

Accessible, Equitable, High-quality, Affordable

A Blueprint for Child Care & Early
Childhood Education in New York City



NYC

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Letters from the Mayor and Deputy Mayor

Letter from the Mayor

To my fellow New Yorkers,

The Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education in New York City marks a historic investment in the future of our children and our city.

I understand the value of quality child care. From day one, children deserve a good meal, and a safe environment where they can learn to socialize with other children, and get a head start on their education. This affects not just their performance later in school, but their performance in life, and impacts their ability to attend college or embark on the career of their dreams.

For parents, access to affordable, quality child care means they do not need to quit their jobs in order to stay home and look after their children. We estimate almost 375,000 parents left or downshifted their jobs because of COVID-19 and lack of access to quality child care.

And most often, the parents who leave the workforce are women of color. The loss is staggering. A New York woman earning \$57,000 a year who leaves the workforce to care for her child from birth to age three will lose more than \$480,000 over her lifetime.

But this is more than just numbers for me. I know first-hand how hard it is to balance both the needs of family and making ends meet. My mother worked three jobs while raising her six children.

The Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education in New York City lays the foundation for a multi-pronged approach to child care that focusses on accessibility, quality and equity for families and the child care workforce. Over the next two years, this plan will increase access to child care for more than 45,000 children in high-need neighborhoods across the city.

We're making it easier to enroll, and we're making sure that our child care workers—again, mostly Black, Brown and Asian women— receive the supports and training they require.

To get this done, we're mobilizing multiple city agencies, the private sector and philanthropic organizations. We're offering tax abatements to property owners who convert their spaces into child care centers, and a new income-tax credit to employers who make free or subsidized child care available to their employees.

The work of caring for a child is the work of life. It's the basis of a fair, just and inclusive city. A city in which every parent and every child not only has the right to dream, but the ability to make their dreams a reality.

Eric Adams
Mayor of the City of New York



Letter from the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives Sheena Wright

To my fellow New Yorkers,

From the moment I joined this administration, I knew that providing affordable, quality child care would be a top priority. It is the way forward to an inclusive, just and economically robust city that meets the needs of all New Yorkers—particularly working families of color who keep our city running.

For too long, children, parents and child care providers in New York City dealt with a broken system consisting of too few and expensive child care seats, confusing lengthy enrollment processes, and inadequate compensation and training. Those who need child care services the most have found it difficult, if not impossible to access them. And providers have closed their doors in record numbers—nearly 400 child care centers shuttered during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education cuts across the multiple city agencies involved in providing subsidized child care, and brings in private sector and charitable organizations to deliver high-quality, affordable seats for New York City's most in need families. The Blueprint also provides critical assistance with training, and navigating bureaucratic hurdles for providers, 96 percent of whom are female, and Black, Brown, Asian or other people of color.

We are undertaking initial strategies to achieve our goals, which are centered on equity, increased enrollment across the city, accountability, and increased support for the early childhood workforce. This is just the first step, and this plan will grow and evolve as we continue to engage with our community partners, advocates, providers and families.

In this initial phase we plan to reach more than 45,000 children in high-need neighborhoods over the next two years and relieve parents from burdensome enrollment processes that involve running between different agencies. We are aiming to increase voucher access, targeting families living in temporary housing and shelters, and training the early childhood workforce.

Finally, with support from our philanthropic partners we will develop an Innovation Fund and are designing a new office at City Hall that will focus on child care and early childhood education, and ensure that our efforts are holistic, equitable and place parent choice as well as the needs of our providers front and center.

Every child in New York City deserves a chance for a better future. Every parent deserves to know that their child is safe and well looked after while they are at work. Every child care worker deserves to be valued and properly compensated. The Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education in New York City puts us on the long overdue path to achieving those goals and more.

Executive Summary



High-quality, affordable and accessible child care is a basic right. Our hardworking families need it, as does our economy. With this Blueprint, we are taking significant steps to implement a number of long overdue, common-sense strategies that will expand access for families in need, improve quality of care, support providers who are the backbone of the city's child care system and streamline delivery across the five boroughs.

Goals:

The plan sets out five ambitious goals and 18 initial strategies to achieve them. Over the next four years, these strategies represent approximately \$800 million in additional planned investments. Combined with existing spending on child care, this represents a total of approximately \$2 billion over the next four years.

Our Goals:

- 1. Offer an accessible child care experience rooted in equity to New York City families**
- 2. Make child care affordable for families**
- 3. Increase child care enrollment across the city**
- 4. Ensure child care programs are high-quality and establish systems of support for the early childhood workforce**
- 5. Create oversight and accountability structures for child care and early childhood education**

Guided by these goals, the city will chart the course to provide equitable access to the affordable, high-quality programs that are essential to New York City's youngest children. Collectively, the strategies in this plan will:

- Reach up to 45,000 children in high need neighborhoods over the next two years through child care expansion and targeted enrollment
- Support at least 7,400 child care educators and leaders through workforce development plans
- Continue to advocate at the state level to eliminate minimum wage requirements that restrict access to care for approximately 10,000 families
- Improve processes for families and providers when they interact with the city

But this is just the start. Over the coming months and years, city agencies will continue to meet regularly and collaborate to review progress, solve problems, and develop additional strategies that continue to advance this work. We will engage families and community stakeholders across the city to ensure their experiences inform city policy as we continue to develop a birth-to-five system in New York City.

Introduction



Child care and early childhood education are the foundations for early development, academic achievement and a lifetime of benefits that follow a child into adulthood. A high-quality child care and early childhood education system support a healthy and strong developmental foundation for our youngest learners and strengthen families, serving as a backbone that is needed now more than ever. Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, building a birth-to-five continuum for families in New York City is essential.

What To Know

New York City is home to more than 500,000 children under the age of 5. According to American Community Survey data, more than 360,000 children under 5 meet the income threshold for subsidized care (income less than 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level), of which approximately 178,000 are infants and toddlers.¹

Although families must be assessed for additional federal & state eligibility criteria, these figures serve as a good benchmark for measuring potential need amongst families who are eligible on the basis of income. Currently, there are 126,500 children ages 0-5 who are either enrolled in a city-contracted early childhood education program or receive a voucher for subsidized child care.²

While New York City has made great progress with Pre-K For All, we recognize there is still work to be done to meet demand for infant and toddler care and to expand full-day and year coverage. Approximately 76 percent of preschool-age children are currently enrolled in a public program compared to just 6 percent of infants and toddlers.³

Workforce Impact

Child care benefits society as a whole, allowing for increased participation in the workforce, especially for mothers. Even pre-COVID-19, the city's labor participation rate for women with young children was under 70 percent, lower than many large U.S. cities.⁴ COVID-19-related child care and school closings only deepened this challenge.

In New York City, more than half a million people did not seek employment in mid-2021 because of child care needs, and New York City estimates say that about 375,000 New York City parents (250,000 mothers, 125,000 fathers) have chosen or may soon choose to leave a job or downshift their careers because of the dual impact of COVID-19 and lack of access to affordable child care.⁵

Working Families and the Economy

The inaccessibility of child care threatens household financial stability, especially for women-led and low-income families. Family members who leave work to care for a child not only lose out on their salary, but also on wage increases, seniority, and, in some cases, retirement matches.

For example, a New York City woman making a median income of \$57,000 a year, who leaves the workforce to care for her child from birth to age three, will lose more than \$480,000 over her lifetime.⁶

When parents downshift their careers or leave their jobs due to COVID-19 and child care inaccessibility, the city's economy suffers.

We lose:

- \$5.9 billion reduction in disposable income
- \$23 billion less in economic output
- \$2.2 billion in tax revenue, roughly 3.7 percent of total 2022 city tax revenue

The bottom line is **child care is essential for New York City's full economic recovery.**

Communities of Color

Child care in New York is outrageously expensive—and the lack of affordable child care is harming parents' ability to work and their children's futures. Children without quality child care—especially during the first 1,000 days of life—are statistically less likely to succeed.

Our poorest families, many of whom are Black, Brown, and Asian, have no choice but to enroll their children in more marginal programs. In 2020 in New York City, for parents with children younger than three, the average cost for home-based care was more than \$10,000 a year, and center-based care was about \$19,000 annually.⁷

Providers

Providers are struggling to keep their doors open. Even before the pandemic, there was a shortage of child care seats in New York City. Over 90 percent of infants and toddlers did not have access to publicly funded care. Close to half live in low-income households.⁸

Research shows that during the first year of the pandemic alone, approximately 400 child care businesses closed permanently.⁹ Employment in the child care industry also fell by more than 20

percent in 2020, with wage levels driving ongoing worker shortages. As a result, child care businesses are currently struggling to staff their programs at pre-pandemic levels and offer pre-pandemic capacity and hours.

Recognizing the opportunity to make child care work better for children, educators and families, New York City has set a vision for accessible, equitable, high-quality, affordable child care and early childhood education for those who need it most.

The city is also committed to driving this vision in ways that center the following values. We will:

- Amplify community engagement and parent voices
- Create avenues to actively listen to community needs as a key input for programs and policy development
- Build trust-based relationships between government and residents
- Embrace ambition and innovation by approaching a long-standing and seemingly gridlocked issue with fresh eyes and by testing new solutions to drive change

Our Approach

Led by the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives, this blueprint is the result of a collaboration between the Deputy Mayors for Health and Human Services, Economic and Workforce Development, and the city agencies that deliver or enable child care and early childhood education in New York City. This blueprint was also influenced by the advocacy efforts, reports and research shared by key organizations such as Citizens' Committee for Children of New York City (CCC), the Campaign for Children (C4C), Robin Hood and countless stakeholders during the Mayoral transition period.

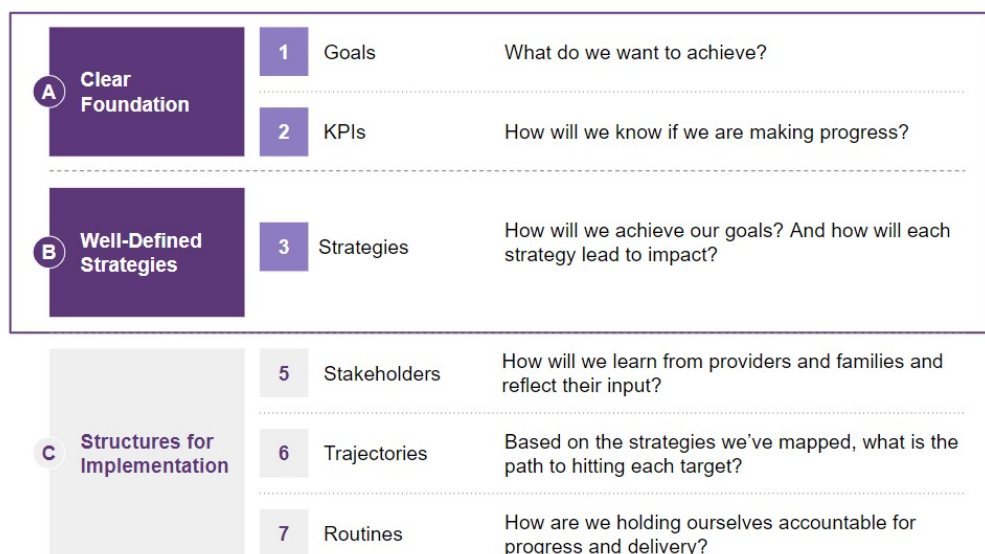
We began by creating a bold, shared vision for the future of child care and early childhood education in New York City:

Accessible, equitable, high-quality, affordable child care and early childhood education systems

Then, agencies worked together to set high-impact goals, and overarching performance indicators that would help the city and our partners understand our progress. The goals are supported by a set of prioritized actions spanning more than ten agencies and departments, creating a collaborative environment of diverse stakeholders and bringing them to the decision-making table.

This approach sets a foundation for work that will be ongoing. We intend to continue to collaborate between agencies, and work with partners and families in order to deliver the best possible child care and early childhood education system for children from birth to five.

Foundational Elements of Blueprint



Our Goals



60 percent of children live in areas considered child care “deserts”, where the available seats are insufficient to meet the need.

Goal 1: Create an equitable, accessible child care and early childhood education experience for New York City families

New York City’s economic recovery is linked to the implementation of an equitable, accessible, high-quality child care system. The lack of child care options has forced largely low-income families, often people of color, to make the choice between going to work and staying home to care for their children. Restarting our economy means reimagining a child care system that will provide working parents peace of mind to join the workforce.

Goal 1 focuses on improving access to child care, with a special emphasis on meeting the needs of the most underserved families across New York City, especially those who live in high need neighborhoods where care is scarce.

Strategy 1.a) Expedite voucher access for all families across the city with a particular focus on high-need communities

Voucher access is critical to providing much-needed financial assistance to families in need. However, for too long, the voucher system has been overcrowded with tens of thousands on the waitlist.

We are committed to fully clearing the current waitlist by September 2022. Since March, the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) contacted over 15,000 families from the list and will continue to contact families every month until the waitlist is cleared.

To enhance equity in voucher distribution and increase access for families with the greatest need, ACS has identified 17 priority community districts with the highest concentrations of poverty (neighborhoods listed in the appendix).¹⁰ ACS will prioritize child care assistance for eligible low-income families in these 17 community districts and expand outreach to ensure that families in these districts are aware of and able to apply for assistance.

All families living in priority community districts will have the opportunity to apply and receive assistance with the voucher application process without being placed on the ACS voucher waitlist. Through focusing on these neighborhoods, ACS has the potential to reach up to 11,000 children over two years.

Target neighborhoods meet all the following criteria:

- Median household income below the citywide average
- Percentage of families living in neighborhoods with higher poverty rates than the citywide average
- Greater percentage of children in poverty than the citywide average
- Percentage of unemployed adults above the citywide average
- Ratio of children under age ten living in the district to the number of child care seats available in the district above one (1) child per seat.

Indicators of impact:

- Number of children from 17 CDs that receive a voucher

Lead agency: Administration for Children's Services

Strategy 1.b) Expand access to contracted care by fostering a birth to five continuum based on family and community preference

Thoughtful seat allocation and placement, based on the needs of communities, can increase the utilization of existing seats and expand access. The Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) is taking a comprehensive approach to optimize existing resources, and consider where new resources are essential. This ensures that families have access to a high-quality, mixed-model delivery system (center-based, family child care, and district school setting) that provides child care and early childhood education for children birth to five.

DOE is strengthening family access to approximately 6,000 high-quality seats through a combination of increasing existing capacity, facilitating seat conversions, honoring expansion requests, and issuing awards through a forthcoming request for proposal (RFP). In order to continue optimizing DECE's portfolio, centered on family choice, the following steps will be taken:

- An internal review of current capacity to reduce oversaturation and increase greater alignment of program capacity for children birth to five
- An assessment of existing providers to determine opportunities to expand or convert current capacity to include infants and toddlers
- An assessment of individual communities to better understand family preferences

- An analysis of the intersection between COVID-19-impacted neighborhoods, child care deserts, and DOE's highest-need districts in order to prioritize those communities for expansion of birth-to-five programming
- Increase capacity to meet the additional demand that will come from recent state approval to expand eligibility to families earning up to 300 percent FPL
- Develop a birth to five RFP

Indicators of impact:

- Number of birth to five seats, including the number of infant and toddler seats added or converted
- Enrollment rates

Lead agency: New York City Department of Education

Strategy 1.c) Increase access for children who are currently ineligible for subsidized care due to their immigration status

Federal and state rules currently limit child care funding eligibility to children who are either U.S. citizens or permanent residents. This policy leaves thousands of children under the age of 5 without access to subsidized care. Immigrant families are the backbone of New York City and no child should be excluded from early childhood education because of their immigration status.

In partnership with the City Council, for the first time the city will invest \$10 million to provide access to subsidized child care for children whose immigration status makes them ineligible for state- and federally-funded subsidies, including undocumented children. Funding would pay for child care vouchers and develop a mechanism for families to seek care without compromising the confidentiality of their immigration status.

Indicators of Impact:

- Number of children enrolled whose immigration status currently make them ineligible for subsidized care

Lead agency: Administration for Children's Services

Strategy 1.d) Authorize child care for 24 months rather than 12 months.

The ability to authorize a family for child care for 24 months, rather than 12 months, would ensure greater continuity of care for children and families, while reducing administrative burden for families, eligibility staff, and child care providers. It will also support stability across the child care sector.

The administration and its partners advocated for this change and we thank the state legislature for passing this bill.

Strategy 1.e) Provide a property tax abatement to incentivize property owners to retrofit space to accommodate child care centers

To address the child care desert crisis, the government must work with the private sector to develop innovative, new solutions.

57 percent of census tracts in New York City are child care deserts, which are defined by the New York State Office of Children and Families (OCFS) as census tracts with three or more children under five years of age for each available child care slot or where there are no available child care seats.¹¹

Creative solutions that spur action by the private sector can be a force multiplier in establishing a quality child care system. That is why the Adams Administration successfully championed a property tax abatement in Albany for residential and commercial property owners who convert their property into child care centers.

The abatement will aid in the creation of additional child care seats in deserts by helping fund construction costs for the retrofit of space in order to comply with New York City Health Code requirements. Through using the full \$25 million included in the city's budget, 11,000 additional child care seats would be generated.

The city will engage property owners and child care providers to ensure that interested parties are able to take advantage of the abatement and facilitate connections to match need with space availability.

Indicators of impact:

- Number of new seats created and number of children enrolled by eligible residential or commercial property owners receiving an abatement

Lead agency: Department of Finance



Over 800 families have been rejected since July 2019 due to the minimum wage floor.

Goal 2: Make child care affordable for families

Policy experts have determined that no family should pay more than 7 percent of total income for child care. Based on this threshold estimates show that only 7 percent of New York City families can afford center-based child care and 20 percent can afford home-based child care.¹²

Such limited affordability means that lower-income families cannot access child care services, while moderate-income families have to face a heavy financial burden to do so. Goal 2 aims to address this issue by creating more avenues for families to access subsidized care that meets their needs.

Strategy 2.a) Expand eligibility for subsidized child care by removing the minimum wage floor

Existing state laws are creating barriers to child care access for economically vulnerable families. State law requires that families must make at least minimum wage in order to be eligible for child care assistance.

The formula used to make the determination is based on reported hours and wages. If a parent's pay divided by hours does not equate to \$15 or more, the family is denied.

The ripple impact of this law is devastating to families who need child care the most. The minimum wage floor excludes certain occupations, including home health aides, cashiers, drivers and secretaries, whose total hours worked often exceed compensated hours. Acknowledging that workers must be compensated for hours worked, existing laws should not prevent these families from accessing care.

The city urges state lawmakers to remove the minimum wage floor to ensure that no family in New York City will be denied child care assistance due to this provision. The city estimates that up to 10,000 families could be impacted by this change.

Indicator of impact:

- Number of families impacted

Lead agency: Administration for Children's Services

Strategy 2.b) Allow families to use child care assistance during the hours they need it by delinking authorized hours of care

Under current eligibility requirements, child care assistance can only be provided during the hours that the caregiver is involved in work or other eligible activities.

This requirement does not reflect the complexities of parents' lives and responsibilities, and it is exceedingly onerous for child care providers to track, manage, and coordinate on behalf of families.

The administration and its partners advocated for this change and we thank the state legislature for passing this bill.

Indicator of impact:

- Number of families impacted

Lead agency: Administration for Children's Services

Strategy 2.c) Reduce the maximum amount families have to pay for child care from 10 percent to 1 percent of total income for families with income between 100 percent and 300 percent Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

Even families eligible for subsidized child care can still face burdensome copayments.

A family of four earning \$55,512 annually (200 percent FPL) currently pays \$55 per week for full time child care assistance.

To address this issue, effective June 1, 2022, ACS is reducing the maximum amount families making between 100 percent and 200 percent FPL can be required to pay in family fees -- from 10 percent of income over 100 percent FPL to 1 percent. This reduction will also apply to families making between 100 percent and 300 percent effective August 1, 2022.

With this change, the same family that once paid \$55 per week will now pay \$10. Once implemented, the change will reach all families in this income bracket who are enrolled in subsidized care.

The reduction will reduce the burden of child care costs for many of the most economically vulnerable families in the city.

Indicator of impact:

- Number of families impacted

Lead agency: Administration for Children's Services

Strategy 2.d) Implement a new business income tax credit for employers that provide free or subsidized child care to their employees

Employers can play a key role in the provision of child care services in a way that not only helps their employees, but also the community at large. The city can strategically use tax credits to achieve the twin goals of an accessible, high-quality child care system and a healthy economic recovery. The business community also has a vested interest in a well-functioning child care system to support a productive workforce

Funding for a new business income tax credit was included in the city's preliminary and executive budgets at \$25 million per year. If the allocated \$25 million of tax credit is fully utilized, it is estimated that employers would create 6,000 new infant and toddler seats.

Indicators of impact:

- Number of employers receiving tax credit and dollar value of tax credit received
- Number of seats created

- Number of children enrolled in seats

Lead agencies: Department of Finance, Office of Management and Budget

Strategy 2.e) Partnering with the private sector

New York's business leaders have a long history of trailblazing innovation, including in the area of employee benefits. Today, New York City employers can lead the way, using the pandemic as a catalyst to build on the success of expanded benefits, meet the demands of a modern labor market while benefiting families and their bottom line.

Supporting families makes sound business sense. Even before the pandemic, U.S. employers lost \$12.7 billion a year due to employees' child care challenges. COVID-19-related child care and school closings only heightened those losses.

To support these efforts, NYCEDC developed a [toolkit](#) to help employers deliver a child care strategy that is employee-centered, data-driven, innovative, customizable, and has a high return on investment. NYCEDC will work with employers via a series of roundtables to further expand on that toolkit and identify new opportunities for creative partnerships.

Goal 3: Increase child care enrollment across the city

Child care enrollment in New York City is on the decline due to several factors. COVID-19 severely impacted enrollment and led to child care providers closing their doors. Moreover, the application process is too complicated for families to navigate.

Goal 3 aims to make enrollment easier for every family with a special focus for the most vulnerable.

Strategy 3.a) Increase outreach and enrollment efforts particularly for families with children in shelter & temporary housing

Approximately 6,800 children five years old or under live in homeless shelters¹³. Inadequate child care during a period of homelessness can make it even more challenging for families to find the support they need to become permanently housed.

To ensure that families are aware of this resource and how to apply for it, each agency that supports families in temporary housing (ACS, DHS, HRA, DOE, and DYCD) will coordinate to target these families, inform them of their priority status, and get more children enrolled in care.

2021 enrollment in full-day pre-kindergarten in New York City declined 13.5 percent compared to 2020.

Their strategies will include:

- refreshing messaging in outreach materials
- the launch of a communications campaign directed at families in shelter or who are unstably housed
- sharing data so that agencies can link families in shelter who receive early intervention services to child care resources
- hosting pop-up events and virtual events at shelters with high numbers of young children
- training for personnel.

Indicator of impact:

- Percentage of children 0-5 living in DHS shelters enrolled in child care

Lead agencies: Department of Social Services, New York City
Department of Education, Administration for Children's Services

Strategy 3.b) Create a single child care application portal

The current child care application process is complex and convoluted, and involves multiple agencies with multiple applications. Too often, families do not even know where to start.

The Adams administration will begin building one unified intake portal for child care where parents can apply for subsidized child care services. With the help of our Chief Technology Officer, we are doing the hard work to make things simple, building a single portal so that parents do not need to know the organizational chart of government to receive child care. Whether a family prefers contracted care or voucher services, this modernization of the current paper process will lead to one place and one process and a simple, seamless application for New Yorkers.

Indicator of impact:

- Digital applications as a share of total applications
- Time to complete online application
- Error/return rate or number of clarifications needed for digital vs paper processes (how successful is user on their first attempt)
- User rating for "ease of use" of digital application process
- Results of follow-up survey with digital users

Lead agency: Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI)

96 percent of the early childhood workforce is female and the majority of the population are Black, Latina, indigenous, and other people of color.

Goal 4: Build high-quality programs and support the child care workforce

A child's first five years are pivotal in determining their opportunity for lifelong success. Access to high-quality early childhood education is proven to reduce achievement disparities when children enter kindergarten--regardless of their racial and income background--and impacts overall lifelong success.

To close this equity gap, we must invest in our early childhood workforce. Every child deserves an early childhood workforce that is educated, experienced, and well compensated.

Social and racial equity is foundational within the early childhood workforce as well. 96 percent of the early childhood education workforce is female, and the majority of the population is Black, Latina, Asian, and other people of color. The city relies heavily on the early childhood education workforce, and we must support the development of a workforce pipeline that consistently recruits individuals into the field and invests in their career advancement professional development, and higher education.

Goal 4 outlines a comprehensive approach to supporting and strengthening the early childhood workforce and thereby improving quality services across the city.

Strategy 4.a) Expand career advancement opportunities for early childhood professionals

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a large number of early childhood educators leaving the field. The educator shortages and time needed to hire new staff compromise the ability of early care and education programs to provide high-quality services. Beginning with a partnership with CUNY's Professional Development Institute, the city will develop a workforce pipeline that recruits new talent and dedicates resources to developing both recently recruited professionals and those who already serve in the field.

Under this partnership, CUNY will offer a portfolio of programs and educational opportunities to early childhood professionals, including:

- Wider access to career advisement services: aiming to recruit new talent to the field and support professional development.

These services will help individuals identify and obtain the training and credentials they need to advance their careers in early childhood development. CUNY plans to add career advisors covering every borough in the city, who will serve more than 5,000 additional child care professionals

- Expanded opportunities for early childhood professionals to earn relevant higher education credentials: includes support for earning credit-bearing Child Development Associate (CDA) credential that can transfer to an associate degree program and support for achieving a Pre-K teacher certification

These initiatives constitute a significant step in addressing the barriers facing the early child care and education workforce.

Indicators of impact:

- Number of new certified teachers
- Number of early childhood directors engaged in leadership development opportunities
- Number of new Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials granted by the Institute's Career Center to child care center staff and family child care providers
- Number of early childhood leaders benefiting from career guidance services

Lead agencies: City University of New York, CUNY, New York City Department of Education (DOE)

Strategy 4.b) Automate DOHMH background check process

Child care employees must undergo a thorough background check to work for a child care provider.

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) will reduce the time providers spend dealing with red tape by automating the processing system and hiring 40 additional staff to deliver results sooner. Streamlining the background check process will make it significantly easier for providers to make new seats available, while still maintaining high-quality checks on all staff and employees.

Indicator of impact:

- Average number of days required to process background checks

Lead agency: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene DOHMH

Strategy 4.c) Reduce administrative burden for providers to claim higher rates

Despite providing critical services to New Yorkers, providers operate with razor-thin margins. Even minor increases in the prices of materials and expenses can affect programs and the financial stability of providers. Every two years, the state sets new rates for providers who provide subsidized care. Today, to receive an increased rate, providers undertake a complex, burdensome review process. To reduce the administrative burden on providers and improve communication, ACS will streamline the process and develop more effective communication to make it easier for providers to receive rates that more closely match their costs.

Indicator of impact:

- Number of providers receiving rate increases across ACS and DOE

Lead agencies: Administration for Children's Services ACS, New York City Department of Education DOE

Strategy 4.d) Help stabilize subsidized child care providers by providing continued support when children are absent, particularly during the pandemic

Child care providers who receive a child care subsidy are also paid for a certain number of days each year to cover when children are absent. Family Day Care, Group Family Day Care, and enrolled informal child care providers can currently claim 24 days per child per year, while Group Day Care and School-Age Child Care Programs and enrolled legally exempt group programs can claim 48 days per child per year. The pandemic has destabilized families and attendance rates and the financial stability of providers. To help stabilize the sector the city will increase this allocation to 80 days per year for all providers. This will support the financial stability of these providers who are otherwise unpaid for absences beyond their control.

Indicator of Impact:

- Providers impacted by this policy change

Lead agencies: Administration for Children's Services (ACS), New York City Department of Education (DOE)

Strategy 4.e) Clear the backlog of unregistered retroactive contracts and amendments

The city is working to clear the backlog of unregistered retroactive contracts and amendments. This work officially kicked off on April 20 with agency leadership and is being jointly managed by Deputy Mayor Wright and Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Law Department, and the Chief Efficiency Officer. Over 12 weeks (from May 9 to July 29), project managers identified by agency leadership will develop implementation plans and concrete metrics to track progress as they clear the backlog with dedicated teams within their agencies

Goal 5: Ensure high performance and ongoing accountability

Child care and early childhood education in New York City are managed and overseen primarily by four city agencies: Administration for Children's Services, the Department of Education, the Human Resources Administration, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, with several additional agencies involved in child care siting, collecting relevant data, and supporting child care businesses and their workers. Child care is also overseen by the New York State Office of Child and Family Services.

Families experience a fractured child care system cutting across multiple agencies and levels of government with numerous rules and processes that are not always aligned.

Goal 5 aims to set up the systems and structures that will provide for ongoing accountability and alignment across agencies and stakeholders.

Strategy 5.a) Establish a Central Child Care & Early Childhood Education Leadership Team

Over the last several months City Hall has established a new, unprecedented framework for interagency coordination for this work. We have created a collaborative process across all agencies involved in child care and early childhood education programs and we want to build on this progress. With support from our partners at Robin Hood, we will establish a new office at City Hall dedicated to early childhood education and child care service delivery. Reporting to the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives, this office will ensure a holistic and coordinated approach to child care and early childhood

education policy by building responsive systems that are centered on parentchoice, supporting providers, and delivering high-quality options for families. The office will be established in fiscal year 2023.

Indicator of Impact:

- Effective data tracking
- Coordinated child care & early childhood education policy across New York City agencies

Lead agency: Office Leadership team (to be established)

Strategy 5.b) Convene a Child Care & Early Childhood Education Advisory Group

The city's child care and early childhood education work should be informed by those who provide and use child care, from parents and teachers to providers and workers. Currently, there is no formal way for these stakeholders to share feedback or new ideas with city officials. The city will establish a child care and early childhood education advisory group, consisting of key stakeholders to help inform the work of the central coordinating office. Once these members for the advisory group are selected and oriented to the task, they will meet on a regular basis to inform policy and help resolve operational issues affecting the sector. We recognize the longstanding challenges affecting programs and it is our goal to bring agency stakeholders to the table to resolve these.

Indicator of Impact

- Number of providers, advocates and families engaged

Lead agency: Leadership team (to be established)

The Path Ahead



The Blueprint above identifies 18 strategies to launch the city on the path towards more accessible, affordable, equitable, and high-quality child care and early childhood education. However, we know that this is just the start. Over the coming months, the Child Care & Early Childhood Education Leadership Team, advisory group, and the many agencies who have contributed will continue to work together to advance more challenging but equally important approaches. We offer a select preview here:

- A child care and early education system cannot be high quality without the ability to attract and retain a qualified workforce. As a first step this year we will partner with experts to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the entire sector - including compensation - to obtain key information.
- Increase business support to build provider capacity and ensure sustainability, particularly for home-based providers
 - New York City is leaning more heavily on home-based child care providers than ever before. Home-based providers offer the benefits of flexible hours, accessibility, and cultural compatibility with our youngest children and their families. In order to achieve an aligned and cohesive early childhood care and education system, we must implement a plan to support home-based providers across New York City. Increasing business support and resources, and investing in these essential workers will help to strengthen the quality of early care and learning to children across New York City.
- Ensure families have access to high-quality child care and early childhood education programs for children with special needs by supporting providers with tools and training to identify and serve children with developmental delays and behavioral challenges.
 - The sooner that developmental delays are identified, the better the chance for children to overcome these delays and receive the supports they need. However, few providers are trained to identify these delays and either provide or suggest appropriate care. Preparing our workforce to identify and address challenges, and make referrals, when necessary, will enhance the system
- Communicate and implement a set of common quality standards across all New York City's child care & early childhood education programs
 - We will work with providers and other stakeholders – including the Advisory Group - to adopt NYS's quality rating

and improvement system as our citywide system. We will help more providers participate in this continuous quality improvement cycle and help families better understand the steps that are being taken to provide high-quality care to their children.

- CUNY currently operates 17 campus child care centers serving more than 1600 children. In the coming year the university will add at least one new center at Queensborough Community College increasing capacity to 1700 children.
 - The City is committed to working with CUNY to assess how it can expand its affordable child care program. Some ideas include, aging down their child populations and extending services to infants, which can result in student-parents returning to school faster and incentivizing programs to offer extended hours providing parents with evening and weekend hours, as needed.
- Conduct a citywide space assessment for child care needs
- Assess the needs of existing child care centers in NYCHA developments
- Develop models for full day, full-year care including summer months
- NYCEDC will launch a Care Innovation Network to cultivate the ecosystem of care innovation companies and support the industry's growth.

Conclusion



This plan lays out an ambitious set of strategies, but we know there is more work to be done and we cannot do it alone. This blueprint is just the first step towards our goal of delivering accessible, equitable, high-quality affordable care to families in New York City. It will serve as a living, breathing guide as we continue this work. However, the components of the plan will grow to meet the evolving needs of families and providers. We will be flexible and adapt as we test our approaches and learn from them, all the while remaining committed to our goals.

It is our mission to work in partnership with our providers, families, community advocates, labor unions, business leaders and the philanthropic community because, as the saying goes, “it takes a village to raise a child.”

We want New York City to be the best place in the country to raise a young family. Our future depends on it.

Data Sources and Notes

Introduction:

Goal 1: Offer an accessible child care experience to New York City families that is rooted in equity

Goal 2: Make child care affordable for families

Goal 3: Increase enrollment across the city

Goal 4: Ensure our programs are high-quality and support providers

Annex 1- Strategy-specific details

Strategy 1.a) Expedite voucher access for high need families

Prioritized Community Districts met the following criteria as of January 2022:

- Median household income is below the citywide average (\$69,171)
- Percentage of families living below poverty is above the citywide average (15.4 percent)
- Percentage of children living below poverty is above the citywide average (23.6 percent)
- Percentage of unemployed adults is above the citywide average (6.8 percent)
- Ratio of children under age ten living in the district to the number of child care seats available in the district is above one (1) child per seat

List of prioritized Community Districts:	
Community District Abbreviation	CD Name
CD MN10	Central Harlem
CD MN11	East Harlem
CD MN12	Washington Heights/Inwood
CD BX01	Mott Haven/Melrose
CD BX02	Hunts Point/Longwood
CD BX03	Morrisania/Crotona
CD BX04	Highbridge/Concourse
CD BX05	Fordham/University Heights
CD BX06	Belmont/East Tremont
CD BX07	Kingsbridge Heights/Bedford Pk
CD BX09	Parkchester/Soundview
CD BX11	Morris Park/Bronxdale
CD BK03	Bedford Stuyvesant

CD BK05	East New York/Starrett City
CD BK13	Coney Island
CD BK16	Brownsville
CD QN14	Rockaway/Broad Channel

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Children's Cabinet

Administration for Children's Services

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Department of Education

Department of Social Services / Department of Homeless Services / Human Resources Administration

Mayor's Office of Operations

Mayor's Office of Policy and Programs

Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer

Office of Management and Budget

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Endnotes

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3. NYC Opportunity review of Enrollment data from New York City Department of Education and Administration for Children's Services; Total population numbers from American Community Survey 2019 data
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