

FactSheet

The Early Years

New York State's children and youth need a comprehensive system that serves them from the prenatal period through college (P-16), starting at zero to five years old. Policy and funding decisions should be made through that lens.

The basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and extends through the early years. Children's experiences and relationships in this early period profoundly impact their cognitive, social and emotional development. Reaching children from zero to five is essential to their success in school and in life.

New York State has a history of services and supports for young children and their families, including intensive home visiting, parenting education, child care and Pre-K. However, these critical components are not comprehensive. The state must invest in the development of a high-quality system of early learning programs.



Key Facts

- ▶ Universal Pre-K serves 106,000, or 45%, of eligible four-year-olds. In order to be truly universal, the state must invest in supports that will make the program accessible to all.
- ▶ 46,000 fewer children have access to child care subsidies than in 2003-04.
- ▶ High-quality, developmentally-appropriate care for infants and toddlers is in short supply.
- ▶ Home visiting programs have proven effective in identifying risks and preventing negative outcomes. Yet fewer than 7% of children born annually, approximately 12,000, are served by prenatal-early childhood home visiting programs.
- ▶ Only 42% of eligible children, approximately 50,000 three- and four-year-olds, are served by Head Start.

We Can Do Better

- ▶ New York State must build a comprehensive system on the key priority areas of the Early Childhood Advisory Council—healthy children, strong families, and early learning. Prevention and early intervention must be the cornerstones of this foundation. Investing in children when they are young will not only save lives and strengthen families in the short-term—it will help young people succeed in the long-term, while providing cost benefits to society.