

# The Path to Universal Child Care

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## Our Vision For Universal Child Care

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care (ESCCC) is committed to advocating for a bold, equitable and inclusive **universal** child care system in New York State. As we move toward this goal, we commit to using our collective power to ensure that system reforms and funding reflect this vision, and prioritize the urgent needs of low-income children and families.

We are working toward a child care system that is free of means testing - with no income, immigration status, or parental work/vocation requirements. We envision a child care system that compensates child care educators equitably and adequately, on par with their public school counterparts. We strive to build a system that is culturally-responsive and is coordinated and aligned with the many systems families and children rely upon to thrive - including home visiting, early intervention services, preschool special education, afterschool, and prekindergarten. This system recognizes and funds child care as a public good, not a private service.

## The Work To Come: Building on Our Incremental Wins

### Free Child Care to All Families with No Barriers

**End onerous means testing:** Universality removes administrative burdens for families

**No copays:** Child care is free at point of access for all families

**No work or immigration requirements:** Child care is not dependent on families' work hours and not rooted in exclusionary practices that deny care and early education to immigrant children

**Expanded uptake:** Families are aware of child care assistance available to them, can access it easily, and have ample opportunities for the care and education setting(s) that meet their needs

### Dignified Work for Child Care Educators

**Compensation:** Child care educators are compensated appropriately and sustainably for their important work

**Benefits:** Child care educators receive health care, paid time off, and retirement benefits

### Modernized System that Meets the Needs of All Families

**Easy, standardized online application:** Mandatory in-person or mail components are eliminated

**Unified statewide system:** Currently county discretion only amplifies inequality and confusion

### Ample Funding and Support for High Quality Child Care

**True cost of care model:** Programs are funded to provide high quality care and education, a key component of which is paying the workforce a thriving wage

**Additional funding and support:** Programs serving families experiencing homelessness, children with disabilities, and/or operating during nontraditional hours are compensated as such

**Higher education:** Continuing education is accessible and meets the diverse needs of child care educators

# Key Victories on the Path to Universal Child Care

## Advisory Roles

**2021:** Release of the [Child Care Availability Taskforce Final Report](#)

**2022:** [Reconstitution of the Child Care Availability Taskforce](#) with additional grassroots membership and bold mandate to develop a framework for rolling out universal child care

**2024:** Release of new report "[Making Child Care More Affordable, Accessible and Equitable for New Yorkers](#)" with updated recommendations that include an urgent call for sustained investment in the child care workforce and a commitment to creating a framework for a phased-in rollout of universal child care.

## Child Care Work Force Compensation

**2024: (Actively advocating)** Create a Permanent Child Care Fund to Increase Child Care Worker Compensation. This fund should be sufficient to offer all child care workers who work in licensed, regulated programs compensation parity with similar positions in the public school system

**2024: (Actively advocating)** Establish Automatic Rate Increase to Child Care Providers, even when that rate exceeds their private tuition price (bill is currently moving through the NYS Legislature)

## Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Eligibility Expansion

**2021:** Increased to 200% of the [Federal Poverty Level \(FPL\)](#) + includes 12 months of eligibility

**2022:** Increased to [300% FPL](#) + up to 24 month of eligibility option for counties

**2022:** [Promise NYC](#) fund for immigrant children in NYC excluded from child care assistance due to immigration status

**2023:** Increased to 85% [State Median Income \(SMI\)](#)

**2023:** Creation of a small statewide pilot program to provide child care assistance to children ineligible for CCAP due to immigration status or because their parents engage in episodic work. Small expansion to pilot program in **2024**.

**2024:** Expansion of the State General Fund investment in CCAP, with a FY 2025 state fund appropriation of \$997.14 million - compared to a FY 2024 general fund appropriation of \$459 million (increase of more than \$538 million)

**2024: (Actively advocating)** End New York's rule of tying child care assistance to parents' exact hours of work ("decoupling" bill is currently moving through the NYS Legislature)

## Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Copay Reduction

**2021:** No more than 10% of income above FPL (10% of income over \$27,750 for a family of 4)

**2023:** No more than 1% of income above FPL (1% of income over \$30,000 for a family of 4)

## Market Rate Increase for Child Care Programs

**2021:** [69th percentile of the 2018 market rate](#)

**2022:** [80th percentile of the 2021 market rate](#)

Simplified attestation process for child care providers that do not serve private pay families to receive new market rate

## System Improvement and Modernization

**2022:** Direct deposit of subsidy reimbursement checks for providers; to be implemented summer **2024**.

**2023:** Automatic income eligibility determination for families receiving government supports (SNAP, WIC, etc.)

**2024:** Online application for families to be implemented summer 2024