



Shaping Futures Together: **THE PLAYBOOK**

The PLAYBOOK represents the recommended strategies and levers that Start Early staff believe will help to realize the priorities identified by families and practitioners.

Each section includes legislative and administrative policy recommendations and research questions specific to each of the priorities in the *Shaping Futures Together: Early Childhood Research & Policy Agenda*.

See the key below to guide your use of the PLAYBOOK.



Legislative Policy

- ▶ Changes that can be made through law or statute.



Administrative Policy

- ▶ Changes that can be made through rule making and federal guidance.



Research Questions

- ▶ Research to inform or evaluate policy.



Healthy Births & Thriving Families

 PRIORITY

 LEGISLATIVE POLICY

 ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Ensure all families have access to paid family leave after the birth or adoption of a child.



- Extend Family Medical Leave Act provisions to those employed less than one year and to employers with less than 50 employees, both which are current provisions in the proposed Job Protection Act of 2023
- Include paid family leave in federal maternal health legislation



- What are the benefits of paid family leave for employers and states?

Make newborn support programs free for all families, with access to longer-term home visiting programs as needed/desired.



- Make newborn support services reimbursable through Medicaid and/or medical insurance
- Embed Universal Newborn Support Systems (UNSS) into all introduced maternal health equity legislation
- Reauthorize and grow an array of federal funding sources (Family First Prevention Services Act, Medicaid and Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting [MIECHV] program) to support home visiting



- Integrate UNSS information and entry points into both mother and baby health care visits
- Clarify how states can leverage other funding sources for UNSS and home visiting
- Ensure funding levels and guidance that allow states and programs to blend and braid federal funding sources for home visiting
- Implement listening and learning opportunities that gather knowledge from families and home visitors to inform implementation of MIECHV and planning for reauthorization



- How do we make UNSS free and available to all families, with access to home visiting as needed?
- How do we grow political will for this?
- What are the most effective and equitable measures for understanding when home visiting programs are needed?

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Healthy Births & Thriving Families

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Support communities in designing their own programs to support new parents and their infants and toddlers.



- Expand funding and research opportunities for community-led home visiting models, adaptations and practices that promote continued innovation and centering of families' needs



- Support needs assessments in communities to identify existing programming and unmet needs
- Query community-led home visiting programs and models about funding and technical assistance that would allow them to better support their community
- Support hiring and training of staff from within communities where services are being provided



- Which existing home visiting models best support cultural responsiveness?
- What are best practices for community-designed home visiting programs?

Make it easier for families to have the financial resources they need to thrive.



- Reinstate the Expanded Child Tax Credit
- Update methods for determining federal poverty guidelines
- Incentivize states to serve and streamline enrollment processes for all eligible families to access federal financial assistance and basic needs supports, while limiting state ability to restrict access



- What barriers do parents and providers say are keeping them from achieving economic security?
- What impacts did the Child Tax Credit have on parents and providers within Start Early's network?



Positive Early Learning & Development

 PRIORITY

 LEGISLATIVE POLICY

 ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Make child care free for most families and more affordable for ALL families.



- Increase Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) annually by 10% and require states to:
 - + Establish payment rates, policies and procedures based on the true cost of care
 - + Ensure that co-payments are based on a sliding scale and no family pays more than 7% of household income on child care
 - + Use quality funds to increase child care supply in historically marginalized and under-resourced communities



- How do you create a system that serves children in the program a family prefers and at a cost they can afford?

Make more families eligible for Early Head Start and Head Start programs.



- Increase financial eligibility to include higher percentage of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
- Implement three-year eligibility without annual income verification
- Implement geographic and group eligibility criteria (e.g., Native populations, foster care, kinship care, community/census tract)



- Simplify and streamline the application and enrollment process, including coordinating enrollment with state preschool and child care subsidy programs
- Expand automatic eligibility to families who qualify for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and/or the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), including those experiencing temporary financial hardship
- Promote interagency collaboration to ensure that home visitors, douglas and other trusted messengers are making referrals to Early Head Start and Head Start programs



- From the perspective of families and staff, what are the facilitators and barriers that need to be removed to enroll more families in Early Head Start and Head Start programs?
- What difference does the Early Head Start and Head Start two-generation approach make for family and child outcomes?

Make it easier for families to receive Early Intervention services that support children 0-3 with or at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.



- Dramatically increase federal funding for Part C, with set-aside for wage enhancements
- Change funding formula to better reflect a state's relative share of young children living in poverty
- Incentivize serving of children at risk for delay, expansion of eligible medical diagnoses, and extending of services beyond age 3

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Positive Early Learning & Development

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- Provide additional guidance on flexibility of delivering services in natural environment
- Increase coordination and cross-training between home visiting, Early Intervention, and child care providers within communities
- Provide guidance and training to health care providers, child welfare and human services, Early Intervention providers and families about automatic eligibility criteria



- What is the parent/caregiver experience of their child being screened, identified, and potentially receiving specialized services in Early Head Start and Head Start programs? What adaptations can be made to these processes based on parent/caregiver feedback and perspective?

Make it easier for families from different cultures and with native languages other than English to participate in screenings and services for children with or at risk of developmental delays and disabilities.



- Include cultural and linguistic responsiveness efforts in IDEA reauthorization
- Require states to collect and report data on demographics (e.g., race, ethnicity, languages spoken) of Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) workforce



- Create guidelines, monitoring requirements and supports specific to language accessibility
- Add significant disproportionality indicator to states' IDEA Part C Annual Performance Report that captures inequitable access for some groups to IDEA Part C services
- Allocate funds to states to develop and implement an action plan that identifies groups with less access to Early Intervention and ECSE, outlines actionable steps to increase access to services and includes necessary budget for advancement



- How do we make it easier for families from different cultures and with native languages other than English to participate in screenings and access services?

Make it easier for children ages 0-5 with or at risk of developmental delays and disabilities to receive learning and care services in any early childhood setting.



- Significantly increase federal funding for IDEA Part B (3-21 and 619) with minimum requirements for use in inclusive programs, including new discretionary funding to support inclusion in community-based early childhood settings
- Identify Early Head Start and Head Start funding that is earmarked to serve children with disabilities and their families
- Expand types of programs eligible to be reimbursed for provision of services through IDEA Part B (3-21 and 619)



- Socialize a standard curriculum for implementation of the Inclusive Classroom Profile
- Provide guidance on Medicaid reimbursement and layering with other funding streams



- What are the most effective approaches for supporting community-based providers to be inclusive?



Effective, Valued & Well-Compensated Workforce

 PRIORITY

 LEGISLATIVE POLICY

 ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Ensure a highly-skilled, well-compensated and supported workforce.



- Expand federal funding for home visiting, Early Head Start and Head Start with specific set aside for compensation
- Consider federal subsidization of early childhood workforce hourly rates, similar to the federal Work Study Program
- Incentivize inclusion of early childhood practitioners within insurance plans and retirement pools and/or establish shared services/benefit purchasing mechanisms for early childhood practitioners



- Provide guidance on using existing early childhood workforce funds to support home visiting workforce
- Create leadership pathways not solely based on degree attainment



- How do we increase workforce retention?
- To what extent does higher compensation solve retention?
 - + *Did Head Start's move to raise staff qualifications help or hurt the early childhood system? Have Head Start class scores improved in line with credential mandates? Have wages kept pace with K-12 with increased credentialing?*
- To what extent have salary increases impacted Start Early early childhood education workforce retention rates? Are there differences in retention rates based on program type, location, staff tenure, educational level, race and ethnicity or language spoken?
- What mechanisms have been used to secure funding for increased early childhood workforce salaries?
- What policy-level conditions and strategies are most conducive to creating a pipeline, recruiting, hiring, compensating, retaining, and providing ongoing supports to a diverse (e.g., racially, ethnically, linguistically, sex) early childhood workforce?

Find ways to keep people working in early childhood and improve their skills.



- Revamp staff qualification requirements in Head Start Act to align with competencies framework outlined in Power to the Profession
- Expand teacher education loan repayment and forgiveness program and scholarships, including for the home visiting workforce
- Expand apprenticeship programs to increase flow within the workforce pipeline



- Foster state and program efforts to improve workplace conditions including adequate facilities, healthy organizational climate and mental health supports
- Provide free or low-cost trainings and resources to support professional development – including supporting early childhood education staff to stay and thrive in their current role
- Promote state and program recognition of competencies, in addition to education and experience, in staff compensation and promotions



- What does the early childhood education workforce say they actually need and want to help them stay in their current roles or advance their profession within the field?
 - + *What are the experiences of racism among the workforce in early childhood settings? What are the associations between experiences of racism and stress and mental health outcomes for staff? What supports are most helpful to staff in navigating and addressing these experiences?*
- What are the most effective policies/mechanisms/strategies to grow a sustainable workforce pipeline of diverse, qualified staff for home visiting, early learning and care, Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education programs?

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Effective, Valued & Well-Compensated Workforce

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Ensuring early childhood programs and staff are welcoming and supportive of families of all backgrounds, cultures and income levels.



- Invest in a workforce pipeline through apprenticeships and training for diverse program staff for home visiting, Early Head Start, Head Start and other early childhood programs
- Integrate language needs into the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) outcomes dashboard and other public reporting tools to better identify gaps in linguistically responsive services



- Support recruitment and training of staff from within communities for home visiting services and Early Head Start and Head Start programming
- Promote use of a broader array of research approaches and interaction measurement tools to ensure that services are responsive to a diverse array of families



- How and to what extent are the strengths, assets and cultural wealth of racially marginalized individuals, families, and communities being identified, leveraged and effectively built upon by early childhood program leaders and staff to support programming and outcomes?

Ensure child care programs and staff are ready, willing and able to support children of all abilities and needs.



- Enact federal regulations, including a clear definition of Least Restrictive Environment for children ages 3-5
- Expand types of programs eligible to pay staff providing services through IDEA Part B
- Expand and dedicate a portion of IDEA Part D funds to recruit, train and retain a diverse workforce prepared to support young children with delays and/or disabilities
- Increase federal scholarships, grants and pathways to student debt elimination for all Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) professionals



- Incentivize enforcement of CCDF standards related to inclusion
- Expand access to streamlined and low-cost credentialing and training services for staff working with children with or at risk of developmental delays and disabilities
- Provide supports to classroom teachers, such as coaching and job-embedded training, for working with children who are experiencing or who have experienced trauma



- What culturally relevant and meaningful practices do early childhood leaders and staff use to effectively partner with and center the voices of families and community members to build shared governance, community linkages and school-community relationships within racially marginalized communities?



Strong, Sustainable & Equitable Early Childhood Ecosystem

 PRIORITY

 LEGISLATIVE POLICY

 ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Make it easier for families with young children to qualify for and enroll in multiple programs at the same time.



- Streamline eligibility requirements across early childhood and safety net programs
- Adopt utilization of centralized application to determine eligibility for various federal programs

- Create federal interagency early childhood collaborative with a specific focus on enrollment and eligibility
- Provide guidance on aligning different funding streams (e.g., Head Start, Early Head Start, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid) for more efficient state home visiting systems
- Expand automatic HS/EHS eligibility to families who qualify for WIC and/or CCDF, including those experiencing temporary financial hardship



- What supports help families access the programs and services they seek to receive? What contributes to existing and potential barriers to accessing such programs and services?

Make comprehensive changes to strengthen the child care industry instead of taking smaller steps to improve programs and systems.



- Identify additional federal funding streams for child care within workforce development and business/industry supports
- Pilot federally-subsidized child care centers with minimal weekly co-pays, modeled after the Canadian system



- Promote coordination of Head Start/Early Head Start and child care through lessons learned from Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP)
- Identify CCDBG reauthorization opportunities that states are not enacting



- What social/political conditions lead to large-scale policy change?

Increase parent involvement in governance of federal and state programs, in particular those supporting children with or at risk of developmental delays and disabilities.



- Increase the role of parents within governance bodies and advisory boards specific to early childhood federal funding streams (HS/EHS, CCDF, SNAP/WIC)
- Provide adequate dedicated funding to federal, state, and local early childhood governance bodies to equitably compensate provider and family representatives who serve
- Require integration of parent voice into states' home visiting service plans

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Strong, Sustainable & Equitable Early Childhood Ecosystem

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- Increase statute requirement to minimum of 30% parents on State Interagency Coordinating Councils (SICC) and on Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B state advisory tables
- Change rule to require states to have early childhood educators (both school & community-based) and at least one parent of a child aged 3-5 on State Special Education (SPED) Advisory Panels
- Incentivize Local Interagency Coordinating Councils and help develop better community-informed policy and systems changes
- Require State Education Agencies (SEAs) to ask all families receiving federally-funded early childhood services about their satisfaction with services, including where services were received and any bias experienced
- Require states to offer program surveys (i.e. Part C family outcomes survey) in multiple formats (paper, online, text message) and in multiple languages



- What policies and systems elements and characteristics act as facilitators or barriers to early childhood programs effectively providing programming to and partnering with racially marginalized families with young children?

Strengthen data collection systems for Early Childhood Special Education and Early Intervention.



- Expand IDEA data collection to include preschool environments and Least Restrictive Environment, including where young children receive ECSE services, other early childhood programs utilized and family reasons for declining services
- Require states to collect and report data on demographics of EI/ECSE workforce (race, ethnicity, languages spoken) and compensation



- Require all Early Intervention and ECSE state data reported federally to be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, income level, English learner status, child welfare status and homelessness
- Expand data collection to include disciplinary data disaggregated by demographic group

Make it easier for parents to understand and exercise their rights in supporting their children with identified delays and/or disabilities.



- Increase funding for Parent Training & Information (PTI) centers, requiring each PTI to have at least one dedicated staff member focused on supporting families with children birth to age 5
- Provide training for early childhood community, including family child care providers, to support families through the eligibility and evaluation process



- What is the parent/caregiver experience of their child being screened, identified and potentially receiving an IEP/IFSP or specialized services in Early Head Start and Head Start programs?
- What adaptations can be made to these processes based on parent/caregiver feedback and perspective?

