

Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care

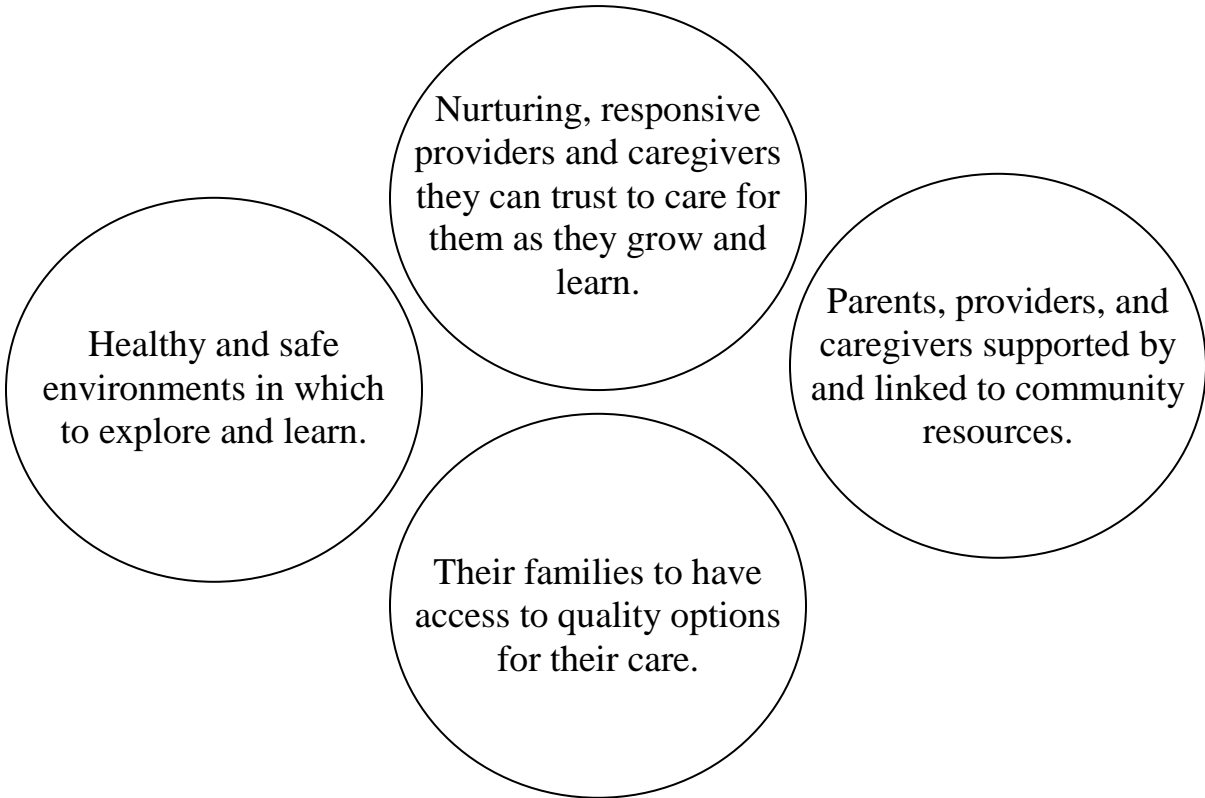
POLICY FRAMEWORK SUMMARY

State policies can promote the quality and continuity of early childhood experiences and positively impact the healthy growth and development of babies and toddlers in all child care settings. Research has shown that the quality of the relationship between children and those who care for them influences every aspect of young children’s development, including intelligence, language, emotions, and social competence. States can implement child care licensing, subsidy, and quality policies that improve the opportunities for babies and toddlers in child care to experience the nurturing, responsive care that will help them thrive.

The *Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care* project is a multi-year effort to identify state policies that support the healthy development of infants and toddlers in child care settings, and to build an online resource to help states implement these policies. The POLICY FRAMEWORK draws on the expertise of more than a hundred policymakers, researchers, and advocates at the state and national levels. The FRAMEWORK sets forth four key principles that establish the foundation of supports that all babies and toddlers in child care need, as well as 15 recommendations that state child care licensing, subsidy, and quality policies should address. Each recommendation corresponds to a key principle, reflects a desired goal, and is followed by a set of policies that may help states move toward that goal. The online resource will provide a research-based rationale for each recommendation.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Babies and Toddlers in Child Care Need:



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE POLICIES

Each recommendation is presented with the corresponding principle and reflects a desired goal. The online resource will provide a research-based rationale for each recommendation.

Principle - Babies in child care need:

Nurturing, responsive providers and caregivers they can trust to care for them as they grow and learn.

States should:

- 1) **Establish what providers and caregivers should know to care for babies and toddlers:** Establish a core body of knowledge, skills, and expertise that providers and caregivers need in order to give babies and toddlers quality care, based on current research on social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.
- 2) **Ensure that providers and caregivers for babies and toddlers have access to education, training, and support:** Ensure access to specialized professional development and support systems for those working with infants and toddlers, including participation in higher education programs, ongoing community-level training, and family support strategies, so that infant and toddler providers and caregivers in all settings can meet the state's core body of knowledge and education standards.
- 3) **Support continuous relationships between providers and caregivers and the children they care for, from when they enter child care to age three:** Provide information and supports for providers and caregivers to develop nurturing, responsive, and continuous relationships with children from when they enter child care to age three.
- 4) **Promote competitive compensation and benefits for infant and toddler providers:** Promote competitive compensation linked to education and experience, as well as health care benefits, to attract and retain highly skilled infant and toddler providers.
- 5) **Recruit, maintain, and support diverse and culturally sensitive infant and toddler providers and caregivers:** Ensure the diversity and cultural competence of infant and toddler providers and caregivers to meet the needs of the state's children under three and their families.

Note: Several different terms exist in the child care field to refer to the places where children receive child care and the people who care for children. For the purposes of this document, we will use the following definitions:

Child care providers (providers): those who care for infants and toddlers in center-based child care programs and family child care homes, who are part of the formal system of child care, are usually licensed by the state, and who require payment for the care they provide.

Caregivers: family, friend, and neighbor caregivers who may not think of themselves as part of the formal child care system, who are often not licensed or registered with the state, and who may or may not accept payment for the care they provide.

All child care settings: all the centers or homes in which children receive child care.

Principle - Babies in child care need:

Healthy and safe environments in which to explore and learn.

States should:

- 6) **Ensure that babies and toddlers in centers are in small groups with sufficient numbers of providers:** Ensure that infants in center-based programs are cared for in groups no larger than six, with ratios of one child care provider to no more than three infants, and that toddlers are cared for in groups no larger than eight, with ratios of one provider to no more than four toddlers.
- 7) **Ensure babies and toddlers in family child care are in small groups with sufficient numbers of providers:** Ensure that no more than two children under age two be cared for by a family child care provider at one time, and that group size not exceed six children (including all children related to the provider).
- 8) **Require training and provide supports on health and safety issues critical for babies and toddlers:** Ensure that all infant and toddler providers and caregivers receive health and safety training and necessary technical assistance relevant to care of this age group, including specific instruction on back-to-sleep, hand-washing, bathing, holding, feeding, comforting, diapering, and providing responsive caregiving for infants and toddlers, and require training prior to child care subsidy receipt.
- 9) **Monitor and provide technical assistance to infant and toddler providers:** Conduct regular monitoring of infant and toddler child care centers and family child care settings and provide technical assistance to help providers with compliance.

Principle - Babies in child care need:

Parents, providers, and caregivers supported by and linked to community resources.

States should:

- 10) **Partner with parents of babies and toddlers in child care:** Promote partnerships with parents and encourage parent involvement with center-based and family child care providers of infant and toddler child care.
- 11) **Screen vulnerable babies and toddlers in child care for health and developmental delays:** Make appropriate health, mental health, and developmental screenings and follow-up available for vulnerable infants and toddlers through connections with all infant and toddler providers and caregivers.
- 12) **Link necessary services for vulnerable babies and toddlers to child care settings:** Link comprehensive health, mental health, and family support services for vulnerable babies and toddlers to all child care settings, and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate service information to parents, providers, and caregivers.

Principle – Babies in child care need:

Their families to have access to quality options for their care.

States should:

- 13) **Build the supply of high-quality infant and toddler child care:** Build the supply of high-quality child care settings for all babies and toddlers, with a special focus on underserved communities, including those in low-income, rural, and/or immigrant and language minority communities.
- 14) **Promote stable, quality care for babies and toddlers through subsidy policy:** Use state child care subsidy policies to support stable, continuous access to the highest quality providers and caregivers for infants and toddlers in low-income families.
- 15) **Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information on choosing infant and toddler child care:** Provide all parents of infants and toddlers with culturally and linguistically appropriate information on choosing high quality care and subsidy eligibility.

The POLICY FRAMEWORK was developed by Rachel Schumacher and Elizabeth Hoffmann of CLASP; and Anne Goldstein, a consultant for ZERO TO THREE; during the first year of the multi-year *Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care* project. For more information about *Charting Progress*, please contact:

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The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is a national nonprofit policy, research, and advocacy organization that works to improve the lives of low-income people. CLASP's mission is to improve the economic security, educational and workforce prospects, and family stability of low-income parents, children, and youth and to secure equal justice for all.

ZERO TO THREE's mission is help professionals, policy makers, and parents to promote the healthy development of infants and toddlers.