Reducing the Impact of Poverty on Early Child Development

Coordinated early childhood policies, across child care, family leave, preschool, Head Start, and direct poverty reduction, can together reduce inequality in child outcomes.

### Poverty Statistics of U.S & Ohio

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Cleveland</th>
<th>Ohio</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children in Poverty</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families that Lack Secure Employment</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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Cleveland Snapshot:

- 78.8% of children under age 6 are economically disadvantaged.
- Black children have 3x the poverty rate of White children in Cleveland.
- The highest lead concentrations exist in predominantly Black neighborhoods.
- Impact on low resource areas: 25.7% of kindergarteners had elevated blood lead levels.

### Early Childhood Development Influences:

The earliest years are the foundation for lifelong thriving and skill development but are the period of the lifespan in which the U.S. invests the least. Socioeconomic and racial/ethnic gaps in families’ access to and quality of early learning opportunities is large and growing and COVID-19 exacerbated these inequalities. Coordinated support in early childhood that addresses economic, environmental and family instability is crucial for healthy long-term development.

Local Snapshot:

- In 2021, 24,858 children were utilizing publicly funded childcare in Cuyahoga County.
- Overall Cleveland Poverty Rates:
  - Black: 48%
  - Hispanic: 44.9%
  - Asian: 32.4%
  - White: 22.8%
- 20.7% of children live within a food insecure household, crucial for well-being.
- Head Start in Cuyahoga:
  - 2.6% of enrolled children are under 3 years
  - 97.4% of enrolled children are 3-5 years

### Cradle to Kindergarten Early Childhood Policy Gaps & Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affordable, Quality Child Care</th>
<th>Universal Quality Preschool</th>
<th>Paid Parental Leave</th>
<th>Head Start</th>
<th>Child Poverty Reduction</th>
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<td>Only a fraction of eligible low- and even middle-income families can access affordable, quality early child care.</td>
<td>Universal preschool programs have been shown to increase the likelihood of attending college by 12%.</td>
<td>Rapid return to work after child birth has been predictive of poorer childhood outcomes like breast feeding rates, fewer vaccinations, and increased child behavior problems.</td>
<td>Head Start offers intensive, early support for children and families experiencing high adversity in areas of concentrated disadvantage. With its focus on ages 3-5, earlier support is needed.</td>
<td>The U.S. has some of the highest child poverty rates among the rich countries of the world. The recent Baby's First Years study shows that reducing child poverty in the first year of life results in increased infant brain activity.</td>
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**Proposed Policy Framework:**

- A child care guarantee to all working families combining use of a refundable tax credit for child care costs and childcare subsidies to support quality child care for children under 5 and with family incomes below 150% of the state median income.

- State education departments work with local departments (with aid from federal government) to develop all-day preschool for 3 and 4 year olds with structure and process quality standards.

- Universal paid leave for up to 16 weeks with minimum and capped wages, built on the Social Security program, with focus on child’s first year of life.

- Realign and strengthen Head Start to ensure free child care for most disadvantaged and vulnerable children under 5, with focus on 0-3, using strong community ties and links to pediatric and early intervention supports.

- Reinstate the Biden Administration’s expanded Child Tax Credit, which reduced child poverty by over 40 percent in the United States in the second half of 2021.

**Local Policy Highlights:**

**AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILD CARE**

- Step Up to Quality (SUTO):
  - Improvement in Kindergarten Readiness Assessment scores in children in higher rated programs.
  - Publicly Funded Child Care through Ohio Works First
  - Provides coverage for child care expenses for families at or below 142% of FPL until they reach 300% of FPL.

**PAID PARENTAL LEAVE**

- Ohio has no universal or comprehensive policy for paid parental leave. In the US, 11 states have implemented their own paid parental leave (PPL) programs.
- Ohio Municipal Paid Parental Leave
  - The state of Ohio, 3 counties (Summit, Lucas, Montgomery) and 15 Ohio cities offer PPL to municipal employees. Local groups are urging Cleveland officials to enact paid family and medical leave for city employees.

**HEAD START**

- Head Start programs in Cuyahoga County participate as UPK sites with quality enhancement funding to strengthen standards and help serve children with special needs.
- School House: Two-Gen model pilot to reduce childhood poverty through providing stable family housing, parent academic support, rental services and resident services, coupled with quality child care with Head Start.

**LOCAL RESOURCES:**

- Birthing Beautiful Communities
- Black Child Development Institute
- Bright Beginnings
- Groundwork Ohio
- Help Me Grow
- Invest In Children
- Starting Point
- Zero to Three
- PRE4CLE

**Universality Charter**

- Invest in Children’s Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program (UPK)
  - 65.8% of program children were on track for language and literacy.
- PRE4CLE Initiative & Head Start
  - 70% of regularly attending PRE4CLE preschoolers are demonstrating and approaching kindergarten readiness.
- Full day Kindergarten Ohio mandate (ORC 3313.48).

**Policy Matters Ohio (2023). Ohio Municipal Paid Leave Initiative 2023.**

**Ohio Revised Code**

- Section 3313.48

**The Schubert Center for Child Studies**

- p: 216.368.0540
- e: schubertcenter@case.edu
- w: case.edu/schubertcenter

**Focus on most vulnerable children.**

- Targeted Universalism framework to improve education/care that is equitable and accessible to all.
- Phase in expansion of access to quality child care and early education by starting with most disadvantaged families and connecting them with high-quality care and resources with federal funding.

**Invest in critical early care and education workforce to ensure quality.**

- Increase provider reimbursement rates to help recruit and retain early care workers.
- Partner with higher ed to build early care and education career pathways.
- Train child care programs and preschools to provide supports for family needs, including trauma-informed care and mental health and well-being support.

**Prioritize policies that promote parent choice and flexibility.**

- Support the continuation of the Child Tax Credit and unconditional direct cash transfers, with focus on early childhood for child well-being.
- Community members urge for policy change to expand Child Tax Credit.
- Urge adoption of equitable paid parental leave for all working parents.

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