

Babies Need Quality, Affordable Child Care



Quality child care prepares babies for future learning and success.

Access to quality child care not only offers families a critical support for employment and education, it supports babies earliest learning laying the groundwork for future success, including strong cognitive skills, higher scores on math and language measures, and the social and emotional skills critical to all learning. But quality child care is tough to access, especially for those who need it most, and most infants are in low- or medium-quality care settings that can be detrimental to their development.

Infant-toddler care is prohibitively expensive, yet little help is available to pay for it. The federal child care tax credit does not approach the actual cost of infant-toddler care, even at the maximum benefit level. Moreover, many families with low-incomes don't benefit from it because they have little or no federal income tax liability and it's not refundable.

Only 12 states allow child care subsidies for families with incomes above 200 percent of the federal poverty level. In fact, only 4 percent of infants and toddlers in families with low- or moderate-incomes are accessing this critical support.

Nearly 8 in 10 voters support increasing funding for quality, affordable early care and learning.

We must strengthen the overall services for infants and toddlers, while ensuring that quality is not the privilege of a few.

Working families need quality, affordable child care options now. Good child care policy solutions will:

- Be properly funded and ensure that every eligible family can enroll their child in a high-quality program;
- Provide enhanced federal, financial support for services for infants and toddlers to focus on improving quality and access; and
- Guarantee that child care providers can be paid a living wage.

For more information, visit thinkbabies.org/policy-priorities-child-care or contact policycenter@zerotothree.org.

The Simon Family (Georgia)

Jasmine was a cocktail waitress in a casino in Las Vegas, Nevada when her daughter Jaelyn was born. While her union membership and the exceptional support of her family afforded her the opportunity to take a year of unpaid leave to bond with her daughter, when she returned to work, to a position without regular hours, Jasmine could not find the reliable and affordable child care she needed for her daughter. Instead, she relied on her family to provide care when she was on the job. Jasmine worried that she or one of her parents would lose their jobs because of the prioritized care for Jaelyn.

The Thompson Family (Wyoming)

Jamie is a child care provider, and she and her partner were excited to welcome a baby of their own. Kaisen was born energetic and funny but was quickly diagnosed with a sensory processing disorder. On a child care provider's limited budget, Jamie was disappointed as she looked for places in their community where Kaisen could have the quality of care he needed. Even the place where she worked could not make his care affordable for her. Eventually, she decided to stay home with him.