

# Excerpt from Expanding High-Quality Child Care for Infants & Toddlers

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



# Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships

## Awards and State Profiles

### Total Annual Partnership Awards to All Grantees

State	Federal FY 2015-2019 Round 1 Grants <sup>A</sup>	Federal FY 2017-2021 Round 2 Grants <sup>B</sup>	Federal FY 2019- 2023 Round 3 Grants <sup>C</sup>
ALABAMA	\$ 8.3 million	\$ 2.2 million	\$10.5 million
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	\$ 0.9 million	\$ 3.0 million	\$ 7.6 million
GEORGIA	\$16.2 million	\$ 2.1 million	\$20.1 million
LOUISIANA	\$ 8.4 million	\$ 5.2 million	\$15.5 million
MARYLAND	\$ 3.4 million	\$ 0	\$ 4.5 million
OKLAHOMA*	\$11.8 million	\$ 7.8 million	\$24.3 million
WASHINGTON	\$ 8.4 million	\$ 4.1 million	\$13.3 million

#### Note:

**Round 1 Grants** – In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, Congress allocated \$500 million for the first round of EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants. ACF awarded the grants for this first round to state and local agencies in winter 2014. Grantees must reapply for these awards every five years.

**Round 2 Grants** – Congress allocated an additional \$135 million for new EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants in FY 2016. ACF awarded the grants for this second round of funding in winter 2017.

**Round 3 Grants** – Congress allocated a combined \$165 million for new EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants between FY 2018 and FY 2019. ACF awarded the grants in spring 2019. Spring 2019 awards also included grant renewals for state and local agencies that had received Round 1 awards in winter 2014.

#### Endnote:

**A** Calculated by the author based on information on the federal fiscal year 2014 awards, found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/early-learning/ehs-cc-partnerships/grant-awardees>.

**B** Calculated based on data from the Tracking Accountability in Government Grants System, available at <https://taggs.hhs.gov>.

**C** Data provided by the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, via email on August 16, 2019.

\* Oklahoma funding amounts include grants to two tribal EHS-CC Partnerships grantees.

To see the full report, please visit: [www.theOunce.org/Partnerships](http://www.theOunce.org/Partnerships)





# OK

The experience of supporting Partnerships in Oklahoma had an impact on CCS leaders and their thinking about how to improve child care quality in the state. Partnerships provided the impetus to create a new statewide infant-toddler specialist network that provides technical assistance and training to child care providers caring for children 0-3 years of age.



# Oklahoma Profile

## Oklahoma's Story

In Oklahoma, the director of Child Care Services (CCS) within the state's Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for oversight of the child care subsidy program, child care licensing, professional development and quality initiatives such as the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Officials at CCS saw the Partnerships Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) as a chance to attract federal funds to the state to improve infant and toddler child care quality. State funding to support subsidized child care had not increased for years, and the child care assistance program had not been able to raise payment rates to keep up with inflation or expand services in underserved areas. In particular, CCS staff read the Partnerships guidance encouraging states to layer the new grant on top of child care slots paid for with the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) with interest. Finding out layering funding was possible was new and exciting.

"We didn't want to do anything wrong, so we never went down that path before. It was great to have the answer clearly in writing," said Lesli Blazer, the former CCS director.

Oklahoma did not apply for a state-level Partnership grant, but CCS wanted to see Oklahoma grantees succeed. At the same time, the state was reviewing changes that would be required by the federal CCDBG law, so CCS staff managed the changes together as much as possible. They also worked to build relationships with the in-state grantees,

including the Choctaw Nation and Delaware Tribe, by setting up quarterly meetings between them and CCS staff.

"It has really enhanced our relationships, and we think it is a supportive space for both the grantees and the Administration. It gives us the opportunity to hear participants' successes and challenges firsthand; we hear challenges and try to figure out solutions together," Blazer said.

The experience of supporting Partnerships in Oklahoma had an impact on CCS leaders and their thinking about how to improve child care quality in the state. Partnerships provided the impetus to focus on building the supply of quality care for infants and toddlers, leading the state to use the funds set aside for quality required by CCDBG reauthorization to create a new statewide infant-toddler specialist network that provides technical assistance and training to child care providers caring for children 0-3 years of age. After piloting layered funding policies with Partnerships grantees, CCS has entered into a public-private partnership to expand this model to other providers across the state so they can provide full-day, full-year high-quality early care and education. When Congress increased Oklahoma's CCDBG allocation as part of the 2018 increase, CCS decided to raise payment rates for infants and toddlers by at least 30% and others by a minimum of 7% to encourage better quality providers to serve children receiving child care assistance.



## Oklahoma Federal Award

**\$11.8 million**

Federal FY 2015-2019  
Round 1 Grants

**\$7.8 million**

Federal FY 2017-2021  
Round 2 Grants

**\$24.3 million**

Federal FY 2019- 2023  
Round 3 Grants

## What Were Oklahoma's Strategies?

### Leveraged multiple funding sources and state systems to support program success and quality.

- Allowed Partnerships grantees to layer the new Early Head Start funding they received from the federal grant on top of full-day, full-year child care subsidy payments for children eligible for both Early Head Start and the state child care subsidy program. Prior to this policy change, full-workday, full-year programs in Oklahoma could not braid funding for services delivered over the course of a 10-12 hour day, which resulted in segmenting the program day into Early Head Start (EHS) and child care "portions of the day." Thus, in full workday, full-year programs funded by EHS and CCDBG funds, subsidy payments were only authorized for before and after "school" hours, requiring families to swipe their Electronic Benefit Card four times daily to log their children in and out of "child care" before and after EHS program hours. The CCS policy change permitting Partnerships providers to receive a full-day subsidy payment, in addition to EHS funding, reduced administrative and logistical burdens on providers and families who now only have to log in once in the morning and once in the evening. This policy change has also substantially increased providers' revenues allowing child care programs to attract and retain more qualified teachers.

- Used the CCDBG (infant and toddler and quality set-aside funds) to enhance quality supports for grantees through an infant and toddler specialist network.
- Worked with one Partnership grantee to increase access for infants and toddlers in foster care to the new high-quality slots.

### Supported continuous access to infant and toddler child care for working families earning low incomes.

- Extended child care assistance eligibility to no less than 12 months after the Partnerships were implemented.
- Waived copayments for assistance for families under the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in Partnerships partner settings.
- Guaranteed full-time rates, including absent days for enrollees. This helps providers by stabilizing their payments each month.

### Raised the bar for what quality infant and toddler child care could and should be.

- Developed a model for a statewide infant and toddler coaching and specialist network that deploys skilled professionals to work directly with infant toddler teachers and caregivers to increase their skills, knowledge and competencies to deliver best practices and increase the quality of each infant or toddler's developmental experience.

*"In working to build relationships with the in-state grantees, it gave us the opportunity to hear participants' successes and challenges firsthand and try to figure out solutions together."*

**LESLI BLAZER, Former Director of Child Care Services**

### Built a higher education pathway for the infant and toddler workforce.

- Helped teachers in Partnerships sites access professional development by creating new certificates of achievement and a stipend program, which is funded with CCDBG quality funds.

### Piloted reforms that could be expanded statewide to improve care for many more babies and toddlers.

- Tested child care subsidy policy changes that are now statewide, such as layering CCDBG and other public and private funds. Increased funding allowed infant toddler child care providers to invest new resources in a range

of strategies that improve quality, such as purchasing new curriculum, equipment and supplies, paying higher wages to attract and retain well-qualified teachers and offering training on the job to implement best practices.

- Drew on Partnerships experience to establish a new collaborative relationship with Oklahoma Early Childhood Partnership Program, a high-quality statewide early education program for children ages 0-4. Funded through a public-private partnership, this program encourages layered funding sources for programs to raise quality for infants and toddlers in child care.

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## USEFUL LINKS

### The state child care subsidy website:

<http://www.okdhs.org/services/cc/Pages/ChildCare.aspx>

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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.