Early Care & Education Consortium

Expanding Access to Early Care & Education

Member Participation

47%
of ECEC member centers participate in public Pre-K

16%
of ECEC member centers participate in Head Start

1/3
of ECEC members' centers participate in CCDBG

FY 2026 CCDBG At-A-Glance

In FY 2026, CCDBG was funded at **$8.8 billion**, which reflects FY 2026 discretionary CCDBG appropriations only; states also receive separate mandatory Child Care Entitlement to States (CCES) funds. Currently, the program **serves roughly one million children** under the age of six. Across all eligible age groups, **childcare subsidies reach only 16% of eligible children**.

Expanding Access Through Public Programs
ECEC members participate in childcare subsidy, Head Start, and public Pre-K, helping families access care they could not otherwise afford. However, subsidy reimbursement rates in most states fall below the true cost of care, limiting providers' ability to serve families who rely on this assistance.

Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)
The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 is the main federal law governing childcare programs for low-income working families. The CCDBG Act authorizes discretionary appropriations to support grants to state, territorial, and tribal lead agencies. Lead agencies use these funds to subsidize the childcare expenses of eligible children and to improve the overall quality and supply of childcare.

State Reimbursement Rates Fall Short

According to the Administration for Children and Families, of the **45 states** that set rates using market rate surveys, only **16 set base payment rates at or above the federally recommended 75th percentile of market rates** across all age groups and care settings, limiting providers' ability to participate and reducing families' access to care.

STATE SPOTLIGHT

CO
64% of ECEC providers participate in the subsidy program, compared to 43% of non-ECEC providers.
97% of ECEC providers currently participate in Universal Pre-K, compared to 75% of non-ECEC providers.

GA
72% of ECEC providers participate in the subsidy program, compared to 70% of non-ECEC providers.

OH
75% of ECEC providers participate in the subsidy program, compared to 66% of non-ECEC providers.

PA
92% of ECEC providers participate in the subsidy program and are more likely than non-ECEC providers to serve children under 5 in Child Care Works, including:
- Infants/toddlers: 76% vs. 58% non-ECEC
- Preschool-aged: 80% vs. 63% non-ECEC

TX
47% of ECEC providers participate in the subsidy program, compared to 39% of non-ECEC providers.

POLICY ASK

Set subsidy reimbursement rates to cover the true cost of care.

Design publicly funded Pre-K as genuine mixed delivery by funding qualified community-based providers alongside public schools at sustainable rates.

Ensure that community-based providers have access and means to **participate fully** in the overall delivery model.

Mixed Delivery Matters

Community-based provider participation in publicly funded Pre-K depends almost entirely on how each state structures delivery.

Genuine Mixed Delivery

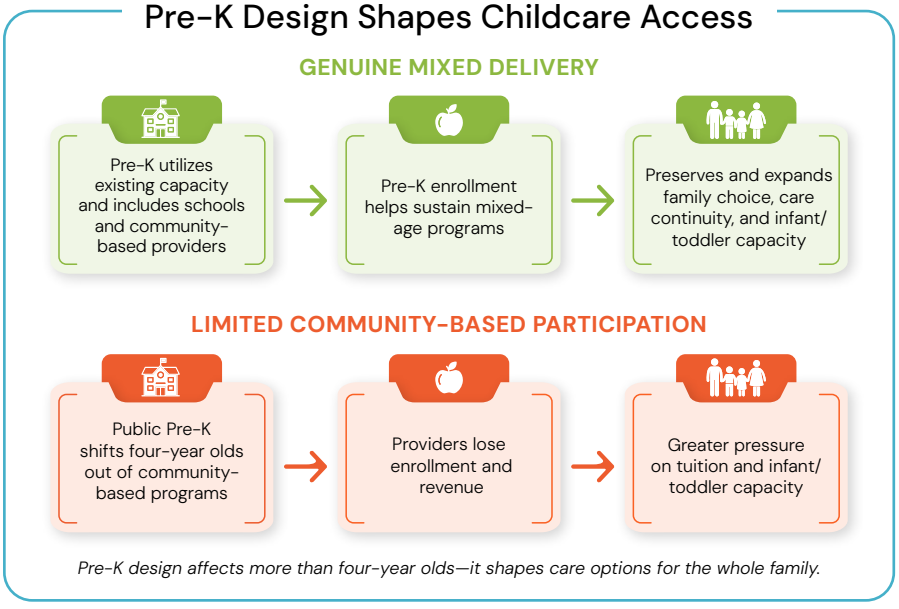
Mixed delivery is a model in which publicly funded Pre-K is offered in a range of community-based settings, as well as through the public schools. It builds on the existing infrastructure and expertise of licensed providers, including childcare centers, home-based programs, faith-based providers, and Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Genuine mixed delivery not only preserves family choice, it also helps sustain the financial model that supports infant and toddler care. Revenue from preschool-age children helps providers cover the higher costs of serving younger children, maintain staffing levels and offer the full-day care working families need.

For example, Colorado's Universal Preschool, Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program, and Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten partner with community-based providers to sustain or expand enrollment while preserving extended-day care, facilities, and continuity of care for working families. This both takes advantage of existing infrastructure and capacity and stabilizes the availability and affordability of care offered in the community.

What Happens When There is No Mixed Delivery

When publicly funded Pre-K is delivered primarily through public schools, community-based providers often lose a significant share of their four-year-old enrollment. Because preschool-age children help offset the higher cost of infant and toddler care, the loss of these children can reduce provider sustainability, increase pressure on tuition rates and limit the availability of care for younger children. Without meaningful participation by community-based providers, expansions of publicly funded Pre-K programs can undermine the mixed-age enrollment that helps sustain infant and toddler care. Families may also have to piece together multiple care arrangements when programs only available in public schools do not cover their work hours or operate year-round. Even relatively small enrollment declines can challenge provider viability and reduce overall community childcare capacity. ECEC members' experiences illustrate how publicly funded Pre-K design can affect enrollment in community-based settings, with implications for the care available to families. More than 40% of ECEC members reported experiencing a decline in their own enrollment due to non-mixed delivery publicly funded Pre-K, including about 25% who saw a major decline of 5% or more. The largest share, about 39%, reported mixed effects across states, which shows that impact depends on how each state designs its program. A mixed-delivery approach that includes both schools and community-based settings can expand access to Pre-K while preserving family choice and supporting full-day, full-year care.



Pre-K design affects more than four-year olds—it shapes care options for the whole family.

Data: Tyton Partners, The ECE Sector and the ECEC Membership in Context (Aug. 2026); Administration for Children & Families, CCDF Provider Payment Rates By State (Jan. 2025); Congressional Research Service, The Child Care and Development Block Grant: In Brief (Dec. 2024); Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, "Child Care Providers including Early Learning Programs Listing Current Monthly Facility County Human Services" (Sept. 2026); Colorado Department of Early Childhood, "Colorado Licensed Child Care Facilities Report" (Oct. 2026); Texas Health and Human Services Commission, "HHSC CCL Daycare and Residential Operations Data" (Oct. 2026); Texas Open Data Portal, "Statewide Child Care Subsidy Providers" (Oct. 2026); Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, "Provider Data Export"; Ohio Department of Children and Youth, "Export a List of All Programs."