

2022 Preschool Development Birth-Five (PDG B-5) Grants Offer Opportunity to Innovate for Infants and Toddlers



The newest offerings of the Preschool Development Grant program, PDG B-5, open pathways for states to intentionally include infants and toddlers.

- The PDG B-5 Planning Grant will fund states to develop, update, and implement a strategic plan to strengthen the state's integrated early childhood system for all young children.
- The PDG B-5 Renewal Grant will fund states to build upon their initial grant activities, investing in strategies that support and strengthen the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) workforce, enhance quality, and expand access to early childhood services for children.

We know from science that brains are built from the bottom up. During the first three years of life, the brain undergoes its most dramatic development, and children acquire the ability to think, speak, learn, and reason. The early experiences of young children will shape the architecture of their brains in enduring ways and build the foundation – whether strong or weak – for their future development. For that reason, we strongly encourage you to emphasize the importance of supporting early learning beginning from birth as you apply for and implement PDG B-5. This includes focusing intentionally on the settings and programs where babies are served, including Early Head Start (EHS); child care centers; family child care homes; and family, friend, and neighbor care – all critical partners in the birth to five ECCE mixed delivery system. It is equally important that states consider how they can strengthen connections between ECCE settings and the broader early childhood system, including Part C early intervention, home visiting, health, mental health, nutrition, child welfare, economic security and family support services.

This document explains how PDG B-5 planning and renewal grants could be used to address ECCE system challenges specific to infants and toddlers and offers recommendations for specific strategies that states could include in PDG B-5 plans to improve outcomes for babies. Information is organized into the following sections:

- Why include a focus on babies in PDG B-5?
- Implementing a needs assessment and strategic planning (PDG B-5 activities 1 and 2)
- Maximizing parental choice and involvement in the ECCE mixed delivery system (PDG B-5 activity 3)
- Supporting and Strengthening the B-5 ECCE workforce (PDG B-5 activity 4)
- Improving quality of B-5 ECCE programs (PDG B-5 activity 5)
- Using subgrants to enhance quality and expand access (PDG B-5 Renewal Only Activity 6)

Why Should Infants and Toddlers Be a Critical Focus of PDG B-5 Grants?

Parents and primary caregivers play the most immediate role in shaping their children's early foundation. When parents go to work, they want and need access to high-quality, affordable child care that supports their infants' and toddlers' health and mental health development. Quality child care feeds a baby's growing brain, building the foundation for the development necessary for them to thrive as adults.

- High-quality child care depends on a well-compensated workforce. Average wages for infant and toddler care are at the bottom of the occupational ladder at approximately \$12 an hour with more than half relying on public assistance. Low wages disproportionately impact women of color. 45% of early childhood educators are Black, Asian or Latinx, and half of child care businesses are minority owned. The pandemic has exacerbated these conditions prompting many child care workers to leave the field and creating widespread staffing shortages.
- Infant-toddler care, especially high-quality care, is prohibitively expensive for families, with costs ranging from 29.3% of a family's income to 93.8% depending on where the family lives. Infant-toddler care costs more than college in 35 states and the District of Columbia and surpasses the cost of housing in 3 out of 4 regions
- Despite the high cost of infant care, few families receive financial assistance for it. Only 4.6 percent of infants and toddlers in families with low-or moderate-incomes are served by the Child Care and Development Fund.
- Individual states set eligibility levels for child care subsidies. Currently only 16 states allow child care subsidies for families with incomes above 200 percent of the federal poverty level which was \$3,838 per month for a family of 3 in 2022.
- High-quality infant-toddlers care isn't only expensive, it is hard to find. Even before COVID-19, most families lived in areas defined as child care deserts for infant-toddler care, areas which licensed child care supply is far short of the population. Moreover, families struggle to find child care options that meet their cultural and linguistic needs.

Child care and other early learning opportunities for infants and toddlers have fallen far short of what children and families need for decades and the loss of child care capacity as well as ongoing service disruptions resulting from the pandemic have left children and families facing a crisis in access to care. PDG B-5 offers states an opportunity to consider how to change this disturbing trend.

Strategies for Implementing a Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning that Includes Infants and Toddlers (PDG B-5 Activities 1 and 2)

- First and foremost, consider how to bring families to the table at the beginning of the planning process. Family voice is crucial in creating policies that make sense for babies and their families.
- Include stakeholders from across the entire spectrum of infant and toddler services. Include ECCE providers from all settings as well as public partners from health and mental health, child care, home visiting, Part C early intervention and child welfare.
- Incorporate findings from related needs assessments and strategic plans focused on



children birth to three, such as those for Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS); Infant-Toddler Court Teams Community Needs Assessment and State Action Plans; Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV); Preschool Development Grant B-5, and Project LAUNCH (Linking Unmet Needs for Children's Health) Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health SAMHSA grants.

- Explore where babies are:
 - What percentage of infants and toddlers are being served in EHS; child care centers; family child care homes; and family, friend, and neighbor care?
 - What is the level of quality of these settings?
 - What services and supports, including IECMH supports are available to parents who are home with their young children?
- Examine how the existing supply of infant and toddler ECCE programs compares to the need – are there differences by geography, race/ethnicity, language, income level, and/or age? Explore how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted infant-toddler supply and the infant-toddler workforce.
- Consider if there are strategies employed using federal COVID-relief funding to support infant-toddler ECCE that could be sustained, adapted or replicated.
- Explore how parents are making choices about ECCE for their infants and toddlers – are factors such as limited supply and high costs limiting parental choice?
- Consider how children are transitioning through the B-5 ECCE system and identify ways to strengthen transitions.
- Explore if and how funding streams supporting the B-5 ECCE system are coordinated.

Suggested Resources for PDG B-5 Activities 1 and 2

- [***State of Babies Yearbook 2022***](#) - This yearbook compares national and state-by-state data on the well-being of America's babies to help policymakers and advocates advance policies and budgets that put babies and families first. It includes [state profiles](#), a [national landscape](#), and the ability to [compare data with neighboring states](#) to support policy decisions.
- [***Building Strong Foundations for Families Bright Spot Video Series***](#) – This video series captures thoughts from interviews conducted with participants from each BSFF state team. Video topics include advancing infant-toddler state policies, expanding public-private partnerships, how states integrated an intentional focus on racial equity, and centering parent voice.
- [***Webinar Series: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Policy***](#) - ZERO TO THREE's IECMH Policy Team explores policy strategies to support the social and emotional well-being of young children and their families. The team hosted a webinar series focused on the foundations of IECMH Policy. Experts from the IECMH Policy Team closely explored innovative policy and advocacy strategies that support the social and emotional well-being of young children and their families. Participants heard from colleagues across the country working to advance IECMH in their states to ensure a great start for babies!

Strategies for Including an Intentional Focus on Infants and Toddlers in Maximizing Parental Choice and Involvement in the ECCE Mixed Delivery System (PDG B-5 Activity 3)

Strategies that center family voices are essential to addressing bias and advancing equity in state policy. Families are the experts in their experiences and the services they use or need to support themselves or the families that they serve. Centering their voices results in policies that are more reflective of the needs of children and families and are thereby more effective in addressing the challenges that these policies seek to solve.

Consider the following Principle and Strategies:

Principles for Elevating Family Voices

- Families are experts.
- While families may choose to share their stories, they are in control of how those stories are used.
- Families are partners, not assets.
- It is the responsibility of organizations to create spaces and processes that enable meaningful family participation.
- Families have a right to know the outcomes of their participation such as decisions made or policy change.
- Relationship building is the foundation of authentic engagement.
- Authentic parent partnership means shared ownership of the outcomes

Strategies for Inviting Parent Voices

- Surveys in multiple languages and formats;
- Stipends/honoraria to recognize time, energy, and ideas contributed by parents and providers, as well as offset potential child care costs;
- Meetings held in the evenings or at times that are convenient to the community being engaged;
- Online meetings to eliminate commute time;
- Interpretation services;
- Print and digital resources in multiple languages;
- Support from an organizer to ensure that participants have the information and context they need to participate fully;
- Partner with trusted community organizations or networks; and
- Slow down the process.

Too often, the policymaking process fails to authentically include those who are most directly impacted by policies designed to serve infants, toddlers, and their families. By utilizing these principles and strategies, organizations can help to ensure that the voices of families with the youngest children are heard often and regularly. Additionally, policymakers should:

- Ensure that state systems focused on establishing high-quality B-5 ECCE programs support the full B-5 ECCE mixed delivery system, including less formal settings where many babies may be served.

- Educate parents on key indicators of quality for infants and toddlers and share key information, such as hours of operation, languages spoken, and cost, so parents can make informed decisions. Ensure materials are accessible to all families by considering language, reading level, outreach strategies.
- Support ECCE programs to strengthen their engagement with parents, particularly around promoting their infants' and toddlers' mental health and development, navigating transitions within and among ECCE programs, and connecting to other early childhood system services, such as Part C or home visiting.



Suggested Resources for PDG B-5 Activity 3

- [***Addressing Bias and Advancing Equity in State Policy***](#) - This article explores the many ways in which states can and are addressing racial equity in problem solving and policymaking. The authors explore national data that make the case for addressing bias and advancing equity in state policy; share strategies and best practices for engaging families and communities; and provide examples of policies that can disrupt and dismantle institutional racism, promote equity, and ensure all babies get a strong start in life.
- [***Centering Parent Voices***](#) - Participants in the ZTT Building Strong Foundations project were asked to examine disaggregated data, invite impacted individuals to decision making tables and to closely examine the policies and practices that impact babies and their families in their individual states. This video highlights how some of the BSFF states responded when asked about their experiences in elevating family voices and giving families power in making policy decisions.

Strategies for Including an Intentional Focus on Infants and Toddlers in Supporting Strengthening the B-5 ECCE Workforce and Disseminating Best Practices (PDG B-5 Activity 4)

- Increase access to culturally competent professional learning opportunities designed for specific settings and create career pathways and equitable compensation strategies designed to improve quality and longevity of infant and toddler child care options.
- Address compensation disparities within the B-5 ECCE mixed delivery system, with particular attention to infant-toddler caregivers who are typically paid less than those working with older children.
- Implement recruitment and retention strategies specific to infant-toddler caregivers.
- Ensure workforce development offerings are provided in languages spoken by the ECCE workforce.
- Provide incentives to infant-toddler caregivers to support their participation in professional development specific to serving babies and toddlers.
- Ensure the full range of infants' and toddlers' needs, including social emotional/mental health needs, and the content and skills caregivers need to support them, are articulated in state core knowledge and competencies.

- Ensure that career ladders include infant toddler specific tiers that allow both cross sector and multiple settings movement while encouraging professionals with infant and toddler expertise to continue to work within that age range.
- Work with institutions of higher education to incorporate substantial infant-toddler content into existing early childhood curricula.
- Establish an infant-toddler credential to ensure individuals caring for infants and toddlers have the specialized knowledge and skills necessary.
- Create an Infant Toddler Specialist Network and/or ensure child care resource and referral staff have expertise in early childhood development so that they can support ECCE programs to deliver high-quality services for infants and toddlers.
- Take intentional measures to ensure that changes within the B-5 ECCE system (such as universal pre-k) do not negatively impact the infant and toddler workforce.
- Encourage coordination between Associations of Infant Mental Health and support child care providers to earn IECMH endorsement.

Suggested Resources for PDG B-5 Activity 4

- [**Supporting High-Quality Early Care and Education from Birth to 5: State Strategies to Strengthen Infant-Toddler Care as Public Pre-k Expands**](#) – This policy brief underscores the critical need for policymakers to expand and stabilize infant-toddler child care when investing in public pre-k. It includes state policy recommendations, such as: implementing pre-k through a mixed-delivery system, allocating a portion of pre-k investment and child care funds strategically to shore up infant-toddler care, and investing in family child care programs, and state examples.
- [**Defining Competencies for the Early Childhood Workforce**](#) - Defining and embedding consistent, evidence-based competencies is a foundational step in realizing significant, sustainable improvements to infant-toddler services. Competencies can help build awareness, readiness, and capacity to change, and support exploration and adaptation in professional practice. This article explores competency-based education to advance effective early childhood services.

Strategies for Including an Intentional Focus on Infants and Toddlers in Improving Quality of ECCE Programs (PDG B-5 Activity 5)

- Ensure that all efforts to improve quality begin with supporting the workforce. Well compensated and properly supported caregivers are the foundation of any quality early learning environment.
- Support additional facilities and upgrades to facilities to provide safe and developmentally appropriate care for infants and toddlers.
- Create support systems for programs that care for infants and toddlers, such as networks that provide administrative support and reduce burden on program leaders.
- Incentivize partnerships between program types that help to stabilize and provide additional supports like Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships.
- Strengthen program quality standards (such as in a Quality Improvement System) to better recognize and promote the unique developmental needs of infants and toddlers by including standards specific to their care and education, such as:

- Infant-toddler training for caregivers
- Approved curricula and learning approaches specific to infants and toddlers
- Lower ratios for infants and toddlers
- Communication with parents regarding routines
- Assignment of a primary caregiver and continuity of care
- Partnerships with the state Part C system
- Integrate infant-toddler early learning guidelines, core knowledge and competencies, and credentials.
- Offer financial incentives for improving quality and/or prioritize infant-toddler providers in tiered reimbursement systems to address the higher cost of providing care for infants and toddlers so that efforts to raise quality do not result in fewer slots for young children.
- Provide infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) consultation to ECCE programs so that caregivers are better able to support very young children's wellbeing.

Suggested Resources for PDG B-5 Activity 5

- [**Places for All Babies: Home-Based Child Care is an Essential Part of the Solution**](#) – This brief highlights the value of increasing and strengthening both family child care (FCC) and family, friend and neighbor (FFN) providers. These home-based types of care are important to many families, as they frequently offer families cultural or language continuity, non-traditional work hours, or the convenience of being located within their immediate community. This brief also includes examples of state strategies, and recommendations that policymakers can explore to build robust mixed delivery systems that embrace both FCC and FFN as essential components in an array of high quality options for infants and toddlers.

Strategies for Using Subgrants to Enhance Quality and Expand Access for Families with Infants and Toddlers (PDG B-5 Renewal Only Activity)

Families should have access to high-quality, affordable child care that best suits their needs, across a variety of settings, whether a child care center, family child care home, or family, friend, and neighbor care. High-quality child care that supports babies' healthy development includes nurturing relationships with caregivers, continuity and stability of care, and an environment that is safe for young children to explore and learn. There are ways that you can specifically target infants and toddlers as a part of your subgrant strategy. Consider these strategies:



- Before beginning this process, ensure that families are at the decision making tables and have power in selecting both how funding is spent and in how decisions are made.
- Create strategies to ensure that funding is distributed in an equitable way, reaching diverse

organizations and populations. Consider engaging grassroots advocacy organizations to assist with this.

- Expand access to ECCE programs that offer comprehensive child and family supports, such as EHS and EHS-child care partnerships.
- Fund support networks that provide access to business, administrative and marketing assistance; child development support; and shared service alliances.
- Implement or expand a contracted slots model for ensuring spaces for infants and toddlers and stabilizing programs.
- Examine pilot projects implemented using American Rescue Plan Act funding in your state and other states and bring to scale programs that showed promise.

Additional Resources on Strengthening Systems to Better Support Families with Infants and Toddlers

- ***[Envisioning Your Home Visiting Expansion Infographic](#)*** – This infographic is designed to help states and communities engage in collaborative and inclusive planning efforts to expand home visiting. The infographic offers reflective questions to help users come to agreement on a vision and goals for their home visiting continuum as it expands; center equity and community voice; and determine next steps for planning and implementation.
- ***[Strengthening Connections: State Approaches to Connecting Families to Services](#)*** – This series of state profiles and a companion overview paper discuss the challenges families with young children face in finding and accessing services to meet their needs, and strategies states can employ to strengthen connections across services and systems. State partners can be leaders in developing approaches to better connect families to services, but there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Case studies illustrate how LA, MI, TN, VT and WA have used policy levers to strengthen families' connections to services.
- ***[Strengthening Families with Infants and Toddlers: A Policy Framework for States](#)*** – This report reframes the role of child welfare from preventing harm to children toward strengthening families and the communities where they live. The policy framework includes 11 recommendations for states and communities that aim to advance equitable outcomes supporting the health and well-being of very young children and their families, including those who are in or are at risk of entering the child welfare system.

If you are interested in consulting with ZERO TO THREE Policy Center staff about your PDG B-5 grant, please reach out to Jamie Colvard at jcolvard@zerotothree.org.