

EARLY INVESTMENT PROJECT: SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE IN TEXAS

Best Practices. Best Policies. Best Results.



**children
at Risk**
Speaking Out + Driving Change for Children

RESEARCH

PUBLIC POLICY

ADVOCACY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Quality early education is proven to have positive short- and long-term benefits for children, particularly those from low-income families. Texas invests significant funds into key components of early education: child care, parenting education, and public Pre-K through 3rd grade. Ensuring efficient use of these dollars means stronger families, more economic prosperity, and better outcomes for kids.

Methodologies Used for Study

CHILDREN AT RISK, a nonprofit and nonpartisan research organization, used several qualitative and quantitative methodologies to complete this study. Methodologies included: 1) a literature review of best practices for child care, parenting, and pre-kindergarten; 2) analysis of policies, legislation, finances, and agencies; 3) face-to-face and phone interviews with key education and state agency stakeholders; 4) parent focus groups; 5) key stakeholder forums; and 6) an online survey of child care providers. More details are provided in the full report.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is twofold. One is to educate parents, policymakers, and the public about the subsidized child care system in Texas. The report describes the system and challenges it presents to child care providers and the parents who need quality child care. The second purpose is to offer policy recommendations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the subsidized child care system.

Key Findings and Policy Recommendations

The following five key findings and policy recommendations emphasize coordination and cooperation among state agencies so that they can avoid duplication, maximize state investments, and support quality while they serve the large population of children in the subsidized child care system.

1. FINDING:

There is a lack of agency coordination around early education data and quality initiatives.

Policy Recommendation: To improve outcomes for children, maximize efficiency, and save taxpayer dollars, the Texas Legislature should increase coordination of child care and Pre-K data systems at the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Workforce Commission through the Early Childhood Database System.

2. FINDING:

There is a lack of local coordination around early education programs.

Policy Recommendation: To increase access to Pre-K, support private businesses, and save taxpayer money, the Texas Legislature should increase local coordination of early education programs by supporting public/private partnerships between school districts and high-quality child care centers.

3. FINDING:

There is a need for increased awareness and understanding of child care subsidy dollars going to Texas Rising Star (TRS), the state's child care quality rating and improvement system.

Policy Recommendation: To ensure the transparent use of taxpayer dollars for high-quality child care, the Texas Workforce Commission and local workforce development boards should report to parents and the Texas Legislature: 1) the number and percentage of children receiving subsidies who are in TRS child care, by TRS level; 2) the number of quality TRS seats in each quality level available to children through the subsidy; and 3) the amount spent on TRS and all quality initiatives across the state.

4. FINDING:

There is a gap in early education between child care and the transition to the formal K-12 system.

Policy Recommendation: To facilitate a successful transition from child care to the formal K-12 system, the Texas Education Agency should create an early childhood through 3rd grade teaching certificate program. Teachers can become experts in teaching the early elementary grades to improve children's transitions from child care to the public K-12 system.

5. FINDING:

There is a lack of agency coordination around parent engagement.

Policy Recommendation: To ensure interagency coordination of parent engagement activities, the Texas Legislature should create a parent education task force to coordinate efforts by the Texas Workforce Commission and other state agencies to build stronger families and spend public dollars more efficiently.



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The research included in this report was generously funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF). WKKF, founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life. The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Mich., and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special emphasis is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success. WKKF priority places in the U.S. are in Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans; and internationally, are in Mexico and Haiti.

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