



Winning Beginning NY

an early care and learning coalition

Winning Beginning NY Legislative Agenda 2011

www.winningbeginningny.org

New York State must preserve and protect access to high-quality early care and learning, which are essential for children's success in school and for the state's economic recovery. Every \$1 spent in local early childhood programs generates \$1.86 in additional spending locally. Every \$1 invested also generates savings for public schools by reducing the need for remedial services, special education and grade retention. These savings are substantial – approximately \$2,500 to \$9,500 per child.

Winning Beginning NY, the state's early care and learning coalition, believes that New York State should:

- **Restore funding for home visiting programs**—including Healthy Families New York (\$23M); Nurse-Family Partnership, funded through Community Optional Preventive Services (\$4.3M); and The Parent-Child Home Program, funded through Hoyt Family Trust (\$1.2M).
- **Restore child care funding** (\$55M), including the reduction of \$48M in ARRA funds and the \$7M loss of funding for SUNY/CUNY child care and the demonstration projects.
- **Restore funding for afterschool initiatives** that advance student achievement and assist working families, including the Advantage After School Program (\$5M).
- **Maintain the commitment to Pre-K** services for more than 108,000 four-year-olds across the state, and eliminate maintenance of effort penalties in the legislation.
- **Build on the progress made in establishing QUALITYstarsNY** to promote better outcomes for children (\$3M).

*Winning Beginning NY also supports paid family leave and appropriate state support for Early Intervention services.**

**Contact: Jenn O'Connor, SCAA and Winning Beginning NY
518/463-1896, ext. 131 or jconnor@scaany.org**

Background

Families do not view the supports needed for their children in discrete categories defined by early care (birth to age three, five, or eight) or school-age (age three, four, or five to age 18). The issues described in this section (home visiting, child care, afterschool, Universal Pre-K, and QUALITYstarsNY) are all part of a core, comprehensive set of supports that all children and families need. These supports all include the critical component of parent and community engagement.

Home Visiting

Home visiting relies on home visitors—either nurses or other trained personnel—to provide regular home visits to educate expectant and new parents about prenatal care, infant care, child development and parenting skills. Research shows that home visiting decreases infant mortality rates, helps prevent child abuse, and increases school readiness.

The Healthy Families New York (HFNY) home visiting program is in danger of elimination because of its inclusion in the Primary Prevention Incentive Program (PPIP) proposed in the 2011 Executive Budget.

In addition, funding streams that support the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) and The Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP)—Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS) and the Hoyt Family Trust, respectively—are included in the PPIP and face elimination.

The establishment of the PPIP, intended to prevent unnecessary foster care placements and other more costly supports, will have the opposite impact. It will create a domino effect. Children and families will go unserved because the PPIP will only reinvest 50% of the savings from restructuring, pit programs that serve different populations against each other, and require a 38% match from counties that they do not have. This will dismantle the state system, which is essential to localities providing services. Families that go unserved in the earliest years will end up needing costly remediation services later on.

Any reduction in funding for home visiting will also disqualify New York State from applying for millions in federal aid by not meeting Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements. We cannot pass up these much-needed resources, which would help us expand and improve our existing system.

New York State is a leader for home visiting in the U.S. It has taken us nearly 20 years to build this system of home visiting supports and services. Once the infrastructure (including research, training, and central administration) has been destroyed, it will take years to rebuild.

We ask that New York State restore funding for home visiting programs—including Healthy Families New York (\$23M), Community Optional Preventive Services (\$4.3M), and the Hoyt Family Trust (\$1.2M).

Child Care

Child care is a critical part of the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers with young children. It offers early learning opportunities for children and supports families in employment. It is also an essential part of New York State's economic recovery strategy. For many families, especially low-income working families, the cost of high-quality, safe care that promotes early learning and

healthy development is simply out of reach. Forty percent of New York State's children live in low-income families and could most benefit from safe, affordable and educational care.

Child care can account for up to 50% of the family budget, outpacing even rent or mortgage. Without access to subsidies, parents' ability to earn and children's ability to learn is compromised. New York State continues to fall short in meeting the need for financial assistance with child care, with tens of thousands of income-eligible families on the waiting list for subsidies. In the last fiscal year, local counties were facing increasing demand for care and with limited resources were forced to continue to further reduce eligibility and raise fees, placing even greater pressure on families across the state.

The state's Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) includes federal child care block grant funding and the TANF funding earmarked for child care. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus money provided a temporary reprieve from the increasing demands on the subsidy system as wages were falling and more families were seeking financial assistance. The loss of the ARRA funding this year will result in a loss of \$48 million to New York State. Of that, \$42 million was allocated to localities for child care subsidies. The effect of the loss of ARRA funds could reduce capacity for full-time year-round care for more than 6,000 children. In addition, the remaining \$6 million represented important investments in quality improvements. The reduction in the quality dollars will greatly reduce funding for the Infant/Toddler Resource Centers, eliminate funding for other Infant/Toddler Quality Initiatives, and reduce support for QUALITYstarsNY.

The 2011 Executive Budget also proposes eliminating \$7 million earmarked TANF funding for child care. This will eliminate funding for the child care demonstration projects that provide subsidies to working families. It will also greatly reduce funding for SUNY/CUNY child care, which support low-income students enrolled in a two-year college program.

In addition, New York must absorb a reduction in the federal child care block grant of \$6.3 million. These cuts place additional pressure on the ability of the state to support both quality initiatives and subsidies to families.

We ask that New York State restore the \$55M lost through the elimination of ARRA funding and the reduction in TANF allocations for child care.

In addition to this budget request, we ask that the state establish consistent child care eligibility rules. Eligibility and fees should not be determined county by county. A recent study documented the significant inequity among counties.ⁱ

Afterschool Funding

Afterschool programs keep children safe, improve school achievement, prevent crime, and help parents go to work every day. They also employ thousands of people across New York State.

Research on after-school programs has shown that they are cost-effective. Every dollar invested in high-quality afterschool programs saves taxpayers roughly \$3, according to a study by the Rose Institute at Claremont McKenna College. Factoring in benefits from crime reduction raises that savings to \$8-\$12 for every dollar invested in an at-risk child.

Afterschool and early care and learning are linked in a number of ways. The CCDF is an overlapping resource for early education and afterschool programs. Because 45% of subsidies go to school-age

care, and the remaining 55% go to early care and learning, all aspects of this funding stream— from reimbursement rates, eligibility requirements, administration, and allowable uses—are relevant for both early education and afterschool stakeholders.

In addition, the afterschool community is aligning its quality work with QUALITYstarsNY. There is also a good deal of system alignment taking place, including shared workforce / training / credentialing systems. (For example, many professional development and technical assistance providers work with both ECE and afterschool programs.)

We applaud the 2011 Executive Budget for maintaining \$17.2M in general funds for Advantage After School, but ask for restoration of the \$5M in TANF funds.

Universal Pre-K

The 2011 Executive Budget allocates \$393 million for Pre-K. This is representative of the state's biggest single investment in early childhood education.

Pre-K is now recognized as part of a P-16 education system with services provided both in community settings and in public schools to better meet the needs of children and families. New York State's mandate for an investment in community settings is both efficient and educationally-effective. The state is to be commended for including early childhood education in its Race to the Top effort.

This year, these services must be protected and improved, to make them sustainable into the future. The pay-off for children, families, communities and the schools is clear—investment in early education saves money by reducing the need for remedial education, grade retention and special needs placements and by improving outcomes for all children. Children who attend high-quality Pre-K are more likely to graduate high school, go to college and have higher incomes as adults.

Yet the state still falls far short of keeping the promise of Universal Pre-K—a promise that all children have access to this valuable education program. Only 450 of the state's 677 school districts participate and the program still serves only 42% of four-year-olds. The per-child funding levels also fail to adequately support quality, including hiring certified teachers. This is a particular problem in non-public school settings, where 60% of all Pre-K children are served.

We applaud the 2011 Executive Budget for maintaining funding for Pre-K. In addition, we ask the state to pursue strategies to maximize current investments and increase the capacity that supports young children's early learning and development, including:

- Allow funding for full-day Pre-K in schools and early childhood programs.
- Eliminate maintenance of effort penalties, which have resulted in reduced enrollment in many districts.
- Base per-child amounts provided to school districts/CBOs on actual cost of a high-quality program to be determined by an annual cost study conducted by SED.
- Improve teacher preparation and professional development efforts, through Race to the Top and other funding dedicated to teacher effectiveness.
- Allow Pre-K children eligibility for transportation aid.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

New York State is long overdue in targeting its early childhood investments to ensure the optimal outcomes for children. Twenty-four other states already have such a system underway statewide. QUALITYstarsNY (QSNY), New York State's quality rating and improvement system, is aimed at supporting the most effective and efficient use of public dollars to improve outcomes for children. It will provide families with the information they need to make the best possible choices for their children.

QUALITYstarsNY creates a star rating system similar to those for hotels and restaurants that indicates the relative quality of services offered, from one to five stars. Programs in all settings—child care centers, private homes, nursery schools, Head Start and Pre-K—are eligible to participate. The state has wisely invested ARRA funding and leveraged private funding to field test the program at 200+ locations in 13 communities across the state.

A modest investment of \$3 million in FY2011-2012 will allow QSNY to more than double participation—reaching close to 500 programs and providers and building on the success in the 13 community field test sites. Federal benchmarks for states' QRIS are forthcoming. An investment from New York State will ensure that the state will be eligible for federal funding and will continue to leverage private philanthropy to support QSNY.

We ask New York State to increase its current investment to \$3 million to build on the success of the first year field test. This year's funding request protects and leverages the investment already made in the field tests and helps the state take the next steps in implementing QUALITYstarsNY.

****Winning Beginning NY* also requests that:**

- **New York State provide paid family leave for employees who need to take time off from work to bond with a new child or to care for a seriously ill family member.**
- **New York State restore funding for the Early Intervention program by rejecting the 10% across-the-board cut to service rates and ensure that young children with delays and disabilities get the services they need (\$11.1M).**

ⁱ <http://www.empirejustice.org/publications/reports/mending-the-patchwork-1.html>