

Developing America's Potential

An Agenda for Affordable, High-Quality Child Care

Developing America's Potential: An Agenda for Affordable, High-Quality Child Care is the product of a historic collaboration of national and state organizations to craft a shared “blueprint” for the future of child care. It provides the Obama Administration, Congress, and state policy makers with a detailed road map for much-needed systemic reforms in early childhood. It can guide the reauthorization of our major federal child care program, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), improvements to the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC), and the development of new federal early childhood initiatives.

The Agenda recognizes that high-quality child care helps children, families, and communities prosper. It helps children learn and develop skills they need to succeed in school and in life. It gives parents the support and peace of mind they need to be productive at work. And it helps our nation stay competitive, by producing a stronger workforce now and in the future. But for many families—especially, but not only, low-income families—high-quality child care is currently unaffordable or unattainable.

The Agenda proposes comprehensive, systemic reforms to meet four goals:

- ▲ **Child care will be healthy and safe.** As a fundamental starting point, families must be assured that their children’s health and safety are protected while they are in child care. By requiring basic health and safety standards, including provider training, and regular monitoring of programs for compliance with these standards, the Agenda ensures that children’s well-being is protected.
- ▲ **Children will be in stimulating early childhood and after-school environments that will help them succeed in school and in life.** Beyond meeting basic health and safety standards, care must be of high quality to promote children’s successful development and school readiness. By requiring statewide systems that rate the quality of care and help programs meet progressively higher standards of quality, the Agenda ensures that more children benefit from high-quality early learning experiences.
- ▲ **Low- and moderate-income families will have more help in meeting the cost of care.** Many families with low and moderate incomes struggle to afford the high cost of care—especially higher-quality, often higher-cost, care. By doubling the number of families receiving child care assistance nationwide, facilitating eligible families’ access to assistance, ensuring that child care providers are reimbursed adequately and fairly, and improving the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, the Agenda helps families better afford care.
- ▲ **Families of infants and toddlers will have increased access to high-quality care.** High-quality care for infants and toddlers is of critical importance to children’s early development, yet is in particularly short supply. By supporting high-quality, comprehensive infant and toddler care and providing targeted technical assistance and training, the Agenda both increases the supply of infant and toddler care and provides models that other child care providers and programs can follow.

Under the Agenda, the federal government will ensure that states have sufficient funding to accomplish these goals and will support research, technical assistance, and coordination efforts to implement them.