

Have a Heart. Invest in Early Learning!

Families Need Funding for Early Childhood Education

As SCAN kicks off our 10th anniversary, our resolve to ensure that every child has access to high-quality early learning has never been stronger. Save the Children Action Network (SCAN) was created in 2014 as the political advocacy arm of Save the Children, to be the political voice for kids. We work to ensure that the issues critical to children's lives and futures are given top priority by our elected leaders, building bipartisan support to make sure every child has a strong start in life. High-quality early education prepares children for a lifetime of learning – but a lack of affordable, quality options means too many kids miss out.

High-quality early education has **long-term benefits for children**, mitigating the effects of poverty¹, improving health² and acting as an equalizer for economically disadvantaged kids and dual-language learners.³

But early learning is **unaffordable** and **inaccessible** in the U.S. In 2021, child care cost **\$10,600 per kid** on average – more than in-state college tuition in most states!⁴ 50% of families live in “**child care deserts**,” where there aren't enough slots to meet communities' needs. For families in rural America, it's even worse.

Child care **allows parents to work** – especially mothers. Some estimates suggest subsidizing care would **help 1.2 million women** return to work.⁵ It's estimated that unaffordable child care is causing our economy to lose out on **\$122 billion** each year.⁶

Critical Programs that Need Ongoing Investment

1. **Head Start and Early Head Start** provide child care and critical support services to low-income families.
2. **Child Care Development Block Grants (CCDBG)** help states fund child care subsidies for low-income families, often in the form of vouchers – but only 15% of eligible children have access.
3. **Preschool Development Grants (PDG)** allow states to expand and improve early learning programs and recruit, train and retain early childhood educators. Nearly every governor nationwide has applied for these funds.

The End of COVID Relief Funding

In September 2023, \$24 billion in COVID relief funding expired for child care.

- This funding helped providers across the nation operate throughout the pandemic, providing salary increases and signing bonuses for child care workers and helping some programs cover utility and rent expenses.
- Each state determined how to distribute the funding, so the impact of its loss won't be felt immediately. Results will differ from state to state, but experts expect increased child care costs, staff salary cuts, lay-offs and even potential provider closures.
- An October 2023 survey found that **nearly 1 in 3 parents** already saw increased costs since COVID funding expired, and 80% said it was difficult to find child care. Of those, more than 4 in 5 said it was impacting their ability to work.

E-mail Save the Children Action Network at supportercare@savechildren.org

1 <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/childcare.pdf>

2 https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/NIEER-Policy-Update_Health_2019.pdf

3 <https://www.brookings.edu/research/puzzling-it-out-the-current-state-of-scientific-knowledge-on-pre-kindergarten-effects>

4 <https://www.childcareaware.org/catalyzing-growth-using-data-to-change-child-care/#ChildCareAffordability>

5 <https://www.axios.com/2022/06/17/childcare-subsidies-would-send-12-million-women-into-the-workforce-new-paper-finds>

6 <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/2038-122-billion-the-growing-annual-cost-of-the-infant-toddler-child-care-crisis>

