

Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care

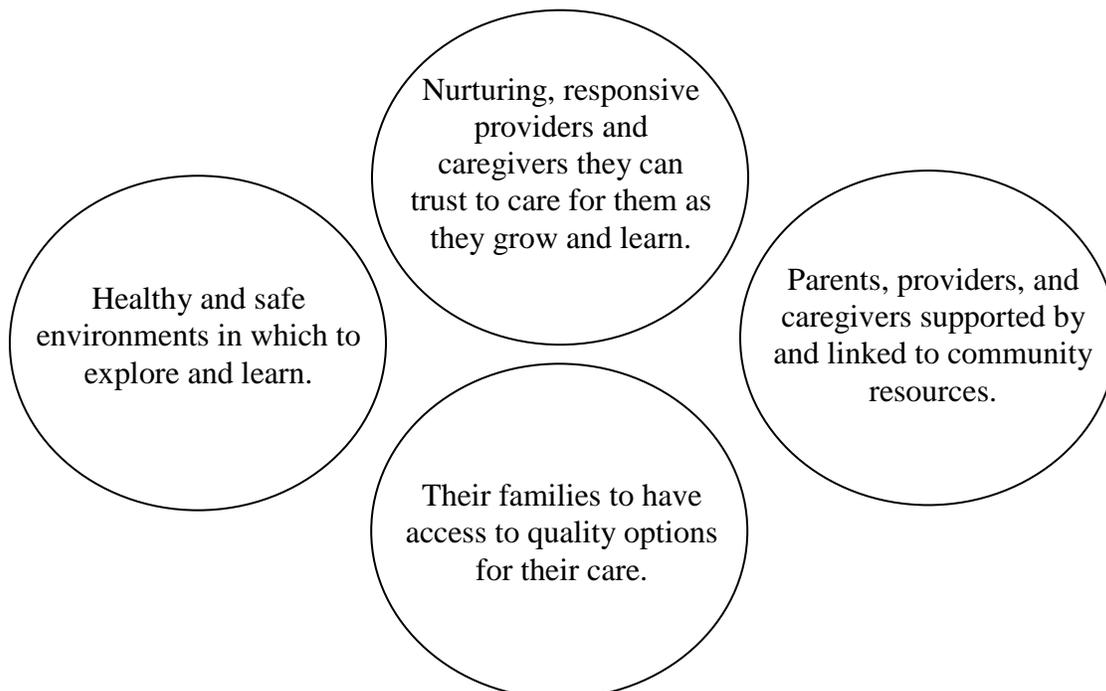
POLICY FRAMEWORK

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 enhancement policies that improve the opportunities for babies and toddlers in child care to experience the nurturing, responsive care that will help them thrive.

CLASP’s ***Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care*** project links research to policy ideas and examples that support the healthy growth and development of infants and toddlers in child care settings and provides online resources to help states implement these policies. The foundation of the project is a Policy Framework that CLASP developed in collaboration with **ZERO TO THREE** based on interviews with over one hundred leaders—including policymakers, researchers, and advocates—around the country. Grounded on four fundamental principles describing what babies and toddlers in child care need, this Framework has 15 recommendations that reflect desired goals for state policies. The [project webpage](#) provides the research basis to help make the case for each recommendation, policy ideas, state examples, and online resources for state policymakers.

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 provides the research basis to help make the case for each recommendation, policy ideas, state examples, and online resources for state policymakers.

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 Core Competencies**: 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) **Provide Access to Training, Education, and Ongoing Supports**: Ensure access to specialized professional development for providers working with infants and toddlers, including participation in higher education programs, community-level training, ongoing individualized consultations, and access to appropriate information and supports for caregivers, so that those who care for infants and toddlers in all settings understand and implement a core body of knowledge and skills.
- 3) **Promote Continuity of Care**: 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**: 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) **Support a Diverse and Culturally Competent Workforce**: Ensure the diversity and cultural competence of infant and toddler providers and caregivers in order 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) **Improve Center Ratios and Group Sizes:** 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) **Improve Family Child Care Ratios and Group Sizes:** Ensure that no more than two children under age 2 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) **Promote Health and Safety:** Ensure that state licensing rules address the needs of infants and toddlers, including requiring practices and training for providers in areas such as back-to-sleep, hand-washing, bathing, holding, feeding, comforting, diapering, and providing responsive caregiving. Make certain that all infant and toddler providers and caregivers have access to the relevant training and necessary technical assistance relevant to care of this age group, and require appropriate training prior to child care subsidy receipt.
- 9) **Expand Monitoring and Technical Assistance:** 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) **Promote Family Engagement:** Promote family engagement and partnerships between families with infants and toddlers and their child care providers and caregivers.
- 11) **Promote Access to Appropriate Screenings:** 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) **Promote Access to Comprehensive Services:** 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 Supply of Quality 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) **Use Subsidy Policies to Promote Stable, Quality Care:** 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 Information on Infant/Toddler Care:** Provide all parents of infants and toddlers with culturally and linguistically appropriate information on choosing high-quality care and subsidy eligibility.

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The POLICY FRAMEWORK was developed by CLASP and 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 advocacy organization whose mission is to develop and advocate for policies at the federal, state and local levels that improve the lives of low income people. In particular, we seek policies that work to strengthen families and create pathways to education and work.

ZERO TO THREE is a national nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers.