include the Early Learning Challenge in our list of primary purpose early care and learning because the grants are coming to an end.

Development Program address the needs of distinct populations – Native American families and children of military parents, respectively.

- The **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)** is a formula-based grant program for states, territories, and tribes dedicated to providing access to child care services for low-income families so they can work, attend school, or enroll in training to improve the well-being of their families. At the same time, it promotes the healthy development and school success of our nation’s low- and moderate-income children by providing them with higher-quality early learning and afterschool experiences. CCDF is governed by the recent bipartisan reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), and is comprised of discretionary funding for the CCDBG, as well as the Child Care Entitlement which includes “mandatory funds” and requires a state match and maintenance of effort.³⁵ In FY 2014, 1.4 million children from over 850,000 low-income families received child care assistance in an average month through CCDF (a decline from the 1.8 million children receiving assistance in an average month in 2001). Of the children served, roughly two-thirds were children under age six, and approximately one-third were school-aged children up to age 13. The 2014 reauthorization of CCDBG coupled the goal of child care as a work support with the importance of quality child care to prepare children for success in school and life. CCDF funds allow eligible families to choose their child care provider. A required set-aside of the grant is used for training, monitoring, and other collaborative quality improvement efforts across a state’s early childhood education system.

Current funding levels allow only 15 percent of federally-eligible children to receive assistance through CCDF and related federal programs.³⁶ Some states maintain waiting lists for assistance, which can be in the tens of thousands of eligible children in a single state. Other states use their option to restrict eligibility of families well below the federal income ceiling in order to limit the number of families who can even apply for assistance.

³⁵ The 2012 GAO report treats this as two programs.

³⁶ This estimate is calculated by comparing the average monthly number of children receiving child care subsidies from all federal sources (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Child Care and Development Fund, and Social Services Block Grant) to an estimate of the average monthly number of children eligible for child care subsidies based on federal eligibility rules.

There have been small discretionary increases but no mandatory funding increase since 2006.

- **Head Start** promotes the school readiness of young children from low-income families through federal grants to agencies in local communities. Head Start and Early Head Start programs support the cognitive, language, mental, physical, social, and emotional development of low-income children from birth to age five. In addition to education services, programs provide children and their families with health, nutrition, social, and other services. Head Start services are respectful of each child and family's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background and heritage. The bipartisan reauthorization of Head Start in 2007 improved standards for quality and accountability. Head Start is central to this Administration's efforts to ensure all low-income children have access to high-quality early learning and care to close the achievement gap before kindergarten. In FY 2015, Head Start programs, including American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs, served a total of approximately 1,100,000 children ages birth to five and pregnant women and their families.³⁷ Head Start serves only 40 percent of the eligible preschool-aged children.³⁸
- **Early Head Start**, authorized by Congress in 1994, provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income infants and toddlers and their families, and pregnant women and their families. All Early Head Start programs provide a full day, full year program option to best meet the needs of families. In FY 2014, Early Head Start programs served 116,726 children and their families, which is only four percent of eligible infants and toddlers.³⁹ Beginning in FY

³⁷ <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/factsheets/2015-hs-program-factsheet.html>

³⁸ According to 2010 Current Population Survey, the estimates of income eligible children served include those whose families have incomes at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty line. These estimates do not factor in other eligibility criterion, including children in foster care or experiencing homelessness, as well as children who may be eligible under the Head Start Act's authority to serve up to 10 percent of children above the percent line and an additional 35 percent of children whose families earn 100 to 130 percent of the federal poverty line.

³⁹ According to 2010 Current Population Survey, the estimates of income eligible children served include those whose families have incomes at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty line. These estimates do not factor in other eligibility criterion, including children in foster care or experiencing homelessness, as well as children who may be eligible under the Head Start Act's authority to serve up to 10 percent of children above the percent line and an additional 35 percent of children whose families earn 100 to 130 percent of the federal poverty line.

2014, Congress and the Administration allocated additional funding for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships to serve more Early Head Start eligible children and raise the quality of child care providers who serve them. Through this initiative, more infants and toddlers will have access to the comprehensive services and performance standards of Early Head Start.

- **Preschool Development Grants (PDG)** support states in providing high-quality preschool for four-year-olds from families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line. The program is designed to develop and build upon existing state preschool program structures and to expand access. The competitive grant program is jointly administered by the Departments and divided into two targeted groups of grantees: development grants to support states with either small or no state preschool programs, and expansion grants to support states that have robust state preschool programs or that have been awarded an RTT-ELC grant. In 2014, this grant made awards to 18 States. The grant program has led to 28,000 more children being served in new high-quality preschool classrooms or classrooms improved by supporting a well-qualified and compensated teacher, becoming full-day, reducing class size or child-teacher ratios, providing evidence-based professional development, and providing comprehensive services in 230 high-need communities in the 2015-16 school year, the first year of funding. This fall, funding from the grant's second year is enabling an estimated additional 35,000 four-year-olds from low-income families to get the strong start they need for success in school and in life. Over the course of the four years of the grant, an estimated 150,000 additional children will receive access to high-quality preschool.⁴⁰
- The **Department of Defense Child Development Program (DoD CDP)**⁴¹ serves military families and eligible Defense civilians as a way to support military service members and to help retain the military workforce. The DoD CDP (for children from birth through 12 years old) supports DoD's goals of mission readiness, family readiness, retention, and morale of the total force during peacetime, overseas contingency

⁴⁰ Preschool Development Grants Fact Sheet. U.S. Department of Education. 2014, available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/pdgfactsheet81115.pdf> .

⁴¹ <https://militarychildcare.cnic.navy.mil/mcc-consumer/home/aboutourprogramhome.action>

operations, periods of force structure change, relocation of military units, base realignment and closure, and other emergency situations (e.g., natural disasters and epidemics). The DoD CDP uses a sliding scale payment schedule for parents that helps subsidize the costs of care for children in Child Development Centers, Family Child Care Homes, and School-Aged Care programs on installations and in the community. All programs must meet the DoD standards of quality and monitoring requirements. Approximately 200,000 children are being served daily under the DoD CDP, 136,000 of whom are children birth to five years old, and 53 percent of the program's birth to five year old population are under four⁴².

- **IDEA Part C, the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities**, provides formula grants to assist states to implement a comprehensive, coordinated, statewide system that provides early intervention services to children with disabilities or at risk for disability from birth through age two and their families. Services are to be delivered in the child's natural environment, such as a home or child care setting, to the maximum extent appropriate, based on the child's outcomes that are identified by the Individualized Family Service Plan team. IDEA requires that states have a child find system in place to ensure that all infants and toddlers with disabilities who are eligible for services are identified, located and evaluated. States can establish their own definitions for "developmental delay" and determine whether or not they will also serve children at risk for a developmental delay. In 2013, 339,071 or 2.8 percent of all infants and toddlers nationally received IDEA services, though this ranged from 1.2 percent to 7.9 percent across states.⁴³ The number of infants and toddlers participating in Part C over the years has steadily increased. Federal funding, however, has not kept pace, resulting in a decrease in federal per child funding for Part C services over the years. To address fiscal challenges, some states have narrowed or restricted eligibility criteria, implemented or increased family fees for services under their system of payments policies, or reduced provider reimbursements, which may result in reduced access to services for infants and toddlers and their families.

⁴² Barbara Thompson (director, Child and Youth Services, Military Family and Community Policy, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense), personal communication, 2015-2016.

⁴³ 2013 IDEA Part C Child Count. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/index.html>

- IDEA Part B, section 619, the Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities program** provides formula grants to assist states to provide special education and related services to children with disabilities ages three through five years old, and at a state's discretion, to two-year-old children with disabilities who will turn three during the school year. These special education and related services must be provided, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the least restrictive environment (LRE) based on the child's unique needs. The LRE requirements state a strong preference for educating children with disabilities in general education settings with appropriate aids and supports alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate. States are also required to have a system to ensure that all children with disabilities residing in the state, including preschool children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated. In 2013, 745,336 or 6.1 percent of all preschool-age children nationally received IDEA services. This ranged from 3.6 percent to 12.1 percent across states.⁴⁴ As with Part C, the number of eligible children has increased steadily and federal funds have not kept pace, leading some states to implement cost-saving measures such as limiting professional development or implementing salary freezes for personnel. These measures may have a negative impact on the quality of services received by preschool children with disabilities.
- Family and Child Education (FACE)** in the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) serves children prenatal to age five in home- and center-based settings. The FACE early childhood component is limited to the number of children served each year in the school-based portion of FACE. The FACE program is the only program supporting early childhood education in the BIE.⁴⁵ In the 2013-2014 school year, the last year full data is available, 44 FACE center-based preschool programs, located in nine of the 23 states

⁴⁴ 2013 IDEA Part B Child Count. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/index.html>

⁴⁵ Under section 611(h)(4) of Part B of the IDEA, the Secretary of Education makes payments to the Secretary of Interior to be distributed to tribes to provide for the coordination of assistance for special education and related services for children with disabilities aged three through five on reservations. Under section 643(b) of Part C of the IDEA, the Secretary of Education makes payments to the Secretary of Interior to be distributed to tribes to provide for the coordination of assistance in the provision of early intervention services by the states to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families on reservations

where BIE-funded school are located, served 521 children. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is planning to add two additional FACE sites in fall of 2016.

As noted by GAO, CRS, and our review, other federal programs may complement and provide support to these early learning programs, but their primary purpose and use are not to support children under age six. Due to competing needs within those programs, most of those funds are not directed at services for children under age six. One example of this is Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Early learning is an allowable – but not primary – purpose or use of Title I funds. Title I programs provide resources to disadvantaged students in low-income schools. Some school districts use these funds to help address the achievement gap prior to kindergarten entry, especially if they do not have access to other primary sources of federal funding or state preschool dollars. However, ED data show that very few preschool students – less than three percent – benefit from Title I funds.⁴⁶

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is another example of a federal program that can be supportive, but is not primarily focused on, early learning. TANF funds can be used for child care assistance at a state's discretion, either to directly help pay for child care or as a transfer to CCDF. Since 1996, there have been significant fluctuations in the amount of TANF funding states use for child care, making this funding source for early learning undependable. According to the 2014 TANF expenditure data, there was a slight increase in TANF child care spending (direct and transfer) in comparison with 2013, but this increase followed a four percent decline in spending from 2012 to 2013.⁴⁷ States spent 16 percent of total TANF and TANF Maintenance of Effort funds on child care and 15 states spent less than five percent of these funds on child care.⁴⁸

III. PURPOSEFUL OVERLAP IS NECESSARY TO MEET THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS

⁴⁶ <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=158>

⁴⁷ Compare http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/fy_2013_expenditures.xlsx and http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/fy2012_expenditures.xlsx

⁴⁸ http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/fy_2013_expenditures.xlsx and http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/fy2012_expenditures.xlsx

Within the landscape of early learning and care, purposeful program overlap is necessary to address the needs of children in varying family situations and adjust to meet those needs as they change over time. While some families need services of only one program, others need multiple programs to maintain parents' employment and ensure that their children are prepared for kindergarten. This overlap of the core federal programs is critical to meeting the needs of children and families.

Notably, the 2012 GAO report recognized that there can be appropriate and beneficial effects associated with program overlap, stating that "it may be appropriate for multiple agencies or entities to be involved in the same programmatic or policy area due to the nature or magnitude of the federal effort"⁴⁹ and that overlap may be necessary to fill a gap or try a new method to address a public interest.⁵⁰ Many families have multiple and unique needs that require more than one type of service. The existing programs work together in a positive way to address program gaps and meet the comprehensive needs of children and families. For example, programs such as Head Start and the CCDF work together to meet children's development and learning needs and families' full-day, full-year work schedule. IDEA Part C and Early Head Start work together to meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities, by providing them with both inclusive, high-quality early learning experiences and family supports, and early intervention specific to their disability and needs. While the alignment and coordination of programs can help improve the experiences of families who are currently served, such actions do not reduce the enormous gaps in services for thousands of eligible young children.

⁴⁹ 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue, GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2012).

⁵⁰ Evaluating and Managing Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication, GAO-15-49SP (Washington, D.C.: April 14, 2015).

Katrina Gilbert and her children exemplify how different federal early learning programs come together to foster school readiness and aid families in their employment stability. This family's challenges, chronicled in the 2014 HBO documentary, *Paycheck to Paycheck*, are typical of many struggling families. Ms. Gilbert's former husband became unemployed when the local factory closed, and Ms. Gilbert works an irregular schedule as an aide in a nursing home. At the time of the documentary, Ms. Gilbert's children were three, five, and seven years old and enrolled in the Chambliss Center, and Ms. Gilbert's former husband lives a distance from the children.

The Chambliss Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee is one of the few child care programs that is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. It is nationally recognized for quality through its accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and recognized as a top tier program in the State's quality rating and improvement system. The Chambliss Center operates Head Start classrooms, provides child care for low-income children with subsidy, participates in the State's prekindergarten program, receives financial support for nutritious meals and snacks through the Child and Adult Care Food program, and charges a small copayment from its low-income families. Both Katrina and her children benefit from the more comprehensive services of the Head Start program. The child care subsidy from the Child Care Development Fund helps provide quality care for the hours when the Head Start program does not operate and she is at work. Both programs are needed so she can work and her children can have the best opportunities for successful learning and development.

The Head Start program at Chambliss is a tuition-free and operated for four hours a day throughout the school calendar year, providing both critical early learning and comprehensive services. The CCDF subsidies provide assistance for the remaining hours of the day, as well as school holidays and summers, to ensure Ms. Gilbert can work a full schedule. Ms. Gilbert pays a co-payment of \$55 per week for one child, and then half of that amount for each of the other two siblings. If her children did not have access to Head Start and the child care was not subsidized by CCDF, the average child care tuition in her area would be roughly \$300 a month per child – a large portion of her wages.

Unfortunately in 2015, there were 509 low-income children (birth through preschool age) on the waiting list at the Chambliss Center for Head Start, child care, or a combination of programs, due to insufficient funding.

IV. PROMOTING COORDINATION, COLLABORATION, AND STREAMLINING

In coordination with Congress, the Administration has promoted greater coordination and streamlining of early learning as part of a plan for a strong continuum of access to high-quality early learning. Together, the Departments and other federal agencies have taken numerous steps, such as the development of four joint policy statements, the formation of the Early Learning

Interagency Policy Board, and alignment of early learning initiatives to ensure that early learning programs and policies are best meeting the needs of young children and families.

Partnerships, Joint Administration, and Cross-Sector Systems Building

Together with Congress, the Administration has put coordination and collaboration at the forefront of its efforts to improve access to and the quality of early learning and care—at the federal, state, and local levels. Whether through joint program administration at the federal level, requirements for formal partnership as a condition of a state grant, or a requirement for coordination through the State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care and other parts of the state’s early learning system, coordination and collaboration are key priorities. For example, this Administration has fostered coordination and collaboration between programs through:

- **Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships:** In FY 2014, the Congress provided funding for a new Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership program to expand access to full day, full year high quality care for infants and toddlers from very low-income families through Partnerships and expansion of Early Head Start. The Partnership grants bring greater alignment between Early Head Start and child care programs – many of whom serve children who are eligible for Head Start – through common standards, full day full year services that meet the needs of working families, and the provision of comprehensive services. Partnership grantees also provide shared training and support to teachers and providers, which not only ensures that teachers across settings receive the same high quality training, but also eliminates the need to conduct the same training over and over in different settings. The alignment and coordination between these two important programs results in a greater number of infants and toddlers receiving high-quality early learning experiences, and a greater number of families who have reliable care for their children while they are at work. A total of 275 grants were awarded by March 2015, including state and territory grants.⁵¹ Grantees are currently operating in every state and 14 tribal communities to ensure that children in child care partnerships benefit from a nurturing learning environment, a well-trained teacher, and strong engagement of families in the

⁵¹ <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ece/early-learning/ehs-cc-partnerships/grant-awardees>

program. All entities currently eligible to apply for Early Head Start are able to apply for Partnerships: states, local governments, and non-profit and for-profit agencies.

Applicants are encouraged to leverage other funding sources and form public/private partnerships to maximize the impact of federal funds.

- **State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care:** Authorized in the Head Start Act of 2007, the State Advisory Councils (SACs) are coordinating bodies with representatives from multiple public agencies, such as child care, Head Start, state and local educational agencies, and the lead agencies for early intervention, as well as representatives from the private sector, that support a comprehensive and aligned system of early childhood education in States and territories. The SAC grants helped establish these public-private councils to improve the quality of early learning services, and better coordinate and streamline the delivery of these services. The SACs help coordinate efforts such as statewide early childhood needs assessments, unified data collection across early childhood programs, and early childhood educator career advancement projects, including working with higher education. More information can be found in HHS' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) report, *State Early Childhood Councils Final Report (2015)* which is available at:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ece/early-learning/state-advisory-councils>
- **Joint Administration of Programs:** In recent years, Congress has designated certain early learning programs for joint administration by the Departments. In particular, the agencies have had a very successful collaboration on the RTT-ELC grants that support state efforts to improve cross-sector coordination and improve the quality of early care and education. The Departments also continue to co-administer the Preschool Development Grants program, helping to ensure an effective mixed delivery model that maximizes choice for parents by including high-quality community providers in PDG-supported state preschool programs. Joint administration of these programs at the federal level has set an example for collaboration and alignment at the State and local levels.
- **Tribal Early Learning Initiative:** The Tribal Early Learning Initiative (TELI), which was launched by ACF in fall 2012, has offered a unique and important opportunity to four tribal communities to coordinate high quality early childhood development services for Native children and families by bringing together their Tribal Home Visiting (Tribal

Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting), American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start/Early Head Start, and Tribal Child Care programs. The TELI has supported tribes in developing data systems that enable them to share data across programs to increase efficiencies, providing shared training to staff across early childhood programs to reduce duplication, and establishing joint application forms across early childhood programs to ease family burden and streamline the enrollment process.

Policy Development and Guidance to Promote Greater Collaboration and Streamlining

The Departments have promoted streamlining of early learning programs through proposed regulations and other policy developments. These efforts include:

- **CCDBG Reauthorization and Final CCDF Rule:** The bipartisan 2014 reauthorization of CCDBG and the HHS implementing regulations published on September 30, 2016, include policies for greater alignment of services for low-income children served by the CCDF, such as the requirement to establish 12-month eligibility periods for subsidy. The new eligibility period reduces reporting paperwork burden on families and supports families' work stability and financial health. Continuity is also vitally important to the healthy development of young children, particularly the most vulnerable, as frequent interruptions in services disrupt young children's abilities to form strong, consistent, and dependable relationships with their non-parental caregivers. This new policy also allows families to access child care that aligns with partnering programs such as Head Start, other preschool programs, and school-based programs. The final rule reflects best practices, particularly in health, safety, and continuity of care, that are raised in the 2014 law.
- **The Head Start Program Performance Standards Final Regulation:** On September 6th, HHS published the final revisions to the Head Start Program Performance Standards regulations. These regulations are a critical part of the Administrations' effort to ensure that all children start school ready to succeed. The bipartisan Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 called for a review and revision of these Performance Standards to ensure that all Head Start programs provide high quality, comprehensive services that lead to strong outcomes for Head Start children. The new standards will improve the quality of services, reduce regulatory burden on programs, and improve

regulatory clarity and transparency. Built on research and best practice in the field, the revised regulations provide a clear road map for current and prospective grantees to provide high-quality Head Start services and to improve the outcomes of the children and families they serve. The revisions facilitate grantees ability to deliver services through a variety of modalities, including through child care and state prekindergarten programs, which often requires braiding funding streams and aligning standards. For example, a key component of the new standards is to increase the length of the day and year of Head Start services, which enables greater alignment to the longer hours often offered by high quality public preschool programs.

- **Joint Policy Statements and Letters:** The Departments have issued joint policy statements on matters of pressing concern to all early childhood programs regardless of setting or funding stream. By issuing joint policy statements rather than separate policy statements, the Departments create consistency for local programs and more seamless services for families. Recent policy statements address reducing or eliminating suspensions and expulsions,⁵² the inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs,⁵³ and engaging families in children’s early learning and supporting dual language learners. In addition, ACF has issued joint policy guidance and letters with the Federal Emergency Management Administration on prioritizing child care in planning for disasters and with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to guide homelessness shelter staff on creating developmentally appropriate environments for young children, implementing developmental and behavioral screenings, and connecting with early childhood programs.
- **Voluntary, Common Health and Safety Standards:** ACF, in consultation with health-focused offices in the Departments, issued *Caring for Our Children Basics: Health and Safety Foundations for Early Care and Education*⁵⁴ which articulates a common set of voluntary basic health and safety standards that can create more alignment in standards and monitoring across child care, Head Start, and other preschool programs if the common standards are voluntarily adopted by the various monitoring agencies.

⁵² Available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/child-health-development/reducing-suspension-and-expulsion-practices>

⁵³ <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/inclusion/index.html>

⁵⁴ Available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/caring_for_our_children_basics.pdf

Eventually, common standards will also enable states and others to create reciprocity and efficiencies in monitoring.

Interagency Policy Boards and Workgroups; Resources to Promote Cross-Sector Knowledge and Technical Assistance

The Departments have established forums for inter-agency knowledge sharing, refined technical assistance efforts. These efforts include:

- **Early Learning Interagency Policy Board:** In August 2010, the Departments launched the Early Learning Interagency Policy Board (IPB). The purpose of the IPB is to improve the quality of early learning and care programs and outcomes for young children; increase the coordination of early childhood research, technical assistance, and data systems; and advance the effectiveness of the early learning workforce among the major federally-funded early learning and care programs across the Departments. On a quarterly basis, the IPB brings together offices within the Departments, and, per GAO's recommendation, has expanded participation to include the ED's Institute for Education Sciences, the Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Education, and the Departments of Defense, Housing and Urban Development, and Agriculture. In April 2016, GAO indicated that this recommendation was addressed.⁵⁵ The IPB provides a strong tool for agencies to ensure programs are aligned and purposeful and positive overlap meets the diverse needs of children and families.
- **Coordinated Head Start and Child Care Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA):** Previously, Head Start and Child Care T/TA centers, which have their own funding streams, operated relatively independent of one another. ACF redesigned in 2015 their early childhood technical assistance system to streamline the assistance offered to grantees, increase alignment, and decrease duplication. The new system is jointly managed by the Offices of Head Start (OHS) and Child Care (OCC) at HHS and are now services both Head Start and child care programs, along with staff who administer such programs at the state and local levels. The technical assistance system will offer grantees support through nine national centers in areas such as health, development, teaching and

⁵⁵ <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-375SP>

learning, and family engagement, by harnessing funding and expertise from various partners, including OCC, OHS, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at HHS. Three of the nine centers are newly funded and five of the nine centers are jointly funded through OHS and OCS. The result of the redesigned technical assistance system will be the delivery of consistently high quality training and technical assistance across early programs that serve expectant parents, young children, and school-aged children through afterschool and enrichment programs.⁵⁶

- **Early Educator Central: Pathways to Credentials and Degrees for Infant-Toddler Educators:** Early Educator Central is a collaboration between ACF, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Department of Defense that brings together federally-funded resources from Head Start, CCDBG, and the military child care system to advance infant-toddler educators' education and improve their competencies. Key features include free or low-cost high-quality course work to support infant and toddler teachers, tools for professional development leaders to build career pathways, and supports for professors, trainers, and coaches, including a free online digital observation tool.
- **Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive!:** The Departments partnered to launch *Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive!*, a national initiative to encourage developmental and behavioral screening for young children. The initiative includes resources that outlined common screening recommendations, and encouraged collaboration and communication between early childhood service providers, including early educators, pediatricians, social workers, and behavioral health specialists, among others.
- **ACF/Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Workgroup:** Convened by the Office of Management and Budget, the ACF/CACFP Workgroup brings together staff from the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services, the Office of Child Care, and the Office of Head Start at HHS to discuss possible collaboration around the Child and Adult Care Food Program. They have provided joint information

⁵⁶ <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/interagency-projects/ece-technical-assistance>

memorandums discussing state and local collaboration and focusing on ways to improve Tribal participation in CACFP.⁵⁷

- **Military Family Federal Interagency Collaboration:** The Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care are working with the Department of Defense as part of the Military Family Federal Interagency Collaboration. The Collaboration focuses on increasing the availability and quality of child care in 20 states for military families, especially those not living near military bases or lacking easy access to other military supports. The Collaboration has identified and is working toward the strategic goals of improving: (1) access to quality child care by increasing the level of quality; (2) the awareness of quality indicators and their importance for creating and maintaining safe and health environments for children; (3) the communication between various partners and agencies to ensure limited resources are used effectively.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS, STREAMLINING PROGRAMS, IMPROVING QUALITY, AND EXPANDING ACCESS

The Administration has recommended, through policies and budget requests, a plan for investments in a strong continuum of access to high-quality early learning and care, from birth to kindergarten entry. These recommendations, if enacted, would provide the resources to help reduce gaps in services, improve quality, and better coordinate and streamline programs across the birth to kindergarten continuum. Working with Congress, the Administration has taken steps to strengthen core federal programs through the 2014 CCDBG reauthorization, formalize program coordination through Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, and reduce gaps in services through PDG. However, the following additional actions are needed to address the gaps in access and quality across the continuum for children under age six:

- ***Expand access to quality, affordable child care.*** Working with Congress, the recent reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reforms the safety, health, and developmentally appropriate early learning and care for young

⁵⁷ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>

children. In the FY 2017 Budget, the Administration also has requested an additional \$82 billion in mandatory funding over ten years to ensure that all low- and moderate-income working families with young children will have access to high-quality, affordable child care. In addition, the Administration has requested an increase of \$200 million to help states implement the important reforms required by the new law and for pilots to test the most effective ways of providing high-quality care during non-traditional hours and in rural areas.

- ***Increase the duration of Head Start programs and invest in high-quality infant and toddler care.*** The FY 2017 Budget includes an additional \$292 million above the FY 2016 level to expand the number of children attending Head Start for a full school-day and year, which research shows leads to better outcomes for children. The Budget also requests \$142 million above FY 2016 to ensure that all grantees, including Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships grantees, can keep pace with the cost of inflation without reducing enrollment or the quality of their services.
- ***Partner with States to Support voluntary, universal preschool.*** The FY 2017 Budget continues to propose transformational new investments in preschool, including a \$75 billion investment over 10 years for Preschool for All to provide all four-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families with access to high-quality preschool, while encouraging states to expand those programs to reach additional children from middle-class families to help ensure that all children arrive in kindergarten ready for success in school and in life. To prepare states for Preschool for All, the President has proposed \$350 million for the Preschool Development Grants program, a \$100 million increase over the FY 2016 level, to build on the successful launch of this program for approximately 33,000 children from low- to moderate-income families in 18 states in the first year cohort of the program. This funding request includes continuation awards to support current state grantees, as well as additional dollars for the newly authorized Preschool Development Grants under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. Without continuation funds, nearly 54,000 children will not have to opportunity to attend high-quality preschool programs in the last year of the grants. The Departments have worked closely together to plan for the necessary expansion of high-quality preschool across the nation. Given the rapid expansion that has occurred in some parts

of the country, HHS has provided guidance to Head Start programs who are interested in converting Head Start four-year-old slots to serve younger children, to ensure that more children age three and younger have access to high-quality early learning services. In addition, the Head Start Birth-to-Five program model enables programs to provide continuous high-quality services for the most vulnerable children so that they have multiple years of support prior to entering school.

- ***Support specialized services.*** Recognizing the importance of ensuring that young children with disabilities receive the individualized services and supports they need to enhance their development and learning and the increased need for these services, the FY 2017 budget includes a \$35 million increase for Part B, section 619 of the IDEA and a \$45 million increase for Part C of the IDEA. Intervening early and providing high-quality services to infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities, and at a state's discretion, infants and toddlers at risk for developmental delays, can change children's developmental trajectories, and minimize the need for special education services as children enter and progress in school.

The President's budget requests have prioritized investments in a strong and more widely accessible system of early childhood education, and alongside those investments, have proposed streamlining the system, by eliminating and discontinuing appropriations for the early learning programs listed below. Appendix A describes in more detail the programs for which the Obama Administration has not requested renewed funding or reauthorization.

- Even Start Family Literacy Program
- Early Reading First
- Early Childhood Educator Professional Development
- Foundation for Learning
- Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge

A wealth of research on the economic, education, and social benefits of early learning makes a compelling case for investing in high-quality early learning, especially for children in low-income families. The federal efforts to coordinate and streamline are valuable in helping states and local providers, but they are not a solution or a substitute for the level of investment that is needed to expand access and quality so that all children in low and moderate income

families will have voluntary access to high-quality early learning and care that prepares them for success in school and in life.

APPENDIX A:

PROGRAMS THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION HAS WORKED WITH CONGRESS TO ELIMINATE

Below are five programs which the Administration has worked with Congress to eliminate and to reduce overlap and fragmentation.

Even Start Family Literacy Program (Title I, Part B, Subpart 3, Elementary and Secondary Education Act) – grants to support local family literacy projects that integrate early childhood education, adult literacy (adult basic and secondary-level education and instruction for English language learners), parenting education, and interactive parent and child literacy activities for low-income families with parents who are eligible for services under the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act* and their children from birth through age seven.

Early Reading First (Title I, Part B, Subpart 2, Elementary and Secondary Education Act) – competitive grants for local efforts to improve early literacy through professional development, instructional materials and literacy-rich environments, and screening assessments to identify children at risk of reading difficulties.

Early Childhood Educator Professional Development (Title I, Part B, Elementary and Secondary Education Act) – grants to provide professional development in early literacy and other domains of child development and learning for children from birth to kindergarten.

Foundation for Learning (Title V, Part D, Subpart 14, Elementary and Secondary Education Act) – grants to local educational agencies, local councils, community-based organizations, and other public or nonprofit private entities to support children’s social and emotional development, access for children and their families to health, mental health and other services, and community partnerships.

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge – grants were competitively awarded to States to create early childhood education systems that promoted high-quality development and learning across settings and sectors for children from birth to kindergarten. These grants will not be renewed and new grants will not be made.