

# The 123s of *ECE* Toolkit



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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NC CHILD

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Thank you all for everything that you do.

# Executive Summary

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In the past three decades, we have seen great improvement in child survival rates on a global scale but in North Carolina infant mortality and premature rates continue trending downward. As much of the basic learning and social skills are developed at a young age, early interventions can be promotive of a child's well-being as they transition through the stages into adulthood. This toolkit aims to provide informative resources to increase understanding of early childhood education (ECE). It intends to provide insights into the current landscape of ECE in North Carolina and highlight inequities within access to childcare while offering proposed solutions to addressing a challenging issue faced by many residents. Additionally, one will find supplemental studies and reports that can provide additional information on ECE, frameworks to address this issue, and how it is being handled on a global level. NC Child is committed to advancing public policies to ensure all children – regardless of race, ethnicity, or place of birth – have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and will continue to do so throughout North Carolina.

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit can serve as a guiding reference for legislators, advocates, and supporters to gain a deeper mastery of ECE. It can be shared throughout networks for ECE policy development in North Carolina.

## LIMITATIONS OF THIS TOOLKIT

The toolkit was developed in May 2023 which frames the data and statistics provided. Additionally, of the solutions provided, these are not the only ways to best address ECE in North Carolina and better solutions may arise after the publication of this toolkit. We are committed to long-term ECE reform.



# ECE Commonly Used Terminology

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In the ECE field, there are several acronyms and terms that are commonly used. Below you'll find common language and their definitions.<sup>1</sup>

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** - Refers to potentially traumatic events that can have a negative, lasting effect on an individual's health and well-being. Adverse childhood experiences can include physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to the death or incarceration of a parent or guardian.
- **Attachment** - The emotional and psychological bond between a child and adult, typically a parent or caregiver, that contributes to the child's sense of security and safety. It is believed that secure attachment leads to psychological well-being and Resilience throughout the child's lifetime and is considered a key predictor of positive Child Development and learning.
- **Child Development** - The process by which children acquire skills in the areas of social, emotional, intellectual, speech and language, and physical development, including fine and gross motor skills. Developmental stages describe the expected, sequential order of gaining skills and competencies that children typically acquire.
- **Developmental Outcomes** - Describes the condition of a child's developmental health and life trajectory that can be impacted by determinants such as: family income and education level, access to health and child care services, choice of neighborhood, social support networks, and genetics, among others.
- **Early Educator** - Teachers, assistants, site directors and others whose primary role is working directly with the children in their care.
- **Early Head Start** - A federally funded program that serves low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers to support optimal child development while helping parents/families move toward economic independence.



# ECE Commonly Used Terminology

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- **Family (Parent) Engagement** - Refers to an interactive process of relationship-building between early childhood professionals and families that is mutual, respectful, and responsive to the family's language and culture. Engagement in the early years prepares families to support their children's learning throughout their school years and support parent/family-child relationships that are key to healthy Child Development, School Readiness, and well-being.
- **Living Wage** - Refers to a minimum wage required to meet basic needs. A living wage varies by household type and the local cost of living. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) hosts a Living Wage Calculator for U.S. states and counties.
- **Professional Development (PD)** - Refers to a continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with, and on behalf of, young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work.
- **Quality** - The characteristics of learning environments that promote the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of young children. High quality programs typically exceed state regulatory requirements, utilizing Developmentally Appropriate curricula and prioritizing adequate teacher and administrative qualifications, ongoing Professional Development, and Family Engagement strategies, among others qualities.
- **Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)** - A system typically administered by a state or local jurisdiction used to assess, improve and communicate the quality of early care and learning settings. Most incorporate some variation of the following elements: quality standards; a system for rating/measuring and monitoring program quality; resources to improve quality such as grants for classroom materials and staff scholarships; and outreach services to educate and communicate with key stakeholders about choosing high Quality early education. QRIS may also create a range of financial incentives to motivate programs to achieve higher levels of quality.



# ECE Commonly Used Terminology

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- **Reimbursement Rates** - Refers to the amount of money that child care providers who accept CCDF Vouchers (Subsidies) are reimbursed by the state to care for low-income children. The amount Providers are reimbursed depends on a variety of factors, such as whether their program participates in the state's QRIS. A program or provider's reimbursement rate may also depend on characteristics of the children they serve, such as whether they care for children with Special Needs.
- **Risk Factors** - Refers to circumstances that increase a child's susceptibility to a wide range of negative outcomes and experiences. Risk factors for low school readiness may include parental/family characteristics such as low socioeconomic status and education, children's characteristics, such as whether the child has Special Needs, or community conditions and experiences, such as whether the child has access to high Quality early care and education.
- **School Readiness** - A term to describe the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to successfully transition to, and perform well in, the early school years. School readiness is typically determined based on children's developmental status and progress in the following five domains: language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, Approaches to Learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development.
- **Subsidy** - Private or public assistance that reduces the cost of child care for families.
- **Smart Start** - A nationally-recognized program funded through state and private funds and provides a variety of services for children less than 6 years of age and their families to ensure all children in North Carolina enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed. It is not exclusively for low-income families but prioritizes children in need.

# ECE Commonly Used Terminology

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- **Wrap Around Child Care Programs** - Child care program in which a team of providers collaborate to improve the lives of the children and families they serve by creating, enhancing, and accessing a coordinated and comprehensive system of supports. Supports might include formal services and interventions, such as enrichment and academic supports outside of regular child care programming, community and health services like doctor visits, and interpersonal assistance such as family counseling. Wrap-around programs also sometimes refer to care provided before, after or outside of Nontraditional Hour Child Care to accommodate family schedules.





# ECE Impacts

## Global Funding



**43%**

of children younger than 5 years in low-income and middle-income countries are at risk of not achieving their developmental potential.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the US has trailed most other developed nations in its ECE spending, currently at 0.3% of its GDP.<sup>3</sup>



**\$57 Billion**

national economic loss annually in the form of lost earnings, productivity, and revenue.<sup>4</sup>

Data: OECD Family Database, 2023

# ECE Impacts

## Global Funding



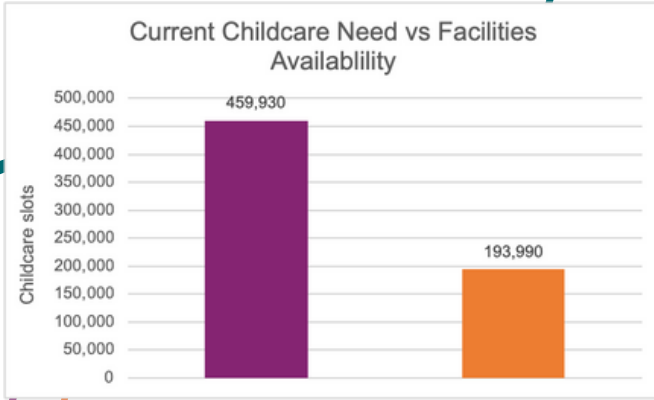
WITHOUT INTERVENTION, ADULTS WHO EXPERIENCE ADVERSITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD ARE ESTIMATED TO EARN

**1/3**

LESS THAN THEIR PEERS' AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME.<sup>5</sup>

# ECE Impacts

## Implications for North Carolina Residents



Data: NC Profile, First Five Years Fund, 2022

Children under the age of 5 are most greatly impacted by the lack of supply of childcare facilities.

**16.8%**

of NC parents have had to make career sacrifices due to child care issues, many of them women.<sup>6</sup>

**44%**

of North Carolina residents live in a child care desert.<sup>7</sup>



# ECE Impacts

## Child Achievement Outcomes

Enrollment in North Carolina's state-supported early education programs reduces the chance of being placed in special education by third grade.<sup>8</sup>

As early child development has been known to start at birth, there are now proven metrics to link children's success to their early education enrollment. Access to the state's prekindergarten program for 4-year-olds reduced the likelihood of third-grade special education placements by 32%, and access to Smart Start reduced the odds by 10%.<sup>9</sup>

39%

reduction in special education placements following both early childhood programs.<sup>10</sup>



# Solutions to Improve ECE Outcomes in North Carolina

## Increase Subsidy Rates for Child Care Facilities



Parents need choices for child care. Increasing the subsidy rates to the most recent statewide average rates can help child care centers stay open, or reopen, to serve more children and families who need to go to work.

Facility Type	Accepted Payment Type	Percent
All Facilities	Private-Pay Only	27.2
	Accept Subsidized	72.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Centers	Private-Pay Only	21.7
	Accept Subsidized	78.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Homes	Private-Pay Only	40.2
	Accept Subsidized	59.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Data: NC Child Care Market Rate Study Report, 2022

Of the 3,777 facilities surveyed for the 2021 Child Care Market Rate Study, accepting subsidy rates improved their ability to provide higher quality child care.<sup>11</sup>

Current rates are still based on 2018 data, even though the most recent child care market survey was conducted in 2021.

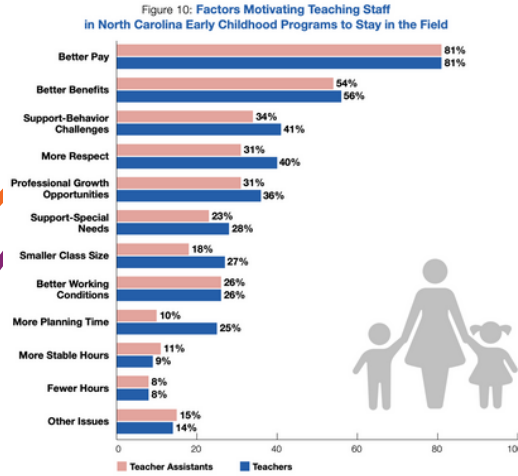
**47%**

of ECE facilities cited the current child care subsidy rate as their base for rate setting.<sup>12</sup>

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES, CHECK OUT THIS [FACT SHEET](#)

# Solutions to Improve ECE Outcomes in North Carolina

## Professionalizing the ECE Career



Data: CCSA Workforce Study, 2020

Burnout cascade: When highly stressed educators are less able to meaningfully engage with children or manage children’s behaviors, which can escalate classroom misbehavior and in turn further exacerbate educator stress.<sup>13</sup>

Making an intentional shift to define the role of ECE educators while improving the pay and benefits is anticipated to have a positive impact on retention. Investment in NC child care facilities has the opportunity to have significant long-term impacts.

Table 17: Professional Support Benefits in Child Care Centers

Professional Supports	2015	2019
Orientation	89%	92%
Written Job Description	93%	95%
Written Personnel Policies	91%	94%
Paid Education/Training	78%	na
Paid Workshop Fees	na	75%
Paid Tuition	na	49%
Paid Breaks	56%	61%
Time Off for Training	60%	70%
Planning/Preparation Time	67%	71%
# Professional Supports	2015	2019
0-3	14%	10%
4	12%	9%
5+	74%	82%

2015 & 2019 Director surveys

Data: CCSA Workforce Study, 2020

# Solutions to Improve ECE Outcomes in North Carolina

## Increased Wages for ECE Educators

**\$16.53**

the living wage for one adult with no children<sup>14</sup>

VS

**\$13.22**

the median pay for child care workers.<sup>15</sup>

## Opportunity for North Carolina: Implement a Salary Scale

- A recruitment and retention tool that can limit the churn of teachers obtaining credentials and moving to positions in public schools with higher wages and benefits
- A budget planning tool based on expenses, not income, or what parents can afford
- Guidelines for wage increases based on tenure, educational milestones reached and other factors<sup>16</sup>

The goal of the salary scale is to provide salary increments based on experience and qualifications that guides salary increases over time, with transparency and equitable wage ranges. Through implementation of a salary scale, it can reinforce living wages for the ECE workforce and reduce the occupation transfers from this industry.<sup>17</sup>

### ECE WAGE SCALE CROSSWALK OF SEVERAL STATES' PLANNING EFFORTS

STATE	VISION	GOALS/GUIDING PRINCIPLES	RECOMMENDATIONS/STRATEGIES	SCALE FEATURES	PROPOSED ELIGIBILITY	PARITY RECOMMENDED?	BENEFITS RECOMMENDED?	LEGISLATION	ENACTED
NORTH CAROLINA	Fair salaries commensurate with education or certification.	A standard scale based on parity with entry-level public school teachers.	Local ECE programs use it to create minimum standards for education and compensation.	Education.	All EC educators.	Wage parity with public school teachers recommended; did not address a 12-month, 40-hour week.	No.		Not yet enacted.

NC Early Childhood Compensation Collaborative Model Salary Scale for Early Education Teachers, October, 2021

Data: CCSA Salary/Wages Scales White Paper, 2021

# Contact Us!

NC Child is committed to advocating for policies that improve the lives of all North Carolina children.

Alongside our partners across the state, we create campaigns and build power so children and their families' voices are heard.



Early Childhood Education



Child Health and Well-Being

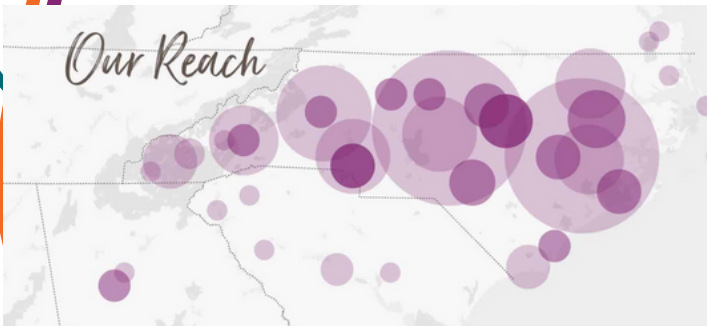


Family Economic Security



**NC Child**  
The Voice for North Carolina's Children

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# Additional Studies and Reports on ECE

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As this toolkit aims to serve as a resource amidst your ECE journey. We wanted to share additional resources we found to be illuminating!

1. NC CHILD: [IMPROVING CHILD CARE SUBSIDY RATES](#)
2. NC CHILD: [MAKING EARLY CARE AND LEARNING AFFORDABLE FOR FAMILIES](#)
3. UNITED NATIONS: [SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA](#)
4. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REPORT: [NURTURING CARE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT](#)



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