



President Obama's Early Childhood Plan

-Early Learning Challenge Grants

The proposed fiscal 2010 federal budget for the Department of Education includes \$300 million to help states create early learning systems that move toward universal preschool, and also improve and expand programs for infants and toddlers – a major new initiative. States would be required to match funds for these “Zero-to-Five” programs, meet quality and accountability standards, and create public/private partnerships. Early childhood services will also be emphasized through the President’s Promise Neighborhood initiative, modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone. The 2010 budget includes \$10 million for one-year planning grants to nonprofit organizations as they launch this new effort.

-Expanding Head Start and Early Head Start

The President’s 2010 budget includes \$7.24 billion for Head Start, an increase of \$122 million over the current level. In addition, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the federal economic stimulus package--included \$2.1 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start. Funds for Early Head Start, which serves infants and toddlers, are set aside for training, technical assistance, and monitoring. Migrant Head Start programs and seasonal programs are also to be considered in the distribution of Early Head Start funds from the stimulus.

-Child Care

As part of the ARRA, the President also included \$2.1 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which is administered through the Department of Health and Human Services. Of that amount, \$225 million must be spent on quality improvements. The President’s 2010 budget, however, doesn’t increase annual funding for the program, which is \$5.1 billion.

-Presidential Early Learning Council

The President will create a council to promote coordination between different federal agencies operating programs that serve young children and to encourage similar coordination at the state level. The council would be modeled after the Illinois Early Learning Council, which oversees the implementation of early childhood initiatives in the state and develops long-range plans to expand programs and reduce gaps in services.

-Home Visiting

To give infants a strong start at home, the President proposes to make home visiting for low-income, first-time parents, available nationwide.. His budget for 2010 includes \$124 million--\$8.6 million a year over 10 years for this program. The effort is inspired by the Nurse-Family Partnership, founded by David Olds, director of the Prevention Research Center for Family and Child Health at the University of Colorado, based on his research with poor first-time mothers in Elmira, N.Y. Research has found that it reduces child abuse and neglect, decreases emergency room visits, and prevents children’s behavior and intellectual problems.