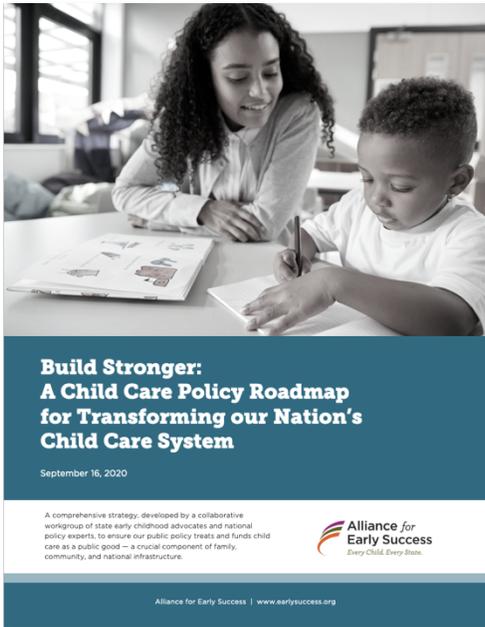


Where Do We Go from Here?

New State Policy “Roadmap” Shows Our Lawmakers the Way to a Strong Child Care System that Truly Supports Today’s Families



The *Build Stronger Child Care Policy Roadmap* can be downloaded at earlysuccess.org/ChildCareRoadmap

Before the pandemic, when we talked about infrastructure, most of us probably imagined bridges, rails, and electrical grids — the public assets that make our daily lives, and our economy, possible. But the recent coronavirus crisis has revealed another crucial structural foundation of our state’s everyday life that most of us probably hadn’t considered: **child care**.

We can’t go to work without a way to make sure our kids are safe, happy, healthy, and learning the foundations they will need to be prepared for school and ready to succeed in life. We need child care that works for families:

- ✓ A system that means we don’t have to pay the equivalent of the cost of a college education right after our kids are born.
- ✓ A system that finally allows parents to choose whether to work or stay home to care for our children – regardless of family finances.
- ✓ A system that provides a variety of easily accessible, high-quality options

Quality child care should be affordable and available to all parents, but for the vast majority of us, it is too expensive, too far from home, or not available when we need it.

If states want parents to succeed at home and work — and still see their kids flourish — then it is time to reengineer essential child care infrastructure. That means thinking about child care as a public good that benefits everyone in society, instead of a responsibility that parents have to bear on their own. And as the economy continues to shift under our feet, broad access to quality child care allows parents to look for a better job, get some new training, or attend school, leading to stronger families and communities.

As our state’s leaders consider budget cuts during the recovery, they should actually *increase* investment in essential child care infrastructure, because those investments will strengthen families and—in turn—the economy.

The Build Stronger Child Care Policy Roadmap was created by a workgroup of state early-childhood policy advocates and national policy organizations from across the country that are part of the Alliance for Early Success network. It describes four interrelated areas of work that collectively create a stronger future, with both equity and quality as foundational values. For each area, the roadmap includes the range of short- and long-term ideas for states to support child care as a public good:

**Increase Access and
Affordability for All Families**

Reform Child Care Financing

**Advance the Early Care and
Education Profession**

**Build a Better Child Care
Business Model**

Taken together, these areas of work build on each other and are a part of a comprehensive strategy to ensure that our public policy treats and funds child care as a public good.

“Our society has decided, rightly, that public education is a public good—that every child should have access to a free education, and it is our collective duty to pay for it—but only from kindergarten through high school. Even as more and more policymakers have declared child care “essential,” especially during the pandemic, it hasn’t been essential enough to be treated as such.

That needs to change, in order to create a world in which every child whose family chooses has access to a range of high-quality early care and education options, delivered in diverse settings, that meet families’ needs and preferences.”

The Build Stronger Child Care Roadmap

We need child care that is affordable, accessible, and available when parents need it – in every community. We need child care that encourages our kids to learn, play, and explore.

We need child care that prioritizes diversity and inclusion and recognizes the strength it provides to our classrooms and communities.

In many cases, this is not the child care of today. But it can be our child care of tomorrow.

It’s time to call for a bold commitment to invest in our essential child care infrastructure, so children, families, and their communities can return to – and then surpass – their vitality before the pandemic.