

Strengthening Infant and Toddler Child Care in the Inland Empire: Policy Lessons and Regional Opportunities

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Drawing on **interviews with parents, child care providers, advocates, and early childhood leaders across Riverside and San Bernardino Counties**, this guide pairs local experiences with **proven policy approaches from across the country to identify evidence-informed strategies** that can improve affordability, strengthen the workforce, support providers, and expand access to infant and toddler care.

Designed for policymakers, funders, community organizations, and early childhood leaders, the findings are intended to inform policy decisions, funding priorities, and cross-sector collaboration to strengthen infant and toddler child care across the Inland Empire.



92%

Of **income-eligible children** in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties do **not receive subsidized child care**.



7%

Affordable care is often defined as no more than 7% of **family income**.



\$15,000+

Center-based infant care averages more than \$15,000 annually, often **exceeding** what many working families can **reasonably afford**.

San Bernardino

Riverside

Themes and Case Study Samples

1



Access & Equity Barriers

Too many families can't find or afford infant and toddler care. Gaps are widest for low-income families, immigrant families and communities with limited child care options.

New Mexico demonstrates how expanding eligibility, eliminating family copayments, and funding the true cost of care can improve affordability while strengthening provider stability.

EXAMPLE

2



Workforce & Provider Sustainability

Low wages, high turnover, and thin margins make it hard to recruit, retain, and sustain a stable child care workforce and high-quality programs.

Washington, D.C.'s Pay Equity Fund shows how public investment in educator compensation can reduce turnover while avoiding higher tuition for families.

EXAMPLE

3



Child Care Financing & Policy Reform

Current funding doesn't meet the true cost of quality care. Targeted financing and modernized policies can expand affordability and stabilize the system.

Vermont's Act 76 combines expanded family assistance with higher provider reimbursement rates and a dedicated funding stream to improve affordability and sustainability.

EXAMPLE

4



Systems Coordination & Reform

Fragmented systems create duplication and gaps. Aligning early childhood, health, and family supports leads to better outcomes for children and families.

Help Me Grow and First 5 California illustrate how coordinated early childhood systems can better connect families to child care, health care, developmental services, and community supports.

EXAMPLE

Moving Forward Together

Strengthening infant and toddler child care will require coordinated action across government, philanthropy, employers, providers, and community organizations. By investing in affordability, workforce compensation, provider sustainability, and integrated systems, the Inland Empire can build a more equitable and resilient child care system for children and families.



Guide developed thanks to the support of:



Download full guide for more detail, case studies, and references to inform decisions and shape action at the local and regional level.