

Special Education Preschool Grants and State Grants

The Special Education Preschool program, along with 6 percent of Special Education State grants, provides formula grants to States to make available special education and related services for 3- to 5-year-old children with disabilities. It supports early childhood programs that provide services needed to prepare young children with disabilities to enter and succeed in school. The Preschool Grants program provides a developmental bridge between early intervention services and elementary school. In FY 2002, Special Education Preschool Grants and State Grants provide approximately \$500 million for early childhood services.

Special Education Grants for Infants and Families

This formula grant program assists States in implementing a coordinated statewide system of early intervention services to all children with disabilities, from birth through 2 years old, and their families. In FY 2002, Special Education Grants for Infants and Toddlers are funded at \$51 million.

The Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program

This competitive grant program enables early childhood educators and caregivers working in high-poverty communities to participate in professional development activities that improve their knowledge and skills. The professional development activities focus on furthering children's language and literacy skills to help set them on the road to reading proficiency once they enter kindergarten. In FY 2002, the Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program is funded at \$15 million.

Research Programs

The National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education

This Institute supports work to identify, develop, evaluate, and assist others in replicating methods and approaches that improve children's early development and education. It supports research regarding the social and educational development of infants, toddlers, and preschool children, and the preparation of personnel for early childhood programs.

Early Childhood Longitudinal Study

This interagency study, spearheaded by the Department of Education, has two components: it chronicles the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development of a large sample of children from birth to age 6 and will follow another sample of children from kindergarten through fifth grade. These studies will provide researchers, policy makers, and parents with information on child development policies and practices.

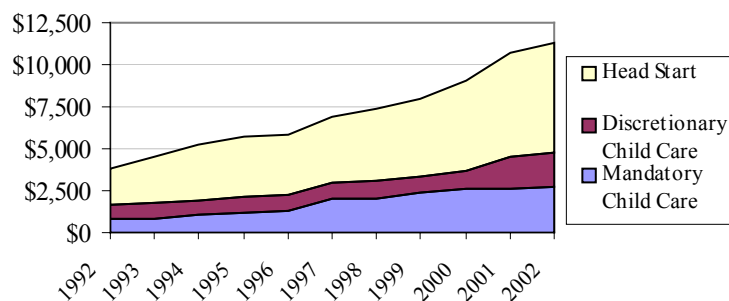
Meeting Early Childhood Needs

Between Federal and State funding for early childhood care, most families are able to provide care for their young children before they start school. Over the past decade, Federal funds specifically appropriated for child care have tripled. Funding from the CCDF, TANF, and SSBG alone will provide child care assistance to an estimated 2.7 million children per month, the majority of whom are under the age of 6. This funding is expected to provide care for 72 percent

of children between the ages of 3 and 5 whose parents are low income and work at least 20 hours a week. In addition, Head Start provides care to 915,000 children.

State support of and funding for child care and early childhood programs has also increased. Two decades ago, for example, only 10 States were providing pre-k programs. Today, 39 States and the District of Columbia provide support for pre-k programs. States are currently contributing about \$4 billion of State funds to pre-kindergarten and child care programs. In 2001, States spent in excess of \$1.9 billion for more than 765,000 children to attend pre-k. Additionally, in 2002, States provided an estimated \$2 billion in State funds to subsidize child care.

**Federal Spending on Child Care and Head Start
(\$millions)**



Access to care, however, does not necessarily mean that children are receiving high-quality care, especially as it relates to early learning and cognitive development.

Some of the obstacles that should be addressed in order to ensure that early childhood care focuses on learning and cognitive development as well as social and emotional development include:

- Most States have limited alignment between what children are doing before they enter school and what is expected of them once they are in school;
- Early childhood programs are seldom evaluated based on how they prepare children to succeed in school; and
- There is not enough information for early childhood teachers, parents, grandparents, and child care providers on ways to prepare children to be successful in school.

The Bush Administration has developed a plan for overcoming these obstacles and for strengthening early learning for young children to equip them with the skills they will need to start school ready to learn. The Administration will strive to meet this goal by addressing needs in three key areas: Strengthening Head Start; Partnering with States to Improve Early Childhood Education; and Providing Information to Teachers, Caregivers and Parents. All children must begin school with an equal chance at achievement so that no child is left behind.