

# Expanding High-Quality Child Care for Infants & Toddlers

Lessons from Implementation of Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships in States





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If you are a parent, provider, teacher or administrator, let your legislator(s) know the value early childhood programs provide, and also the importance of investing in Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships.

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# Key Takeaways

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*The Ounce recently conducted interviews with a variety of state leaders regarding their Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships (Partnerships) programs. Interviewees included those who administer a Partnerships grant, and some who supported implementation of Partnerships in their states but did not have a Partnerships grant.*

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## Child Care Background

- Child care for children under age 3 is especially hard for families to afford.
- Scientific research shows that relationships with adult caregivers build neural connections in the brain by age 3, impacting a child's lifelong health, education and other social outcomes.
- The current state of child care in the United States has young children, particularly infants and toddlers whose parents work but earn low wages, losing the opportunity to thrive before they even reach kindergarten.

## The Partnerships program is:

- A federally-funded program launched in 2014 by Congress as a promising solution to the infant toddler child care crisis. The program was created to be a collaboration between a grantee and local child care center or family child (home-based) provider where the partnership agrees to adhere to Head Start Performance Standards in exchange of supports and resources (i.e. coaching, research-based curricula, comprehensive services, etc.).
- Designed for children under the age of 3 from families with income below the federal poverty guidelines; are receiving TANF or SSI; are experiencing homelessness; and/or children in foster care.
- Comprised of over 275 grantees nationwide, partnering with 1,400 local child care centers and 1,000 family child care centers, providing 32,000 infants and toddlers with access to high-quality early care and learning.

## According to several state leaders interviewed for the Ounce's study, the Partnerships have made it possible for states to:

- Leverage multiple funding sources and state systems in new ways to support local program success and quality.
- Support continuity of care without interruptions for infants and toddlers in working families with low incomes.
- Raise the bar for what quality infant and toddler child care could and should be.
- Create higher education pathways to build new skills and competencies for the infant and toddler workforce.
- Pilot reforms that were ultimately scaled statewide to improve care for many more babies and toddlers.

## According to the Ounce's study, there are several opportunities for policymakers at the federal and state levels to strengthen the Partnerships. Some opportunities include:

- Permanently authorizing the Partnerships and strengthening requirements.
- Increasing funding for the Partnerships.
- Continuing to increase access to high-quality child care.
- Incentivizing states to establish beneficial child care policies.
- Studying and highlighting promising Partnership practices across states.

# Letter to a Legislator

<<Insert Date>>

<<Insert Legislator's Name>>

<<Insert Legislator's Address>>

Re: Invest in high-quality child care for children in the United States: Increase funding for the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships programs

Dear <<Insert Legislator's Name>>,

Access to high-quality early childhood education is essential to the future success of our youngest learners and their families, especially working families earning low wages and living in underserved communities. However, the lack of affordable high-quality child care for infants and toddlers is at a crisis level. Nearly 5 million children under the age of 5 living in families with earnings below the poverty level do not have access to experiences that promote healthy development and learning. In 2014, Congress addressed this challenge by appropriating \$500 million to expand access to Early Head Start, which included the creation of a new Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships program (Partnerships).

It is essential that funding allocations for the Partnerships like this one continue into the future.

With those dollars, as of 2017, the Partnerships program has funded 32,000 Early Head Start (EHS) slots for infants and toddlers, supported the professional development of 8,000 early learning educators, and partnered with 1,400 child care centers and 1,000 family child care programs. Partnerships have empowered local community child care businesses to improve their quality and provided pathways to strengthen the early childhood workforce in several states across the country. Through the Partnerships, we have seen tremendous strides achieved in ensuring the expansion and sustainability of high-quality child care across the United States.

An investment in the Partnerships program is an investment in securing bright futures for many more young children across the country. I strongly urge you to champion for funding increases for child care in the future, specifically toward the Partnerships, because when you change the first five years, you change everything.

Sincerely,

<<Insert Your Name>>

Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2017) "Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships: Growing the Supply of Early Learning Opportunities for More Infants and Toddlers." [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/ehs\\_ccp\\_brochure.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/ehs_ccp_brochure.pdf)

# Template | Social Media Posts

## Facebook

In 2014, Congress deliberated about how to address the alarming state of child care, deciding to appropriate \$500 million to expand access to Early Head Start programs. This funding included the creation of new Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships. We are excited to be featured in the @OunceofPreventionFund’s newly-released research on the influence of the Partnerships. Learn more about the report and check out our state profile at [www.theOunce.org/Partnerships](http://www.theOunce.org/Partnerships).

## Twitter

Thrilled to be one of the states featured in @theOunce’s research on the vital need for increased funding for high-quality child care for our infants and toddlers. Learn more about the report and check out our state profile at [www.theOunce.org/Partnerships](http://www.theOunce.org/Partnerships).

# Template | News Release

We're excited to announce the release of a new policy paper that features <<Insert Organization>> and the work <<Insert State>> is doing to ensure our youngest children have access to positive and quality child care opportunities. The paper, [Expanding High-Quality Child Care for Infants & Toddlers](#), highlights key findings that demonstrate the importance of high-quality child care and provides key recommendations for expanding and strengthening the current Partnerships program.

The Ounce of Prevention Fund (the Ounce), a Chicago-based nonprofit organization focused on providing access to high-quality early childhood education and care to children and families, conducted interviews with a variety of state leaders regarding their Partnerships programs. Interviewees included those who administer a Partnerships grant (Alabama, D.C. and Georgia), and some who supported implementation of Partnerships in their states but did not have a Partnerships grant (Louisiana, Maryland, Oklahoma and Washington).

<<Include Anecdote from Organization or State>>

The Ounce found that across states, Partnerships have:

- Leveraged multiple funding sources and state systems in new ways to support local program success and quality.
- Supported continuity of care without interruptions for infants and toddlers in working families with low incomes.
- Raised the bar for what quality infant and toddler child care could and should be.
- Created higher education pathways to build new skills and competencies for the infant and toddler workforce.
- Piloted reforms that were ultimately scaled statewide to improve care for many more infants and toddlers.


<<Include Quote from Organization or State Leader>>

Learn more about the report and check out our state profile at [www.theOunce.org/Partnerships](http://www.theOunce.org/Partnerships).



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**The Ounce of Prevention Fund** (the Ounce) gives children in poverty the best chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest-quality care and education from birth to age five. The Ounce envisions a world in which high-quality early learning opportunities beginning at birth are an integral part of our nation's education system. With commitment to quality as our guiding principle, the Ounce works at the intersection of practice, policy and research and forges public-private partnerships. Over the last 30 years, the Ounce has developed an effective approach to advancing knowledge, testing ideas in real-world settings, advocating for policy change, engaging champions and training practitioners and leaders.