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Working Together for a Better Beginning

“Research shows that one of the best investments we can make in a child’s life is high-quality early education.”

President Barack Obama in his State of the Union address, January 28, 2014

Early Childhood Development

Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
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Check out these ACF blogs

On Thursday, the U.S. Senate passed a reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, which updates the longstanding program for the first time since the 1990s. The bill, S. 1086, was sponsored by Sens. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Richard Burr (R-NC), who, together with Sens. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Lamar Alexander (R-TN), crafted the legislation. The final vote was 97-1.



The bill supports enhanced quality and safety requirements for federally-financed child-care and after-school programs. It contains measures for helping protect children in child care, such as requiring providers to undergo comprehensive background checks, ensuring annual inspections are conducted and requiring childcare providers receive training on CPR, first and safe sleep practices.

I want to thank Shannon Rudisill and the [Office of Child Care](#) staff for all their efforts to raise the quality of care for children in our country. Their hard work provided the foundation for this vote in the Senate.

I also thank our early childhood support network for all their efforts.

As President Obama stated in his State of the Union address, research shows that one of the best investments we can make in a child’s life is high quality early education. Both the President and Congress have continued to support our youngest infants and toddlers.

Earlier this month, President Obama presented his budget request for FY 2015. It builds on the work done in the 2014 budget and the priorities for investment for the early years of learning.

To build a foundation for success in the formative early years of life, the President’s Budget supports greater access to high-quality early childhood education:

- An \$807 million increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, of which \$57 million is discretionary funding and \$750 million is mandatory funding. Of the discretionary funds, \$200 million would be available to states by formula

The ACF blog — The Family Room — talks about new initiatives at the agency, success stories and policy announcements.

[A Big Week for Tribal Early Childhood Programs](#): New and exciting opportunities for tribal communities to expand high-quality early learning and development launched this year.

[Opportunity for All](#): The foundations of opportunity begin at birth and grow rapidly during the early years of life.

[In Memoriam: Robert E. Cooke, M.D.](#): One of the principal architects of Head Start passed away on Feb. 2.

[ACF Is Deepening Our Relationship with Tribes](#): Commissioner Sparks Robinson recently provided updates to the United South and Eastern Tribes who were in Washington, D.C., this week to discuss cross cutting issues on education, social services and economic development.

[Jacob's Story: Cheaper Coverage for the Whole Family](#): The Affordable Care Act is helping a family in Arkansas access health care coverage on one plan at a much lower rate.

See more blogs on the [ACF Family Room Blog Page](#).

Featured Reports

to increase child care quality.

- A \$270 million increase for Head Start and Early Head Start, including a \$150 million increase for expansion of Early Head Start through Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.
- A \$250 million increase in the Department of Education's budget for preschool development grants to states to develop, enhance, or expand high-quality preschool programs for low-income children.
- A \$100 million increase for the Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visitation (MIECHV) program.
- A \$3.3 million increase for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C to support early intervention services for infants and toddlers and their families.
- Expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, which helps families get relief from child care costs; the budget would provide an additional credit for working families with children under age 5; they would be able to increase the amount of child care expenses they could claim and the percentage they would receive as a tax credit.

The President's Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative, provides a roadmap for additional spending on critical needs, and would add additional funds to support the development of high quality early learning:

- \$800 million for **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships** over the amount in the base discretionary resources, which would mean \$1.45 billion for partnerships overall
- \$250 million for **Preschool Development Grants** over the amount in the base discretionary resources, which would mean \$750 million total for preschool development grants



We know this is the beginning of the budget process, and we look forward to seeing the process move ahead.

We are busy preparing for the launch of the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CC Partnerships). Materials to support communities in thinking about the EHS-CC Partnerships have been shared, and we are planning a number of webinars this month to ensure potential applicants have what they need to be successful.

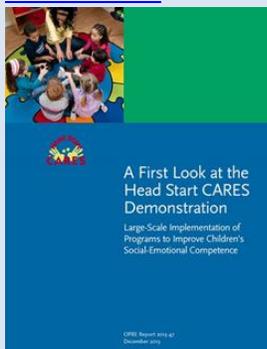
We're planning for recruitment of potential panel reviewers and looking at developing additional resources for the field. [Check this site regularly](#) as it will continue to have updates.



Recently posted on the [OPRE Site](#) is a [Child Care Subsidy Literature Review](#). This is part of the [Child Care and Early Education Policy and Research Analysis \(CCEEPRA\)](#) project.

The brief, [Family-Provider Partnerships: Examining Alignment of Early Care and Education Professional and Performance Standards, State Competencies, and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Indicators in the Context of Research](#), is now live on the [OPRE Site](#).

Read a report titled [A First Look at the Head Start CARES Demonstration Large-Scale Implementation of Programs to Improve Children's Social-Emotional Competence](#) on the [OPRE website](#).



This is part of the [Head Start CARES \(Head Start Classroom-based Approaches and Resources for Emotion and Social skill promotion\)](#) project.

The Children's Bureau (CB) is pleased to announce the release

President Barack Obama getting his heart checked on by a preschooler at Powell Elementary on the morning of his fiscal year 2015 budget release.

Watch for things to come by checking our [website](#) and signing up for our [newsletter](#) and updates. Did you see last month's [Federal Role for Early Childhood Education](#). I will be sharing more thoughts on our work ahead.

Linda

President Obama Nominates Cancian for ACF Assistant Secretary



On Feb. 12, President Obama nominated Maria Cancian, Ph.D. to be the next Assistant Secretary for Children and Families. Cancian is currently a professor and administrator at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW). She has served as Associate Dean for Fiscal Initiatives at UW's College of Letters and Science since 2012 and as Associate Dean for Social Sciences since 2011. As Associate Dean, Cancian leads fiscal policy development and planning for a college of 22,000 students with 2,000 faculty and staff. Over the years, much of Cancian's programmatic work has focused on issues related to TANF and child support.

We look forward to welcoming Dr. Cancian to ACF.

Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Highlight

Rhode Island Partners with Institutions of Higher Education

By Sara Mickelson, Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge

A key focus of [Rhode Island's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge \(RTT-ELC\) Grant](#) is to ensure children are educated by a high-quality workforce. Our approach to improving our workforce is to set clear expectations through Workforce Knowledge and Competencies, including a career pathway for educators, and to support them in achieving these expectations. In addition, we recognize the need to ensure there is a cohesive professional development pathway, aligned to our competencies, that supports educators in progressing up the career pathway. Partnering with our Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to understand the current state of higher education and to ensure programs are aligned with our competencies and poised to improve the knowledge and skills of both pre-service teachers and those currently in the field is a crucial part of our work.

Our first step in partnering with our IHEs was to better understand each of their early



of an important new resource: [A Roadmap for Collaborative and Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities \(2013\)](#) American Indian and Alaska Native communities face unique challenges when participating in program evaluation.

Additional Resources

Home Visiting: Published in the February edition of *JAMA Pediatrics*, a follow-up study of a Colorado Nurse-Family Partnership found that children whose mothers received nurse home visits had improved child development at ages 6 and 9. According to the study, children who received Nurse-Family Partnership nurse home visits had over a 55% reduction in behavior problems at school entry, as well as reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, and fewer problems with attention and impulsivity at age 9. Read more [here](#).

Infant Stress: A recently conducted research study presents findings that infants can “catch” stress from their mothers’ stressful experiences, which can result in physiological changes. Researchers recruited 69 mothers and their 12- to 14-month-old infants to participate in the study, which was published in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

ACF NEW Resource: [Ten Ways State Child Care Administrators](#)

childhood education programs. To achieve this, Rhode Island’s [Early Learning Council](#) supported the RI Department of Education to work with the [Center for Study of Child Care Employment at UC-Berkeley](#) to conduct the *Early Childhood Higher Education Inventory*. The Inventory provided baseline data on the current state of our early childhood education degree programs. This data pointed to several needs, including the need to expand infant/toddler courses, improve field experiences, and support IHEs in aligning programs to the Rhode Island Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Teachers. Though Rhode Island dedicated significant RTT-ELC resources to support educators in attaining degrees, this inventory pointed to a clear need to provide further support to our bachelor’s level programs. As a result, \$2 million was allocated in order for our IHEs to establish Centers for Early Childhood Teaching and Learning. These centers, which are currently in the design phase, will focus on supporting the current workforce to attain bachelor’s degrees and ensure that there is both high-quality coursework to address the entirety of the birth-five population and field experiences that meet rigorous criteria, as well as provide resources for IHEs to align all early childhood coursework with the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies.

The [Early Childhood Higher Education Inventory](#) provided foundational data to move forward our state’s conversation on improving our workforce and ensure that children’s developmental and educational needs are met and highlighted the need to collect ongoing data about our IHE programs. Through our Centers for Teaching and Learning we are confident we can achieve these ends and ensure we are effectively supporting our workforce to support positive child outcomes.

Find additional information on the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge [here](#) and [here](#).

A Systematic Approach to Ending Family Homelessness



The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released [Family Connection: Building Systems to End Family Homelessness](#), which outlines a multi-pronged approach to ending family homelessness. It focuses on four key areas of action: developing coordinated entry systems, ensuring that housing intervention strategies are tailored to needs of individual families, strengthening linkages to local mainstream support systems, and building the research base and further developing evidenced-based practices. View the Family Connection document [here](#).

For more information on ACF efforts to end Family Homelessness, read a blog by Acting Assistant Secretary Mark Greenberg [here](#).

ACF Hosts a Bill Emerson Hunger Fellow to Focus on Early Childhood Homelessness

ACF welcomes Brock Grosso to the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early

[Can Promote Health Insurance Opportunities](#)

[Kids Teach the First Lady and Will Ferrell About Being Healthy](#)

In celebration of the fourth anniversary of *Let's Move!*, the First Lady and comedian Will Ferrell hosted a "focus group" with young kids to ask them about eating healthy and being active. Watch what they had to say.

[READ MORE](#)



[Child Care Assistance Spending and Participation in 2012](#)

<http://www.clasp.org/issues/child-care-and-early-education/in-focus/the-highs-and-lows-of-early-education-and-child-care>



Framework for Comprehensive Assessment Systems: Where is Your State on the Path to Developing a Comprehensive Assessment System?

The Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance Program hosted a webinar on February 25, 2014. This was the first webinar in a series scheduled to occur on a bimonthly basis schedule through August 2014. This presentation provided a broad-based overview of comprehensive assessment systems. Two grantee states, Ohio and California, participated in the webinar and provided information on the assessment framework of their respective systems. Each state also included

Childhood Development as a Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow.

The [Emerson National Hunger Fellows Program](#) is a social justice program that trains, inspires, and sustains leaders. Fellows gain field experience fighting hunger and poverty through placements in community based organizations across the country, and policy experience through placements in Washington, D.C. Fellows support partner organizations with program development, research, evaluation, outreach, organizing, and advocacy projects. The program bridges community-based efforts and national public policy, and fellows develop as effective leaders in the movement to end hunger and poverty. Brock will be working on issues surrounding early childhood development and homelessness.

Brock graduated from the University of Michigan in 2013 with a degree in Public Policy and Community Action & Social Change. In addition to homelessness, Brock is also interested in economic security, affordable housing, and food security policies.

The Science of Children - Birth to Age 8: Public Session

The Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education and key players in the philanthropic community including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, and the McCormick Foundation are sponsoring a study titled "[The Science of Children Birth to Age 8: Deepening and Broadening the Foundation for Success](#)".

On February 28, 2014 from 8:30am - 4:00pm EST, the Study Committee held a [public information-gathering session](#) at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC to obtain input from stakeholders interested in the developmental science, care, and education of children from birth to age 8.

Two panels were presented. Panel 1: Perspectives from Example Initiatives on Opportunities and challenges for a Birth through 8 Continuum and Panel 2: Perspectives on the Workforce for birth through 8. The IOM website will soon have this information posted.

At this public session, a limited number of stakeholders interested in the topic of the study provided brief remarks at the public session on how, from their perspectives, children can be supported to move more seamlessly through the birth through age 8 continuum. See a few comments [here](#) (Sue Russell) and [here](#) (Grace Whitney). These speakers were selected by lottery and had 3 - 5 minutes for comment. For a list of all presenters, please see the [IOM site here](#).

Super Storm Sandy: The Rough Road to Recovery

Hoboken is a New Jersey city of 50,000 directly across the Hudson River from Manhattan. Following Super Storm Sandy floodwaters made up of rain, river water, and sewage engulfed much of the city. A local community action agency in Hoboken provides Early Head Start services to 50 pregnant women and children (up to age three) and Head Start services for 172 children (three to five years of age), mainly from low-income families. The agency suffered significant flooding and extensive damage to classroom facilities and administrative offices.

information on the professional development strategies they are using to support practitioners. A recording of the presentation is available at:

<http://elcta.adobeconnect.com/p96emshcqzn/>. If you have questions, please contact Kenley Branscome at ken.branscome@elcta.org

Upcoming

Stay Tuned! In the near future ACF will send out a notification inviting potential peer reviewers with expertise in child care and Early Head Start and relevant grant review experience to review grant applications for the upcoming **Early Head Start-Child Care** partnership initiative. More info to come soon.

A new funding opportunity from HRSA's Maternal and Child Health Bureau entitled **Safe Infant Sleep Systems Integration Program**: <http://www.grants.gov/view-opportunity.html?oppld=251648>

To download the full Funding Opportunity Announcement, select the "Application Package" tab, and click the "Download" link. The purpose of this cooperative agreement program is to increase the adoption of safe infant sleep behaviors among infant caregivers. The awardee will provide leadership by establishing, facilitating, and coordinating a national safe infant sleep coalition with the purpose of integrating safe sleep promotion throughout systems that serve families, with a particular emphasis on reaching communities at higher risk for Sudden Unexpected Infant Death.

Newly released: [Development and Expansion of Research-based](#)



Immediately following the storm, the agency struggled to locate and support devastated families. Repairs to maintain security and safety in affected facilities followed. But, as the months unfolded, the true extent of the storm's damage began to emerge. The program faced one challenge after another. Soaked drywall was removed and replaced. Failure of an adjacent tenant to make similar repairs caused new mold contamination. Addressing the mold

contamination revealed that insects had invaded the soaked insulation in some equipment and appliances. A sinkhole appeared and had to be filled. A leaking sewer pipe was discovered and needed repair. Playground soils were tested and contaminated soil and surfaces were replaced. Agency staff juggled program responsibilities with the seemingly endless task of recovery.

Staff from the Office of Head Start in Region II and assigned experts visited the agency, met with agency leaders, strategized and provided resources and information throughout the recovery process. Disaster relief awarded to the agency funded needed repairs and helped the agency plan for the future. According to the grantee, "The Office of Head Start and especially Region II staff were literally our lifeline during the storm, immediately after and to the present day. Their support and encouragement, and most of all, genuine care, have helped us to maintain our motivation and perseverance during the most challenging of times."



Even today, the storm's impact continues. Cabinets, floors, and door frames are warping, electrical and data wiring are showing corrosion, and tiles are lifting from their adhesive bases. The agency continues to evaluate damage, and work closely with Regional staff to make necessary repairs.

Recently, the agency unveiled plans to construct a new facility to replace classrooms lost to the storm. The modern, light-filled building, compliant with new floodplain elevation requirements, will allow local families to resume services in their own neighborhood. The agency is pursuing local project approval and plans to break ground for the new facility early in the 2014 building season. Looking to the future, the agency remains optimistic, "In the true spirit of Head Start, and as our years of experience with our families have taught us, every challenge can be turned into an opportunity."

Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive!

Recent statistics indicate that as many as 1 in 4 children aged 0-5 are at moderate or high risk for developmental, behavioral, or social delay.[1] As a result, the Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Community Living, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Medicaid and Medicare, Health Resources and Services Administration, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at the Department of Health and Human Services as well as the Office of Special Education Programs at the Department of Education have partnered to launch ***Birth to Five: Watch Me Thrive!***, a coordinated effort to encourage developmental and behavioral screening and support for children, families, and the providers who care for them. ***Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive!***

[Court Team Models to Strengthen Parenting and Promote Healthy Development in Infants and Toddlers in Child Welfare](#) HHS-2014-ACF-ACYF-CA-0824

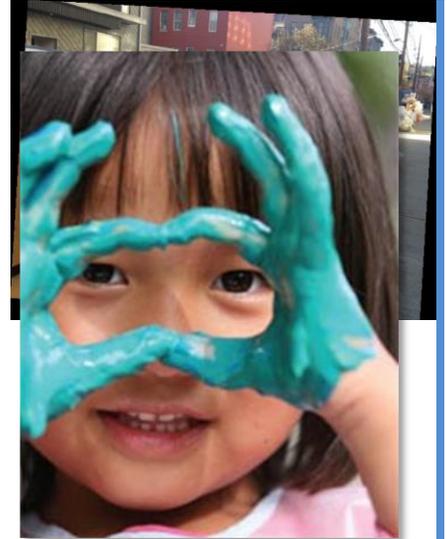
ACF is hosting new webinars to provide as much information as we can to help states and communities plan for the EHS.CC Partnerships grant opportunity!

See the schedule here:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/program/secd/news/upcoming-webinars>

seeks to:

- **Celebrate milestones.** Every family looks forward to seeing a child's first smile, first step, and first words. Regular screenings with early childhood professionals help raise awareness of a child's development, making it easier to expect and celebrate developmental milestones.
- **Promote universal screening.** Kids need support and attention in the early years to make sure they stay healthy and happy. Just like regular immunizations help prevent sickness, developmental and behavioral screenings allow families and providers to track children's developmental progress and their overall well-being. Developmental and behavioral screening is a regular part of growing up.
- **Identify possible delays and challenges early.** Screenings can help kids succeed in and beyond their school years. With regular screenings, families, teachers, and other professionals can assure that young children get the services and supports they need, as early as possible to help them thrive alongside their peers.
- **Enhance developmental supports.** Families are children's first and most important teachers. Combining the love and knowledge families have of their children with tools, guidance, and tips recommended by experts, can help optimize the developmental support children receive.



Birth to Five: Watch Me Thrive! will support the implementation of these core missions by releasing:

1. A compendium of research-based screening tools
2. "User's Guides" for multiple audiences
3. An electronic package of resources for follow-up and support

This unprecedented multi-faceted initiative will assure that the wide range of adults who love, work, and care for young children are all on the same page and have an array of resources tailored to fit their needs and those of the families they serve. Visit www.hhs.gov/WatchMeThrive on **March 25th** for a complete set of resources.

Tribal Early Childhood Programs Spotlited by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee



On Wednesday, February 26, 2014, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development, Linda K. Smith, testified at a hearing of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee titled, "Early Childhood Development and Education in Indian Country: Building a Foundation for Academic Success". The hearing, which was the first overseen by new Committee Chairman Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), also included testimony from Danny Wells,

Executive Officer for the Division of Education, Chickasaw Nation, OK; Barbara Fabre, Chairman of the National Indian Child Care Association and Director of the Child Care/Early Childhood Program, White Earth Ojibwe Nation, White Earth, MN; Jacquelyn Power, Superintendent/Principal of the Blackwater Community School, Coolidge, AZ; and Dr. E. Jane Costello, Associate Director for Research at the Center for Child and Family Policy, Duke University, Durham, NC. You can watch the entire hearing at <http://www.indian.senate.gov/hearing/oversight-hearing-receive-testimony-early-childhood-development-and-education-indian-country>.

During the hearing, Linda spoke of her background in Indian Country, having grown up on the Flathead Reservation in Northwestern Montana and begun her career by setting up the Northern Cheyenne Reservation's child care program. She described her passion for working with and supporting American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) communities, and detailed the work that ACF has done, in partnership with tribes, to improve conditions for young children and their families. This includes programs such as Head Start/Early Head Start, the Child Care Development Fund, the Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, the Tribal Early Learning Initiative, and programs funded by the Administration for Native Americans. She also spoke of the upcoming Early Head Start/Child Care Partnerships funding opportunity for tribes.

Linda acknowledged that despite the progress being made throughout Indian Country, there continue to be terrible disparities between the health and well-being of the AIAN population and the U.S. population as a whole. She spoke of the ways that ACF's early learning and development programs support children's school readiness and success, as well as caregivers' parenting skills and engagement in their children's growth and learning. All of ACF's tribal early learning and development programs support AIAN children, families, and communities in a culturally appropriate and tribally-driven way.

It was very exciting to witness the Committee's awareness of and interest in the issues facing tribal early childhood programs and the children and families they serve. Senators at the hearing were very interested in what tribes are doing, with ACF funding, to build and sustain early childhood programs and systems that are high-quality, culturally-relevant, evidence-based, and effective at reducing the achievement gap and improving the health and well-being of AIAN children, families, and communities. Members asked about the work that tribes are doing to evaluate their programs and demonstrate their impact. Senators also had questions about whether tribes' early learning programs are coordinating to prevent duplication and maximize their ability to meet the needs of families and communities, including how programs partner with schools. And the Committee was very interested in the role that programs have in building parents' and providers' skills and confidence to support children in AIAN communities that experience historical and

ongoing trauma, poverty, stress, and violence. Finally, the Members asked about unmet need for early childhood services and tribal communities and seemed concerned with building opportunities to meet the need.

Innovations in Early Childhood

New Professional Development Resource: Bringing Evidence-based Practice and Teacher Research Together Through [CONNECT](#)

[Building Powerful Family Partnerships](#)

[CONNECT](#)'s efforts are led by researchers from 2 universities: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and University of Kentucky with funding by Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).



[CONNECT](#) Web-based Modules are FREE practice-focused instructional resources for faculty and other professional development providers that focus on and respond to challenges faced each day by those working with young children and their families in a variety of learning environments and inclusive settings. The practice-based modules are designed to build early childhood practitioners' abilities to make evidence-based decisions.

The newest release is [Building Powerful Family Partnerships](#). This 2.5-hour course shows how to build trusting family-professional partnerships when working with families of young children. Partnership-oriented practices encompass both child and family focuses. They include enhanced communication, high expectations, respect, commitment, equality, and advocacy.

For more information, contact Pamela J. Winton, PhD at pam_winton@unc.edu.

If you have an Innovation in Early Childhood that is available for public use, let us know.



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marsha.basloe@acf.hhs.gov

For more information on the Early Childhood Development Office at ACF, visit the website <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd>.

The Early Childhood Development newsletter contains links to other websites and news articles. These links represent just a few examples of the numerous reference materials currently available to the public. The opinions expressed in any articles or web pages do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration for Children and Families. The inclusion of resources should not be construed or interpreted as an endorsement of any private organization or business listed herein.