

# Backgrounder: Leading States for Early Childhood Development

*Fall 2021*



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## Contents

Contents	1
Introduction	2
Early Care and Education	2
Preschool	2
Preschool Enrollment	2
Preschool Quality	3
Preschool Funding	3
Child Care	4
Family Income Eligibility for Child Care Assistance	4
Enrollment	4
Provider Compensation	5
Quality Standards	5
Health Care	6
Prenatal Care	6
Access	6
Infant Mortality	7
Pediatric Care	7
Young Children Health Insurance	7
Immunizations	7
Primary Care Visits Toddler to 6 Years	8
Primary Care Visits Infants and Toddlers	8
Developmental Screening	8
Participation in Early Intervention	9

## **Introduction**

This background document was created in response to an inquiry from a leading Louisiana legislator seeking to understand how Louisiana is doing in supporting early childhood development compared to other states. This brief backgrounder highlights key areas of early care and education, including child care and preschool care and health care, including prenatal and child health. Each section highlights some key indicators and provides information on leading states and Louisiana.

Research shows that early experiences affect the development of the brain architecture and provide the foundation for future learning, behavior, and health. Ninety percent of brain development takes place between birth and age four. Children who receive high-quality early care and education experience long-term improved outcomes in education, health, and social behaviors.

However, high-quality early care and education is neither accessible nor affordable for many families in Louisiana. This proves very difficult for both working families and businesses. Overall, Louisiana's economy loses \$1.3 billion annually due to child care breakdowns, and last year only 40% of kindergarteners entered school meeting critical benchmarks.

Child development is also heavily influenced by a family's ability to access quality healthcare and experience good health outcomes during these crucial years. Yet, many Louisiana families lack access to quality healthcare for a variety of reasons. This results in suboptimal health outcomes for expectant mothers, postpartum mothers, and young children.

Providing children with high-quality early care and education will help to ensure that they are prepared to be successful students and thriving members in their communities. Ensuring families—particularly expectant mothers, postpartum mothers, and young children—have access to quality healthcare and related supports also ensures children get the best possible start in life. The state of Louisiana needs to continue to invest resources in quality early care and education and healthcare for families.

## **Early Care and Education**

### **Preschool**

For preschool, information is available in the areas of enrollment, quality, and funding, and shows leading states compared to Louisiana. Louisiana is doing well in terms of its quality approach for preschool.

### **Preschool Enrollment**

Leading states are noted by looking at percentage of the total population served- four-year-old children and three-year-old children. In its four-year-old program, Louisiana does serve 90% of those who are at risk and qualify for the state's preschool enrollment. Comparison information is based on all children in the age group.

**Table 1. Four Year Old Children Served in Preschool by State Rank**

State Rank	State	Percentage Served
1	District of Columbia	84%
2	Florida	72%
3	Vermont	76%
4	Wisconsin	72%
18	Louisiana	33%

Source: The National Institute for Early Education Research, *The State of Preschool 2020*, available at [https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/YB2020\\_Full\\_Report\\_080521.pdf](https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/YB2020_Full_Report_080521.pdf)

## Preschool Quality

Leading states are identified by looking at the ten quality benchmarks used by the National Institute of Early Education Research. These ten quality benchmark categories are: 1) Early learning & development standards, 2) Curriculum supports, 3) Teacher degree, 4) Teacher specialized training, 5) Assistant teacher specialized training, 6) Staff professional development, 7) Maximum class size, 8) Staff-child ratio, 9) Screening & referral, and 10) Continuous quality improvement system. Louisiana is a leader in this area.

**Table 2. States Meeting Quality Benchmarks for Preschool**

States	Number of Benchmarks Met
Alabama Hawaii Michigan Mississippi Missouri Rhode Island	10 of 10 benchmarks
Delaware Louisiana Maine New Mexico Oklahoma Tennessee West Virginia	Nine of 10 quality benchmarks (Note: LA does not meet the staff professional development benchmark)

Source: The National Institute for Early Education Research, *The State of Preschool 2020*, available at [https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/YB2020\\_Full\\_Report\\_080521.pdf](https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/YB2020_Full_Report_080521.pdf)

## Preschool Funding

Leading states are noted by looking at the amount of state resources invested per enrolled child. The average amount per child in the United States is \$5,499. Louisiana's investment is \$4,623 per child, which is based on state expenditures and TANF funding.

**Table 3. State Investment**

State Rank	State	Amount per Child
1	District of Columbia	\$18,421
2	New Jersey	\$14,103
3	Oregon	\$10,164
4	Hawaii	\$9,886
5	Rhode Island	\$9,722
27	Louisiana	\$4,623

Source: The National Institute for Early Education Research, *The State of Preschool 2020*, available at [https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/YB2020\\_Full\\_Report\\_080521.pdf](https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/YB2020_Full_Report_080521.pdf)

## Child Care

For child care, comparative information is provided on family income eligibility to participate in the state's child care assistance program, enrollment of infants and toddlers in the state's child care assistance program, median wages for child care teachers, and quality standards. Louisiana is further behind on child care relative to preschool.

### Family Income Eligibility for Child Care Assistance

Leading states are organized by looking at family income that qualifies a family to participate in child care assistance. States decide the family income eligibility limit for their state child care assistance program. Louisiana recently improved its family income eligibility to 200% federal poverty level (FPL).

**Table 4. Maximum Family Income by Federal Poverty Level for Child Care Assistance**

State	Income Measured by Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
Alaska	329% FPL
California	321% FPL
Maryland	277% FPL
Tennessee	241% FPL
Vermont	295% FPL
Louisiana	165% FPL, recently increased to 200% FPL

Source: National Women's Law Center, *On the Precipice State Child Care Assistance Policies 2020*, available at <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/NWLC-State-Child-Care-Assistance-Policies-2020.pdf>

## Enrollment

Leading states are identified by looking at the percentage of infants and toddlers participating in the child care assistance program. The leading states are close to 10% of their infants and toddlers participating and Louisiana is about 5%.

**Table 5. Infants and Toddlers in Child Care Assistance**

State	Percentage of Infants and Toddlers Participating in Child Care Assistance
New Mexico	9.6%
Delaware	9.3%
Oklahoma	8.1%
Pennsylvania	7.9%
Louisiana	4.9%

Source: ZERO TO THREE, *State of Babies 2021*, available at [https://stateofbabies.org/compare-indicators-across-states/#learning\\_indicators\\_ccdf](https://stateofbabies.org/compare-indicators-across-states/#learning_indicators_ccdf)

### Provider Compensation

Leading states are noted by looking at child care provider median hourly wages, adjusted for state cost of living. Taking into account the cost of living, Louisiana fares poorly for the compensation for child care teachers who are providing early care and education services.

**Table 6. Child Care Provider Median Hourly Wages**

Rank	State
1	Washington
2	Michigan
3	Colorado
4	New York
5	Arizona
50	Louisiana

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2020*, available at <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/>

### Quality Standards

Quality indicators as outlined in the *QRIS Compendium* are provided. All other states except Louisiana include family child care in their quality improvement system. All other states except Louisiana use more than one indicator to determine the quality performance of a child care program. Louisiana uses the “interactions” indicator. It provides information on staff qualifications and training. Louisiana could consider addressing staff qualifications and training and environment in its quality standards.

**Table 7. Quality Standards Use in States**

Indicator	Use in Centers	Use in Family Child Care
Staff qualifications and training	93%	90%
Environment	91%	90%
Program administration, management and leadership	84%	79%
Family partnership and engagement	81%	74%
Interactions	81%	71%
Child assessment	81%	76%

Source: Child Trends and BUILD Initiative, *Quality Compendium 2019*, available at <https://qualitycompendium.org/top-ten/types-of-indicators>

## Health Care

### Prenatal Care

In the area of prenatal care, there are two indicators: one addressing late or no prenatal care and the other focusing on the infant mortality rate. Louisiana lags the country on these indicators for prenatal health care.

### Access

Births to women receiving late or no prenatal care in the United States are listed showing leading states. Leading states have between 1 and 4% of pregnant women receiving late or no prenatal care compared to 7% for Louisiana.

**Table 8. Births to Women Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care**

Rank	State	Percentage of Women with Late or Not Prenatal Care
1	Rhode Island	1%
2	Vermont	2%
3	New Hampshire	3%
4	Connecticut	4%
4	Kansas	4%
4	Iowa	4%
4	Idaho	4%
4	Wisconsin	4%
4	Minnesota	4%
4	Massachusetts	4%
4	Utah	4%
4	Maine	4%
4	California	4%
32	Louisiana	7%

Source: Annie E Casey Foundation, *Kids Count*, available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/11-births-to-women-receiving-late-or-no-prenatal-care?loc=1&loct=1#ranking/2/any/true/1729/any/266>

## Infant Mortality

The infant mortality rate is the number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births, and information is provided comparing the leading states to Louisiana. Louisiana is 50<sup>th</sup> in this area.

**Table 9. Infant Mortality Rate**

Ranking	State	Infant Mortality Rate
1	New Hampshire	3.5
2	New Jersey	3.9
3	Oregon	4.2
3	Massachusetts	4.2
3	Connecticut	4.2
50	Louisiana	7.5

Source: Prenatal-to-three Policy Center Impact Center, *Prenatal-to-3 State Policy Roadmap 2020*, available at <https://pn3policy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Prenatal-to-3-State-Policy-Roadmap-2020.pdf> and ZERO TO THREE, *State of Babies Yearbook 2021*, available at [https://stateofbabies.org/compare-indicators-across-states/#learning\\_indicators\\_idea](https://stateofbabies.org/compare-indicators-across-states/#learning_indicators_idea)

## Pediatric Care

Six indicators are provided for pediatric care, including children, 0-5, who do not have health insurance; two-year-old children who have been immunized; toddler to preschool visits for primary health care; infant visits for primary health care; developmental screening and; participation in Early Intervention.

## Young Children Health Insurance

Children who do not have health insurance, 0-5 years of age, are noted. For this indicator, the leading states have a gap of 2% compared to Louisiana's gap of 4%.

**Table 10. Children Without Health Insurance, 0-5 Years of Age**

Rank	State	Percentage Without Health Insurance
1	Hawaii	2 %
1	Vermont	2%
1	Massachusetts	2%
1	Rhode Island	2%
1	New York	2%
6	Michigan, Illinois, New Hampshire and Virginia	3%
18	Louisiana	4%

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/10184-children-without-health-insurance-by-age-group?loc=1&loct=2#ranking/2/any/true/1729/17/19709>

## Immunizations

2-year-old children who are immunized are shown comparing leading states to Louisiana. Leading states are over 80 percent in this area and Louisiana is at 75 percent.



**Table 11. Two-Year-Old Children Who Are Immunized**

Rank	State	Percentage Immunized
1	Connecticut	85.4%
2	Massachusetts	82.6%
3	North Dakota	82.4%
4	New Hampshire	82.2%
5	Alabama	81.8%
6	Kentucky	81.3%
26	Louisiana	74.8%

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/8001-2-year-olds-who-were-immunized?loc=1&loc2=#ranking/2/any/true/37/any/15387>

### Primary Care Visits Toddler to 6 Years

This indicator looks at the percentage of children with a primary care (PCP) visit in the past year, ages 25 months to 6-years-old.

**Table 12. Percentage of Children with a PCP Visit in the Past Year, Ages 25 Months to 6 Years**

Primary Care Visits	States
90% or more of children had visit	Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, West Virginia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Iowa
87% up to 90% of children had visit	Louisiana (and others)

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, *Quality of Care for Children in Medicaid: Findings from the 2019 Child Core Set*

### Primary Care Visits Infants and Toddlers

Leading state information is provided for well-child visits in the first 15 months of life. Leading states have more than 69 percent of infants and toddlers participate in 6 or more visits compared to 57 percent to 63 percent in Louisiana.

**Table 13. Well-Child Visits in the First 15 Months of Life**

Well Child Visits	States by Quartile
69 to 87% of infants had 6 or more visits	Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Michigan, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maryland, District of Columbia
57 to 63% of infants had 6 or more visits	Louisiana (and others)

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, *Quality of Care for Children in Medicaid: Findings from the 2019 Child Core Set*

### Developmental Screening

Developmental screening is early identification of children at risk for cognitive, motor, communication, or social-emotional delays, which may interfere with expected growth, learning, and development and may warrant further diagnosis, assessment, and evaluation. This indicator is provided for leading states and for Louisiana.

**Table 14. Developmental Screening for Infants and Toddlers**

Developmental Screening	States
54% to 87% of infants and toddlers with developmental screening	Oregon, North Carolina, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut
3.8% to 21.7% percent of infants and toddlers with developmental screening	Louisiana (and others)

Source: Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services, *Quality of Care for Children in Medicaid: Findings from the 2019 Child Core Set*

### Participation in Early Intervention

Infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities who are participating in the Part C Early Intervention program is provided by percentage. The Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (Part C of IDEA), Early Intervention, is a federal grant program that assists states in operating a comprehensive statewide program of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, ages birth through age 2 years, and their families. Louisiana’s participation rate is significantly less than the leading states.

**Table 15. Percentage of Infants and Toddlers in the Part C Early Intervention Program**

State	Percentage of Infants and Toddlers in Early Intervention
Massachusetts	19.2%
New Mexico	16.6 %
Rhode Island	13.7%
West Virginia	12.6%
Vermont	11.4%
Pennsylvania	10.3%
Indiana	10.3%
Louisiana	5.5%

Source: ZERO TO THREE, *State of Babies Yearbook 2021*, available at [https://stateofbabies.org/compare-indicators-across-states/#learning\\_indicators\\_idea](https://stateofbabies.org/compare-indicators-across-states/#learning_indicators_idea)