

P3 Policy Priorities & Action Team Toolkit: Child Care Assistance

Can Michigan really help 41,750 more families with infants and toddlers get the early childhood services they need? With your voice, we can!

Thank you for taking action!

As an early childhood expert and a member of the Pritzker-funded Michigan Prenatal-to-Three Collaborative, you know that the first three years of a child's life are critical — a formative period that can lay the groundwork for the best possible outcomes throughout a child's life.

Across Michigan, tens of thousands of families with infants and toddlers are not able to access the high-quality programs, services and opportunities they need to raise healthy and thriving children. You can make a difference.

This **P3 Policy Priorities & Action Team Toolkit** will facilitate conversations on five infant-toddler policy priority areas. Together, we'll gather input, insight and ideas from as many parents, caregivers, providers, teachers, health care professionals, administrators, community leaders, advocates and agency directors as possible.

If you have questions or additional needs during this important and powerful process, please contact us: ta@ecic4kids.org | 855.790.4900. Additional resources and information can be found at ecic4kids.org/p3action.

Thank you for helping craft Michigan's Prenatal-to-Three policy agenda. Let's make Michigan the top state to have a baby and raise a child!

Taking action is as easy as 1, 2, 3 ...

Step 1: Host a discussion using the sample agendas and discussion questions in this toolkit, either in existing meetings or at a new gathering.

Step 2: Take notes on your group's ideas and submit them online at ecic4kids.org/p3action.

Step 3: Save the date for Jan. 23, 2020, when we release the final policy report. See how your voice made a difference and learn about steps you can take in 2020 to help Michigan achieve our collective goals.

Suggested Agendas

**If you have 30 minutes:**

- Review **Michigan by the Numbers** data.
- Facilitate three to five **Discussion Questions** with parents and/or providers.
- Take notes and report at www.ecic4kids.org/p3action.

**If you have 60 minutes:**

- Review **Michigan by the Numbers** data.
- Facilitate three to five **Discussion Questions** with parents and/or providers.
- Select three to five **Potential Policy Solutions** for reflection.
- Take notes and report at www.ecic4kids.org/p3action.

**If you have 90 minutes:**

- Review **Michigan by the Numbers** data.
- Facilitate five to eight **Discussion Questions** with parents and/or providers.
- Facilitate reflection on all **Potential Policy Solutions**.
- Take notes and report at www.ecic4kids.org/p3action.

Michigan by the Numbers: Child Care Assistance

In Michigan, there are currently

167,000 infants and toddlers

in families who live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.



21,000

infants and toddlers in families that currently receive child care assistance. (Source: 2017 CDC and LARA, State of Michigan)



7,000

infants and toddlers in families that currently receive early Head Start.

(Source: Head Start)

100,200

total infants and toddlers in families that currently qualify for child care assistance.

THE GAP

72,200

infants and toddlers in families not currently receiving the assistance they need for quality child care.

Michigan's initial eligibility rate for child care assistance is one of the lowest rates in the country.

Michigan has experienced one of the biggest drops in child care assistance caseloads nationally.

Nearly 20,000 fewer families receive assistance today than did in 2009.

Only Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C., rank below Michigan.

What is Michigan's Child Care Assistance Program?

I applied for child care assistance, but didn't qualify ...

I thought child care assistance wasn't available to my family ...

I tried to apply for child care assistance, but it was really confusing ...

For many families, the cost of safe, quality child care can affect the family budget. The Child Development and Care (CDC) Child Care Subsidy Program provides payment assistance for child care services to families that meet eligibility requirements to support them in working, high school completion, seeking employment and other authorized activities.

When a parent chooses a child care provider that accepts MDHHS CDC subsidy-eligible children, the parent and provider are forming a business relationship with each other, and the CDC offers information and resources to help both receive and provide quality care.

(Source: https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-63533_63534---,00.html)

We want to increase the number of families eligible for and enrolled in Michigan's child care assistance program.

The following questions are intended to be asked directly of parents and providers.

Submit your input at www.ecic4kids.org/p3action.

Questions for Parents:

1. If you're working full or part time or are in school, who cares for your children while you're working or in school?
2. How do you pay for care?
3. Have you ever been placed on a waiting list for a child care program or child care assistance?
4. Are you using or have you used the Child Care Subsidy Program?
5. How did you find out about the Child Care Subsidy Program? **-OR-** Are you aware of the Child Care Subsidy Program?
6. Have you tried to apply for Child Care Subsidy? **-OR-** What was your experience when you applied for Child Care Subsidy?
7. Have you tried to apply for child care assistance on michigan.gov/MIbridges?
8. What barriers, if any, make it difficult for you to use child care assistance?
9. What would make accessing and using child care assistance easier for families?
10. If not mentioned in conversation about barriers: Have you had any challenges in finding child care providers who accept assistance? **-OR-** What challenges have you had finding or paying for child care?
11. What have you or your friends done to overcome the challenges of finding or paying for child care?

Questions for Providers:

For those who accept subsidy:

1. What is working well for you with the Child Care Subsidy Program?
2. What challenges, if any, did you experience with the Child Care Subsidy application process?
 - a. If there were challenges, what might be some solutions to address them?
3. What challenges, if any, do you experience accepting Child Care Subsidy?
4. Has your community developed local solutions, such as doing things to work around the system, local funding, etc., to help families in need of affordable child care who face subsidy-related barriers?
 - a. What are those?
5. Are you experiencing any challenges related to being in the child care workforce?
6. Do you think that child care providers are paid fairly?
7. Do you feel like child care providers change jobs frequently?
 - a. If so, what do you think would help child care providers stay at the same jobs for a longer time?
8. Would your community be able to hire new child care providers if more families were able to access subsidy?

For those who do NOT accept subsidy:

1. Have you ever tried to apply to accept Child Care Subsidy?
 - a. If so, what challenges, if any, did you experience with the Child Care Subsidy application process?
2. What are some possible solutions to address those challenges?
3. Has your community developed local solutions, such as doing things to work around the system, local funding, etc., to help families in need of affordable child care who face subsidy-related barriers?
 - a. What are those?
4. Are you experiencing any challenges related to being in the child care workforce?
5. Do you think that child care providers are paid fairly?
6. Do you feel like child care providers change jobs frequently?
 - a. If so, what do you think would help child care providers stay at the same jobs for a longer time?
7. Would your community be able to hire new child care providers if more families were able to access subsidy?

The following questions are intended to spark a discussion with your groups.

These **Potential Policy Solutions** are the result of Michigan's Prenatal-to-Three Collaborative working sessions and need your expert experiences to make them as actionable and realistic as possible.

Things to think about and record:

- What are your reactions to these **Potential Policy Solutions**?
- How do each of these solutions make you feel?
- Would these address your challenges?
- If you had to prioritize the solutions, what order would you place them in?
- What holes would you poke in these potential solutions?
- What aren't we asking or thinking about?

Submit your input at www.ecic4kids.org/p3action.

Solution One

Increase income eligibility for child care assistance so more families can afford child care.

Solution Two

Simplify the application process.

Solution Three

Address barriers that prevent parents from applying for child care assistance.

Solution Four

Address barriers that prevent providers from accepting subsidy.

Solution Five

Increase earnings for infant-toddler early childhood workforce.

Solution Six

Examine geographic and racial/ethnic disparities and cultural concerns that may deter or prevent families from enrolling in the Child Care Subsidy Program.

Solution Seven

Tell us your ideas! What policy solutions would you suggest?

Facilitators: Interested in more policy ideas and information?

Visit <https://www.ecic4kids.org/toolkits/>.

Contact Us: ta@ecic4kids.org | 855.790.4900

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