

PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

SUMMARY OF EARLY LEARNING IN THE FY 2014 PRESIDENTIAL BUDGET REQUEST

Introduction

Parents have long recognized that high quality early education for young children is of the foundation for their success in kindergarten and beyond, and generates life-long benefits for children, families, and our nation's economy. Recognizing the value of helping families find stable, supportive and educational care for their young children while parents are at work, federal and state funds support a flexible range of neighborhood-based early care options to help low income parents meet their children's early education needs.

On April 10, the Obama Administration submitted to Congress its Fiscal Year 2014 budget proposal. A central component of this proposal was the Preschool for All initiative, which builds on work being done in the states through existing federal and state programs to promote access to high quality, voluntary early learning programs for children starting at birth. The President's plan seeks to help states improve quality and expand access to home visitation, early childhood development for infants and toddlers, and extend high-quality preschool for four year olds, taking a birth to five approach to assure school readiness.

Summary

The largest part of the Preschool for All initiative would support the voluntary expansion of high quality preschool opportunities for four year olds from low- and moderate-income families. To qualify for their share of funds, states that choose to participate must meet minimum quality standards and contribute matching funds that ramp up over time. To help states enhance quality and build systems to support expanded pre-Kindergarten, the Department of Education proposes a competitive award program to build state capacity to implement high-quality preschool programs, the Preschool Development Grants. The early learning strategy also proposes complimentary increased investments in programs for younger children, including \$15 billion over the next ten years to extend home visiting for at-risk children and an increase of \$1.4 billion for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships that would elevate the quality of care for children age birth to three. This multipronged focus on the nation's youngest learners represents a vision focused on both access and quality. Over time, as states use more Department of Education funds to serve four year olds, resources currently allocated to local communities through the Department of Health and Human Services would be re-focused on younger children.

Summary of Proposed Investments

Voluntary Home Visiting Services: *\$15 billion mandatory funding over 10 years (HHS)*

The President proposes to extend and expand current home visiting services to families with very young children administered by the states, beginning in FY 2015. Evidence-based home visiting programs demonstrate improved maternal and child health in the early years; long-lasting, positive impacts on parental skills; and enhanced children's cognitive, language, and social-emotional development and school readiness.

Head Start/Early Head Start: *\$9.6 billion discretionary funding in 2014 (HHS)*

This provision would continue grants to local public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies to maintain the current number of children enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start, and minimize the potential for service disruptions in the transition from incumbent grantees to new grantees as a result of recompetition. This funding level includes the request for an increase of \$1.4 billion for **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships**, competitive grants that would be provided to states, local governments, public and private non-profits, and for-profit agencies to partner with child care providers to provide high-quality early childhood development services that meet both the Early Head Start standards and the needs of working families. Applicants would be evaluated based on the extent to which they partner with child care providers in

their communities, especially those caring for Early Head Start eligible children receiving a subsidy through the Child Care and Development Fund.

Child Care and Development Fund: *\$5.8 billion discretionary and mandatory funding in 2014 (HHS)*

This allocation supports formula grants to States for child care subsidies for low-income families who are working, and combine mandatory and discretionary funds (better known as CCDBG). The request includes a \$200 million child care quality initiative that would provide competitive grants to states to raise the bar on child care quality through improved standards, monitoring, and transparency. Funds would be available to states with the most effective applications in key areas, including implementing quality indicators, raising standards to improve monitoring and oversight of child care providers, and implementing more evidence-based professional development systems. The request also includes \$500 million to be distributed to states via formula to reduce waiting lists and expand access to care.

Preschool Development Grants: *\$750 million discretionary funding in 2014 (USED)*

These grants would support the expansion of state-based pre-K programs by providing competitive grants to states most willing to commit to creating or expanding a high-quality preschool system that can serve 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families, including children with disabilities. Competitive grants would be awarded both to low-capacity states to develop critical physical and program quality infrastructure, as well as to states with more robust state-funded preschool systems to improve program quality and fund expansion.

Pre-Kindergarten for Four Year Olds: *\$1.3 billion mandatory funding in 2014 (\$75 billion over 10 years) (USED)*

For many years, school districts have had flexibility to use their Title I funds to support high quality early childhood education for children birth to five, provided on school property or through community-based programs. This investment would help expand state and local preschool initiatives by offering states funding to implement high-quality pre-K programs for four year olds through a state-federal cost-sharing model. These programs would provide access to high-quality pre-Kindergarten for four year old children from families below 200% of poverty, and provide incentives for states to serve additional middle-class families. Funds would be used to improve outcomes for children by enhancing the quality of existing pre-Kindergarten programs and expanding the number and availability of high-quality pre-K programs. States would increase access to and improve the quality of pre-K programs in part by demonstrating that they have (1) early learning and development standards across the essential domains of school readiness, (2) high-quality program standards, (3) requirements for teacher and staff qualifications, and (4) the ability to link preschool data with K-12 data. Pre-K classes could be offered in school buildings or through agreements with high quality non-profit or for-profit community-based providers.