

The patchwork of early care and education (ECE) programs for young children in the United States varies from state to state, where children and families face greater economic hardship in some locations more than others simply based on geography. While high-quality ECE programs are associated with positive academic and social outcomes for children, equal access across the nation, and even within states, simply does not exist. Research and insights featured in this issue of *Focus on Poverty* examine geographic, demographic, and policy differences across the national landscape of early care and education policy and its effects.

This issue begins with co-authors Liana Christin Landivar, William J. Scarborough, Caitlyn Collins, and Leah Ruppner summarizing how rates of maternal employment decline when child care is expensive and difficult to find. As federal policy is lacking, the authors explain, states have a primary role in reducing barriers to employment for mothers by expanding eligibility for child care subsidies and providing funds for pre-K programs.

Next, Karen Babbs Hollett and Erica Frankenberg examine how Black and Latinx children are much less likely than White children to participate in high-quality ECE programming. This disparity replicates and amplifies chronic racial disparities found elsewhere in the United States. The authors offer several plausible policy alternatives to the predominant mechanism of tiered reimbursements for ECE.

Co-authors Jaeseung Kim and Julia R. Henly round out this edition of *Focus on Poverty* with explanations of how child care subsidy stability and social support networks can reduce material hardship for families with low incomes, especially those who cycle on and off child care subsidy programs.

Within this issue, we share a Research to Watch item submitted by Alejandra Ros Pilarz & Anna Waltham as well as a Classroom Supplement with additional resources on the topic of early care and education. A few additional resources of note are two recent IRP-hosted webinars exploring facets of the early care and education policy landscape. *Supporting the Early Care and Education Workforce: Evidence and Opportunities* includes insights from Lea Austin, Anna Markowitz, and Laura Dresser while *Ensuring Access to High-Quality, Affordable Early Care and Education for Low-Income Families* gathered the collective wisdom of guests Julia Henly, Yoonsook Ha, and Gina Adams. A recent episode of IRP's Poverty Research and Policy Podcast also recently welcomed Dr. Crystasany Turner in an episode titled *The Strengths, Challenges, and Cultural Assets of Family Child Care Professionals*.

As usual, we welcome feedback on how scholars, practitioners, and classroom teachers use *Focus on Poverty* in their work. Keep up with events, webinars, podcast episodes and more through IRP's social media pages. Thank you for reading *Focus on Poverty*.