

THE FEDERAL BUDGET: THE RIGHT INVESTMENTS IN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

We cannot afford to postpone investing in children until they become adults, nor can we wait until they reach school age—a time when it may be too late to intervene. Learning is a dynamic process and is most effective when it begins at a young age and continues through adulthood.

-James Heckman, Ph.D, Nobel Laureate in Economics

Historically, the federal funding for early childhood education has been a critical investment in our national priorities of education and family economic security. With the exception of the stimulus funds, over the last several years the core federal early childhood education programs received small, if any, increases in federal resources, making it difficult for families to access affordable and quality programs for their young children and weakening providers' abilities to meet and sustain delivery of high-quality experiences.

Under current funding levels, the unmet needs of children and families are significant:

- Only one in six eligible children receives child care assistance that help families work and children be safe and supported in learning and development.
- Less than half of eligible preschoolers can enroll in Head Start, which provides school-readiness and comprehensive services.
- Less than four percent of eligible babies and toddlers can enroll in Early Head Start, which ensures a positive developmental foundation for young children.
- Many children with developmental delays and disabilities are unable to receive early intervention services because of inadequate funding of Part C of IDEA.

The sequester has put even greater burdens on families with low and moderate incomes and their children:

- 70,000 Head Start children will lose their program's benefits through reduced enrollment, shorter program length, or other cuts.
- 30,000 children will lose child care assistance, making state waiting lists for assistance even longer as families try to keep their jobs.
- 600,000 children will be vulnerable to poor nutrition because of cuts to WIC.

Recommendations for Budget/Deficit Reduction Agreements:

Any further deficit reduction or budget agreement should not lead to a reduction in the number of children or lower the quality of early childhood education, nutrition, health, and other programs providing important work support for families and supporting development for children.

Any further budget or deficit reduction agreement should fairly increase revenues through closing loopholes and raising revenues for those earning more than \$250,000 a year.

Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2013:

End the sequestration of discretionary funds for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2013 and increase investments in early childhood education, nutrition and health programs.

Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2014:

Increase funding for the Child Care & Development Block Grant so that more families have affordable child care and providers meet higher-quality standards.

Increase funding for Early Head Start and Head Start so that more children from families with low incomes have access to comprehensive development and early learning programs. Fund the President's early childhood initiatives to expand Early Head Start and high-quality child care for children from birth through age 3 and to provide state-federal cost sharing partnership to expand high-quality prekindergarten programs to 4-year-old children, targeted to serving children under 200 percent of poverty.

Extend funding for evidence-based programs under the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program.

Adequately fund Pell Grants and other student financial aid assistance (including loan forgiveness), which helps early childhood educators obtain degrees in early childhood education to improve the quality of their work with children.