

State early care and education public policy developments: Fiscal year 2012^[1]

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Summary:

For Fiscal Year 2012, states faced many funding and policy challenges as a result of budget deficits. States continued to spend down their federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds while they faced severe crises with their own funds. As a result, many of the highlights in this document reflect reductions in state investments in early childhood education, higher education, and elementary and secondary public education. Several states reduced their public contributions to private/public partnerships and followed the previous year's trend of changes to the child care subsidy system (particularly in family eligibility and copayments) that negatively impacted access to child care by low-income families.

One of the most noticeable trends was the reduction of state funds for prekindergarten programs. Although some states were able to maintain their funding with remaining ARRA funds, 19 out of the 40 states with pre-K programs reduced their per-child funding. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 37 states reduced their investments in public elementary and secondary education and 30 states reduced spending on K–12 education to 2008 levels. A report by the National Women's Law Center shows that state child care subsidy policies were worse in at least one category than in 2010.

Despite tight finances, some states have continued building their early childhood systems through their Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care (also known as Early Childhood Advisory Councils) and through enhancing or implementing their quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) and professional development systems. The continued focus on and investment in building statewide early childhood data systems and on refining and expanding QRIS (key components of the federal Race to The Top—Early Learning Challenge grants) show that certain policy changes can work hand in hand with the federal vision and plans for state investment in early care and education.

Several states also benefitted from the new Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, enacted in March 2010 as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Over five years, the federal program will award \$1.5B to states to expand evidence-based, voluntary home-visiting programs for pregnant women and caregivers of young children in at-risk communities.

Another key development has been the Common Core State Standards for K–12 English Language Arts and Mathematics, which were finalized in June 2010. To date, 41 states (including the District of Columbia) have adopted these standards.

This document is only a highlight of state developments. It does not include all legislation filed or other pending policy changes; instead, it highlights selected enacted legislation; new initiatives approved by the state executive branch; major funding increases, decreases, or level funding; and additional significant fiscal or policy changes that impact early childhood education.

Region: United States^[3]

Tags: legislation & regulation^[4]

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