Every year, tens of thousands of young children from low-income families benefit from North Carolina’s early learning and care programs. This system supports the care, education, and healthy development of children living in poverty, prioritizing parental choice and children’s individual needs. Unfortunately, due to funding rates & levels, the programs only reach a fraction of eligible children—putting child care & early learning out of reach for thousands of families who want to work and support their children.

**CHILD CARE SUBSIDY**

**WHAT IT DOES**
Child care subsidy program for low-income families with children ages 0-5 (children ages 6-13 may receive care outside school hours).

**WHO IT SERVES**
Children from families who are working or in school, earning below 85% of the state median income. Also serves other special populations.

**FEDERAL PROGRAM**
Child Care Development Block Grant, plus state matching & maintenance of effort funds. Some Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) funds for eligible children. Below budget does not include recent federal pandemic relief funds.

**BUDGET:** $403M FY 2020-21

17% of eligible children under 6 served

**HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START**

**WHAT IT DOES**
Comprehensive early learning, health, nutrition support services to children birth to age five who are living in poverty.

**WHO IT SERVES**
Families earning below the federal poverty line, families experiencing homelessness, children with disabilities, children in foster care.

**FEDERAL PROGRAM**
Head Start & Early Head Start

**BUDGET:** $242M FY 2020-21

HEAD START

19% of eligible children served

EARLY HEAD START

6% of eligible children served

For more information about early care & education:
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ncchild.org
NC PRE-K

WHAT IT DOES
Early learning program to enhance school readiness, available during the school year / during school hours.

WHO IT SERVES
Four-year-old children from families with income at or below 75% State Median Income (SMI), or other documented categories regardless of income including: military status, developmental disability, chronic health condition, Limited English Proficiency.

STATE PROGRAM NC Education Lottery revenue
Supplement: federal TANF funds, CARES funds, & state general fund

BUDGET: $185M FY 2020-21

51% of eligible children served

SMART START

WHAT IT DOES
The Smart Start network is a public/private partnership comprised of 75 local partnership organizations and the North Carolina Partnership for Children. Created in 1993, Smart Smart helps parents pay for child care, improves the quality of early care and education programs, promotes children’s health and development, and provides family support.

WHO IT SERVES
Children birth to five in all 100 counties

STATE PROGRAM State general fund
Supplement: Some county & private funds

BUDGET: $154M FY 2020-21

25% of eligible children served

FOOTNOTES & SOURCES
1 Office of State Budget & Management (2020)
2 Think Babies Alliance NC (2021)
3 National Head Start Association (2022)
4, 5 National Head Start Association (2020)
6 Division of Child Development and Early Education (2022)
7 myFutureNC (2021)
8, 9 Smart Start (2022)

First Five Years Fund
National Institute for Early Education Research