



MICHIGAN
ASSOCIATION FOR
**Education
of Young
Children**

Public Policy Program

Introduction

The creation of the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children's Public Policy Program serves as a framework of advocacy for the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children (MiAEYC). Upon review of this document one gains an understanding of the positions and legislation that MiAEYC supports. The MiAEYC Public Policy program will also act as a framework for creating an annual Public Policy Agenda.

Preamble

The Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children (MiAEYC) and its local affiliates under the umbrella of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) are committed to excellence in early childhood care and education. The Association's mission is accomplished in part by the work through public policy, advocacy, and professional development.

- MiAEYC's legislative program is a compilation of public policy statements derived in part from MiAEYC Position Statements, NAEYC Position Statements and other MiAEYC public documents. It does not replace or alter current MiAEYC Position Statements or other documents.

State role in early childhood care and education

The state role in early childhood care and education is a critical one. The role of state government in early childhood care and education is to:

- Promote effective state-level administration for quality early childhood care and education and related services, equal opportunity, and adequate and equitable resources for each and every child;
- Establish goals, policies, budgets, and programs in early childhood care and education in consultation with early childhood experts, educators, providers, and local agencies responsible for early childhood care, education, business, and other interested citizens and to regularly review such goals, policies, budgets and programs;
- Administer, oversee and regularly monitor systems relating to the quality of early childhood programs and services;
- Establish requirements for credentials and professional licensure, including preparation and ongoing professional development, and articulation between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education and other providers of professional development;
- Coordinate programs and services both within and among state agencies and entities responsible for early childhood care and education and related services, such as health, family support, and other human services;
- Provide technical assistance to local agencies and entities, programs, and individual providers of early childhood care and education;
- Undertake data collection, analysis and evaluations of programs and services provided with state funds and disseminate the findings widely;
- Provide additional financial resources in addition to technical assistance and other in-kind supports that will enhance access to and the quality of early childhood care and education programs in the state, and in so doing, ensure that additional resources do not supplant other federal, state, local or private dollars for similar purposes;
- Support the provision of easily accessible, comprehensive information for all families that describes the characteristics and components of quality early childhood care and education programs, including after-school programs, and how to choose appropriate, quality programs

- for their children and the provision of information on financial assistance available to help families afford quality programs; and
- Support access to programs, services, and supports for families and children that promote positive health, nutrition, economic independence and stability, and social competencies.

Federal role in early childhood care and education

The federal role in early childhood care and education is a critical one. The appropriate role of the federal government is to:

- Partner with states and local communities to help ensure equal education opportunity and excellence in early childhood care and education programs and to ensure that children and their families have access to programs, services and supports that promote health, nutrition, economic independence and stability, and social competencies;
- Provide resources targeted to national goals in early childhood care and education and to help states and localities assist special populations, such as economically disadvantaged children, children with disabilities, and children whose native language is other than English, to meet high academic standards and develop personal, health, and social competencies;
- Protect the civil rights of all children, families, and early childhood program personnel; and
- Undertake and promote research, data collection and analysis, program evaluation, and dissemination of child development, effective early childhood care and education programs and services, and professional development programs.

Principle I

All Children deserve access to safe and accessible, high quality early childhood care and education that includes a developmentally appropriate curriculum, knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators, comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition, and social well-being, in an environment that respects and supports diversity.

Access to safe and accessible programs

Child abuse prevention

- All program staff, substitutes, and volunteers should receive pre-service orientation and refresher training at regular intervals that includes, but is not limited to, (a) understanding of what constitutes child abuse, (b) the program's discipline policy and appropriate guidance of children, (c) means of preventing potential abuse situations in group settings, identification of signs of potential abuse, and (e) individual obligations and procedures for reporting suspected cases of abuse.
- At a minimum, basic screening should be conducted on all staff members, substitutes, volunteers, and other individuals who may have access to young children but do not have direct responsibility for their care and education.

Violence and prevention strategies

- Policies should promote curriculum and teaching practices that address violence prevention, teach conflict resolution, cooperative learning, and respect for diversity in all its forms and promote positive cultural identity as a central part of the program.
- Children who are the victims of violence should receive individualized early intervention services.
- All personnel in early childhood care and education programs and schools should receive training in violence prevention strategies, early intervention services and appropriate referrals to services and counseling.

Welfare reform must:

- Ensure high quality of child care through standard setting and oversight;
- Expand the supply of qualified providers to meet the increasing need for child care;
- Provide adequate assistance to families so they can afford high-quality child care that is appropriate for their children;

- Set payment rates that actually cover the cost of providing care and reflect the variation in cost of serving different characteristics of children;
- Provide child care assistance to welfare recipients engaged in meeting their work requirements, to working families at risk of going on welfare, to the working poor, and to low-income families. Provide child care assistance for children of all ages;
- Ensure a variety of equitable child care choices for all families;
- Ensure broad public participation in developing state plans for implementing child care under welfare reform; and
- Establish a system for collecting data to measure the impact of welfare reform on children and child care.

Access to high quality programs

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), which include tiered reimbursement, rated licensing and voluntary and mandatory rating systems of programs based on indicators of program quality, should:

1. Be used for greater consumer awareness of quality programs
2. Provide increasing resources to help programs improve and sustain higher quality
3. Lead to system-wide improvements in the quality of all programs, including all settings and auspices and ages of children served.

The development of a QRIS should take into account the perspective of those that will be impacted, including but not excluded to families, state departments (i.e. licensing and the Department of Education), child care homes, child care centers, state-funded pre-k programs, and colleges and universities. Leading state early childhood organizations, like MiAEYC, should also have representation in the development, implementation, and continuation of a state QRIS. In order to ensure necessary parties, like the ones stated above, have the opportunity to participate, information and responsive sessions should be hosted in a variety of formats including, but not excluded to, webinars, conference calls, and meetings.

In the development stages, it should be determined how a QRIS will be embedded in the regulatory system to enable greater systemic improvements.

A QRIS should provide a number of tiers or levels in order to provide a continuum that sets clear benchmarks of quality that build upon each other, leading to the top tier that includes program accreditation by a national early childhood program accreditation system, including NAEYC accreditation for center-based and school-based programs, and other recognized national accreditation systems for family child care and school-age care.

Multi-leveled quality rating systems must be supported by a system wide strategy for:

- Improving professional development and higher education opportunities for program staff and directors linked to a career pathway in the field of early childhood care and education;
- Enhancing compensation that reflects additional education and retention in the field;
- Increasing reimbursement rates/payments to reflect the cost of quality programs and other mechanisms to ensure that high quality programs are accessible for all families;
- Expanding family involvement and understanding of quality early childhood care and education in ways that are inclusive and respectful of the diversity of families and children with special needs;
- Fairly evaluating programs for meeting evidence-based conditions for quality; and
- Promoting program's continuous improvement to encourage achievement of higher tiers.

Quality rating and improvement systems should build upon and should be used to raise child care licensing standards and should address:

- Physical environment, including class size and ratios as well as health and safety;
- Staff qualifications and professional development;
- Interactions between teachers, children and families;
- Developmentally and culturally appropriate curriculum and classroom practices;
- Regular program evaluation and public reporting;
- Adequate number of well-trained evaluators and access to technical assistance and mentoring to help programs reach the next level of the quality rating;
- Continuous program quality improvement;
- A career ladder for all early childhood professionals that includes ongoing professional development opportunities and compensation that will attract and retain high quality educators;
- Family involvement, including the ability for families to access early care and education programs that are of high quality, be participants in the education and well being of their children through family involvement in programs and schools, as well as opportunities to increase their educational attainment; and
- Funding for all communities to have accountability for the quality of early childhood programs and services provided to all children.

A QRIS should require sufficient resources be available to ensure adequate ratios of qualified teachers to children and small groups for individualizing instruction. For example, NAEYC accreditation criteria recommend that:

- For infants, adult-child ratios should be 1 adult to no more than 4 children, with a maximum group size of 8;
- For toddlers, adult-child ratios should be no more than 1 adult for 5 to 7 children, for a maximum group size of 14;
- For three -four- and five-year-olds, adult-child ratios should be no more than 1 adult for 8 to 10 children, with a maximum group size of 20; and
- Optimum class size in the early grades is 15 to 18 children with one teacher.

Developmentally appropriate curriculum

Early learning standards should include the following four essential features:

- Significant, developmentally appropriate content and outcomes;
- Developed and reviewed through informed, inclusive processes;
- Gain their effectiveness through implementation and assessment practices that support all children's development in ethical, appropriate ways; and
- Require a foundation of support for early childhood programs, professionals, and families

Currently, the early learning standards developed by the Department of Education contain these features. As a result, early care and education programs should use them as a base for their curriculum, including incorporating them into their assessment tool or using an assessment tool that aligns with these standards.

As the federal government looks to develop common standards for birth to five, the four essential features listed in the above section should also be incorporated into the common standards. As the common standards are developed, early childhood professionals including, but not excluded to MiAEYC members, should be active in the development and review processes.

Educational technology implementation should be guided by the points below:

- Appropriate technology (as determined via the professional judgment of the teacher, the medical community, and the early childhood professional community) is integrated into the regular learning environment and used as one of many options to support children's learning.
- As part of the teacher's overall classroom plan, technology should be used in ways that support existing classroom educational directions rather than distort or replace them.
- Early childhood educators should promote equitable access to technology for all children and their families. Children with special needs should have increased access when this is helpful. (If schools wish to provide equity to children of low-income families, with respect to their confidence and competence concerning computer learning, these children need to be provided more in-school, developmentally appropriate technology access. And that access must be meaningful, moving beyond rote drill-and-practice usage).
- Adaptive Technology for children with special needs, such as communication boards, recording systems, microphones, should be available.

Curriculum should:

- Be thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children;
- Support children being active and engaged in learning;
- Have clearly defined goals, share among "stakeholders" (for example, program administrators, teachers and families), and understood by all;
- Be based on sound evidence that is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically relevant for the children who will experience the curriculum, and be organized around principles of child development and learning;
- Build on prior learning and experiences;
- Encompass critical areas of development including children's physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and cognition and general knowledge, and (more fully and explicitly for older children) subject matter areas such as science, mathematics, language, literacy, social studies, and the arts;
- When subject-specific curricula are adopted, meet the standards of relevant professional organizations and be reviewed and implemented so that they fit together coherently; and
- If implemented as intended, be likely to have beneficial effects, including benefits on a wide range of outcomes.

In order to achieve developmental appropriateness:

- Programs must be comprehensive in nature, so that both age-specific and individual characteristics are addressed and designed to meet the needs of children and families served.
- Program planning and implementation must recognize the integrated nature of care and education for young children and not treat child care and early education as separate services or program functions.
- Pre-service and ongoing professional development should provide early childhood teachers, administrators, and other staff with knowledge of and skills in using developmentally appropriate practices.

Social promotion/grade retention:

- Children who fall behind in learning should receive individualized support, such as tutoring, personal instruction, focused time on the areas of difficulty, and other strategies to accelerate the learning process. Efforts should be made to avoid grade retention of children who fail to make expected progress.

Educational assessments should align with the following:

- Ethical principles guide assessment practices, such as young children are not denied opportunities or services (such as program placement or entry), and decisions are not made about children on the basis of a single assessment.
- Assessments are used in ways that are consistent with the purposes for which they were designed. If the assessments will be used for additional purposes they are validated for those purposes.
- Assessments are appropriate for ages and other characteristics of children being assessed.
- Assessment instruments are in compliance with professional criteria for quality.
- The objects of assessment include a comprehensive, developmentally, and educationally important set of goals, rather than a narrow set of skills.
- Assessments are aligned with early learning standards, with program goals, and with specific emphases in the curriculum.
- Assessment evidence is used to understand and improve learning.
- Assessments lead to improved knowledge about children.
- Assessment evidence is gathered from realistic settings and situations that reflect children's actual performance that are consistent with children's culture, language, and experiences.
- The assessment system emphasizes repeated, systematic observation, documentation, and other forms of criterion- or performance-oriented assessment that use broad, varied, and complementary methods.
- Screening or other assessments identify concerns; appropriate follow-up, referral, or other intervention is used. Diagnosis or labeling is never the result of a brief screening or one-time assessment.
- Use of individually administered, norm-referenced tests is limited to situations in which such measures are appropriate and potentially beneficial, such as identifying potential disabilities.
- Families are part of assessment, with regular communication, partnership, and involvement.
- Tools to assess young children's progress must be clearly connected to important learning represented in the standards, must be technically, developmentally, and culturally valid and must yield comprehensive, useful information.
- Developmental assessment of children's progress and achievement should be used to plan curriculum, identify children with special needs, communicate with parents, and evaluate the program's effectiveness.
- Information gained from assessments of young children's progress with respect to standards must be used to benefit children. Assessment and accountability systems should be used to improve practices and services and should not be used to rank, sort, or penalize young children.
- Staff are given resources that support their knowledge and skills about early childhood assessment. Pre-service and in-service training builds teachers' and administrators' "assessment literacy," creating a community that sees assessment as a tool to improve outcomes for children.

Assessments in the form of Standardized Tests should follow these guidelines:

- Group-administered, multiple-choice standardized achievement tests should not be used before third grade or preferably even before fourth grade.
- All standardized tests used in early childhood programs must be reliable and valid according to the technical standards of test development.
- Resources must be made available to provide administrators and teachers with the knowledge and skills to critically evaluate, carefully select, use and interpret standardized tests only for the purpose for which they are intended and for which data exists demonstrating the test's validity (the degree to which the test accurately measures what it purports to measure) and to present the information accurately to families and others as appropriate.
- Pre-service and ongoing professional development programs should ensure that administrators and teachers are knowledgeable about testing use and practices, and on how to interpret test results accurately and cautiously to parents, school personnel, and the media.
- Selection of standardized tests to assess achievement and/or evaluate how well a program is meeting its goals should be based on how well a given test matches the locally determined theory, philosophy, and objectives of the specific program.

Comprehensive services that support health, nutrition, diversity and equity

To regulate health, safety, and quality:

- Any provider of care and education to children from any unrelated families should be regulated by the state without exception, including all centers, schools, large family or group child care homes, and small family child care homes, and kith-and-kin care paid with public funds.
- Licensing standards should be coordinated statewide, streamlined and be comparable for all out-of-home settings within the state, including standards regarding staff qualifications, ongoing training requirements, the role of the family, group size and staff-child ratios, discipline, health and safety aspects, and developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- States must establish a system for implementing standards that includes monitoring and inspection, including adequate licensing staff with early childhood training to monitor compliance with standards and assure technical assistance and leadership.
- Standards should require regular review and public reporting of their continued effectiveness in promoting quality services for children.
- Public purchase of services should be limited to regulated settings.
- All early childhood programs should be free of tobacco, illegal drugs, alcohol, hazardous materials, and violence.
- Licensing standards should be clear and reasonable and reflect current research findings related to children's health development and to reducing the risk of harm.
- Policies should promote incentive mechanisms that encourage and reward achievement of a higher quality of service beyond the basic foundation of licensing.
- Regulating agencies should provide consumer and public education to families, providers, and the public of the importance of the early years and of ways to create environments that promote children's learning and development.

Nutrition

- Good nutrition is critical to children's physical and cognitive development, and children should have access to nutritious food throughout the day and year, whether in the home or in early childhood care and education program (including after-school) settings, including snacks and meals as modeled by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

- Eligible children, families and pregnant women should have access to nutrition education and counseling and to food services through programs such as the Women’s Infant and Child (WIC) nutrition program, Food Stamps, school lunch and breakfast programs, and other programs that provide food services and nutrition counseling.
- The CACFP should be available to all children of low-income families, regardless of whether the children attend a center or family child care home and regardless of the program auspice (public, private, nonprofit, or proprietary).

Diversity and Equity

- Policies, practices, and procedures of early childhood programs and schools should reflect and support diversity of all aspects including, but not limited to, culture, race, ethnicity, and religion.
- No child should be barred from attending a public school on the basis of his or her family’s residency status.
- No federal, state or local law or regulation should require or cause educators, doctors and nurses to deny services to children or to report undocumented individuals.
- For the optimal development and learning of all children, educators must accept the legitimacy of children’s home language, respect (hold in high regard) and value (esteem, appreciate), the home culture, and promote and encourage the active involvement and support of all families, including extended and nontraditional family units.
- Provision of funds must be tied to continued efforts to meet and improve standards and their enforcement.
- Individuals in the early childhood field should be hired, employed, promoted, and if necessary, terminated based solely on their competence and qualifications to perform their designated duties, and not on the basis of their gender, race, national origin, religious beliefs, age, marital status, disability, or sexual orientation.
- No early childhood program or school should discriminate against children or their families in the admission to programs or delivery of services on the basis of race, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, income, sexual orientation, or national origin.
- Programs should be designed to attract children from a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. For programs/providers serving non-school age children, a socioeconomic mix should be facilitated that is responsive to the needs of a diverse population.
- Policies should focus on quality of program design so that segregation on the basis of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or special need, including “at-risk,” status does not occur.
- Public funds should not be used for religious instruction or worship.

Principle II

All Early Childhood Professionals deserve to be supported as professionals with a career ladder, ongoing professional development opportunities, and compensation that will attract and retain high quality educators.

Career ladders

- Career ladders should be established, providing additional increments in salary based on performance and participation in professional development opportunities.
- The provision of an adequate benefits package is a crucial component of compensation for early childhood staff.
- Compensation should not be differentiated on the basis of the ages of children served.

Credentials (for staff and administrators) and teacher licensure

- Michigan should require an elementary teaching certificate with an early childhood endorsement [at a minimum] for those holding the role of lead teacher in public school classrooms (i.e. classrooms within school districts) for children five-years-old and younger in pre-kindergarten and in kindergarten programs.
- Michigan should require a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development focused on teaching young children in state-funded programs that are not in school districts.
- School districts and schools should give priority in hiring and placement to teachers with an early childhood certificate and/or endorsement for public school classrooms for six, seven, and eight-year-olds (1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades).
- Assistant Teacher credentialing for early childhood programs outside of school districts and publicly funded programs should not be limited to a BA and teacher certification, but should support professional development, accepting those with experience, training, or certified degrees including a CDA, AA with an early childhood focus, or BA with an early childhood focus.
- Quality early care and education programs outside of school districts and publicly funded programs should focus on attaining a lead teacher who holds a BA in early childhood or child development.
- All programs should hire staff that strive to attain the highest level as described in the Core Knowledge and Core Competency document that can be found via the following link: <http://web.grcc.edu/frey.pdf>

Professional Development

- Resources should be available to provide financial assistance to individuals in a program of preparation toward a credential or degree necessary to teach in or direct an early childhood program. Such financial assistance may take the form of scholarships, grants, or loans tied to loan forgiveness if the individual fulfills the credential or degree requirements and makes a commitment to remain in the field of early childhood.

Preparation and ongoing professional development standards

- Ongoing professional development is essential for all early childhood professionals to stay current in an ever-expanding research base and to continually improve their teaching skills and the learning outcomes for children.
- Personnel standards must articulate common core knowledge and skills necessary for all individuals who work with young children with special learning and developmental needs and their families, as well as the specialization knowledge and skills required for each of these roles.
- Early childhood professionals must be provided with professional preparation and development in the areas of culture, language, and diversity.

Equitable compensation provided via state and federal funds

- Compensation must be sufficient to attract and retain qualified staff to work with young children and reduce the high rate of turnover and its detrimental effect on children. Salaries and benefits should be comparable to other professionals with equivalent training and responsibilities.
- Compensation for early childhood professionals should be equivalent to that of other professionals with comparable preparation requirements, experience, and job responsibilities.
- Early childhood professionals should be encouraged to seek additional professional preparation and should be rewarded accordingly.

Principle III

All Families deserve access to early care and education programs that are affordable and of high quality, and to be participants in the education and well being of their children through family involvement in programs and schools, as well as opportunities to increase their educational attainment.

Access and affordability

- Provisions such as direct subsidy for low-income families and sliding-fee scale mechanisms must be made so that program options are not limited by family income.
- Accurate calculations of affordability must reflect the full cost of quality, including equitable compensation.
- High-quality early childhood programs should be available to all families who want or need their service at a price that each family can afford.

Family/parent engagement

- Families/parents should be represented in the membership of pertinent advisory groups and must be directly involved in policy decisions affecting their own children.
- Families/parents should be provided with ongoing opportunities to discuss children's needs and progress with program staff and have pertinent program information available in a variety of modalities.
- Families/parents should have unrestricted access to the facility areas to which children have access, and should be encouraged to spend time at the program site.
- Early childhood providers and schools should support family members as decision makers without abdicating professional responsibility for children's care and education.
- Early childhood programs must respect and support the cultural, linguistic, racial, religious, and ethnic differences of families and children.

Comprehensive/coordinated services

- Collaboration among agencies whose programs affect young children and their families should be ensured through interagency committees or other mechanisms to assure coordination.
- Coordinating mechanisms must be fostered among federal, state, and local levels, as well as within each of these levels.
- There must be mechanisms for collaboration among services (including education, social, economic development, etc.) in a community and state.
- Collaboration should be encouraged among early childhood programs within the community.
- New programs should contribute to the overall provision of services for young children and avoid needless duplication of existing private or public programs.
- Every young child should have access to a health care provider for regular health care as well as screening for early diagnosis and treatment of vision and hearing problems.
- Whenever agencies and programs collaborate in the provision of services to children and families, there should be the appropriate exchange of information and privacy protections.

Family medical leave

The eligibility for Family and Medical Leave Act should be expanded:

- To serve more families than those currently eligible;
- To provide a longer period of time than the current twelve (12) weeks;
- To partially pay for leave.

In addition, all families should be provided with an additional 24 hours a year to participate in their children's child care, preschool, and school activities.

Flexibility should be provided to states in providing partial paid parental leave, such as using the unemployment insurance compensation funds, among a range of mechanisms.

Public information

- In order for parents/families to make informed decisions, there must be state and local dissemination of information related to cost, quality, and service delivery that is readily available and accessible to all families, regardless of income or native language.
- States and localities must support mechanisms such as community resource and referral that enable parents to make informed choices about early childhood care and education, K-3 education, and school age care programs.

Principle IV

All Communities deserve accountability for the quality of early childhood programs provided to all children, backed by the state and federal funding needed to deliver quality programs and services.

Public support/investment

- A substantial commitment of new public funds must be made to begin to meet the compelling and immediate need for comprehensive, high-quality early childhood care and education services.
- The adequacy/sufficiency of resources should take into account the full cost of quality services and programs for all children.
- Whenever public funds do not serve all eligible children, such resources should be targeted to the most economically disadvantaged communities or children.
- Public funds should be available to support access to high quality, comprehensive early childhood services and programs in a variety of settings based on whether the provider meets standards of quality, and not the status as for-profit or non-profit, or affiliated or not affiliated with specific institutions.

Creating block grants from existing categorical programs

While flexibility in federal programs and resources is important, flexibility should not compromise quality, equity, or be an end in itself. Proposals to block grant existing categorical federal programs should be subjected to the following criteria:

- That the federal funds are used to further child and program outcomes, as compared to the existing categorical programs;
- That the original purposes and populations for receiving assistance will be maintained;
- The states and localities and other grant recipients will be held accountable for results;
- That concentrations of children and families most in need of extra help will benefit;
- That states, localities, programs and schools with high percentages of low-income children will continue to receive adequate funds compared to the categorical programs;
- That levels of funding for activities and levels of standards for programs and child outcomes, such as the Head Start Performance Standards and Outcomes Framework, will not be reduced or undermined by the structure of the block grant; and
- That other flexibility mechanisms are available or preferable, such as consolidated program applications and consolidation of administrative costs at the state and local levels.

Readiness of schools

- It is the responsibility of schools to meet the needs of children as they enter school and to provide whatever services are needed in the least restrictive environment to help each child reach his or her fullest potential.
- Expectations of the skills and abilities that young children bring to school must be based on knowledge of child development and how children learn.

- Representatives of local school systems and private schools, including principals, teachers, and other instructional and related services specialists, should collaborate with early childhood providers in the locality to reduce barriers to and increase coordination of education and services to young children as they make the transition to the elementary grades.

Public policies - Flexibility

- Policies should be flexible enough to meet individual state and community needs provided that such flexibility does not compromise the quality of services for children and their families.
- Strategies for conducting local assessments of need and service delivery should be required prior to and at regular intervals during program implementation.
- Early childhood programs should meet the varying needs of families by (1) including part-day, full-workday, and nontraditional hours, (2) providing choices among various delivery systems, including private and public centers, schools, or family child care, (3) providing options in settings near home or the workplace.
- Mechanisms for equitably providing the information parents need to make informed choices, such as community resource and referral programs, should be readily available to all families.

Public policies - Waivers

While flexibility in federal and state programs and resources is important, flexibility must not compromise quality, equity, or be an end in itself. Proposals to waive or allow states, communities or program/service providers to waive statutory or regulatory requirements must be subjected to the following criteria:

- The waiver does not result in a block granting of existing categorical programs at the state or local levels if no such block granting is currently permissible among the affected programs;
- The program and funds would be continued to further child and program outcomes;
- The original purposes of receiving assistance will be maintained and that the populations intended to benefit will not be diminished;
- The states and localities and other waiver recipients will be held accountable for positive results;
- The waiver shall not result in the reduction of funds to states, localities, programs and schools, particularly those with a high percentages of low income children; and
- Other flexibility mechanisms are available or preferable, such as consolidated program applications and consolidation of administrative costs and other collaborations at the state and local levels.

Waivers of maintenance of effort must be for a limited period of time and a request for waiver must be submitted showing fiscal distress that requires such a waiver and its impact.

Federal and State governments must prohibit waivers of:

- Civil rights laws and requirements;
- Requirements to use funds to supplement and not supplant other funds;
- Within-state formula distribution of funds and comparability of services;
- Family participation and involvement requirements;
- Safety and health requirements and prohibitions on facility construction; and
- Prohibition on the use of funds for religious worship or instruction.

The waiver process must include:

- A set period for the waivers (i.e., not unlimited in time);
- Public notice and comment on the proposed waiver;

- Publication of the approved waiver;
- A process for terminating a waiver; and
- Both an interim and final report on the impact of such waivers.

Continuity

- Efforts must be made to address continuity between programs as children move from one type of program to another from year to year. If children attend multiple programs, strategies for fostering communication and collaborative planning should be stressed.
- Efforts must also be made to foster continuity between home and program by including many opportunities for parent participation and involvement in programs.

High quality/evidence based programs

- Resources for improving program quality should include financial support to assist programs to undertake and meet national accreditation standards for early childhood care and education.
- Policies promoting accreditation must be supported with resources for personnel and administrator training, release time, facilitation projects, quality improvement efforts, peer support and mentoring, the costs of fees, materials, and equipment, technical assistance, and expert consultation.

Program evaluation should:

- Occur regularly, including self-evaluation, to document the extent to which programs are achieving desired results, with the goal of engaging in continuous improvement.
- Focus on processes and implementation as well as outcomes. Over time, evidence is gathered that program evaluations do influence specific improvements.
- Have designs and measures that are guided by goals identified by the program, by families and other stakeholders, and by the developers of a program or curriculum, while also allowing the evaluation to reveal unintended consequences.
- Have comprehensive goals, including goals related to families, teachers and other staff, and community as well as child-oriented goals that address a broad set of developmental and learning outcomes.
- Use scientifically valid designs, guided by a "logic model" that describes ways in which the program sees its interventions having both medium- and longer-term effects on children and, in some cases, families and communities.
- Include multiple measures, including program data, child demographic data, and information about staff qualifications, administrative practices, classroom quality assessments, implementation data, and other information that provides a context for interpreting the results of child assessments.
- When individually administered norm-referenced tests of children's progress are used as part of program evaluation and accountability, use matrix sampling (that is, administering the assessments to only a systematic sample of children) so as to diminish the burden of testing on children and to reduce the likelihood that data will be inappropriately used to make judgments about individual children.
- When individually administered norm-referenced tests are used as part of program evaluation, be developmentally and culturally appropriate for the particular children in the program, conducted in the language children are most comfortable with, valid in terms of the curriculum, and technically sound (including reliability and validity). Quality checks on data are conducted regularly, and the system includes multiple data sources collected over time.
- When child assessments are used as part of program evaluation, have a primary focus on children's gains or progress as documented in observations, samples of classroom work, and other assessments over the duration of the program, and ensure that the focus is not just on children's scores upon exit from the program.

- At whatever level or scope, be conducted by well-trained individuals who are able to evaluate programs in fair and unbiased ways, and ensure that assessor training goes beyond single workshops and includes ongoing quality checks.
- When self-assessment processes are used as part of comprehensive program evaluation, follow a valid model.
- Include data that are analyzed systematically and can be quantified or aggregated to provide evidence of the extent to which the program is meeting its goals.
- Have the results shared with families, policy-makers, and other stakeholders, and that data from program monitoring and evaluation, aggregated appropriately and based on reliable measures, should be made available and accessible to the public.
- Use appropriate safeguards to ensure, when including child assessments, to use multiple assessments, including observational assessment, children's work and performance, parent interviews, and community data, and that child outcomes assessments are not the sole or primary basis for program evaluation.

Transfer of program administration should:

- Measurably improve the program's goals and purposes;
- Not create undue confusion or burden at the federal, state, or local levels;
- Maintain or improve the collaboration with other programs in other agencies; and
- Not result in a lowering of standards for any of the programs.

Appendix - Definitions

To support clarity in terms used in this document, specific vocabulary that may be mis-interpreted has been operationalized or defined below:

- early childhood – children from birth through age 8.
- young children – children from birth through age 8.
- early childhood care and education programs – includes child care, preschool, and the early elementary grades.
- early childhood professional – includes all staff and administrators of an early childhood program, a family child care setting, or an elementary school.
- public funds – any resources from local or state, or federal government.
- school – any elementary grade school.
- kith-and-kin – unlicensed providers who are also called family, friends and neighbors or relative care providers and day care aides.