



**ALL TOGETHER NOW:
STATE EXPERIENCES IN USING COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD
CARE TO PROVIDE PRE-KINDERGARTEN**

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Introduction

State pre-kindergarten programs have grown dramatically in the last two decades, and much more attention is being paid to the school readiness of children. In 1980, there were only 10 state programs;¹ now at least 38 states and the District of Columbia have one or more pre-kindergarten initiatives.² By one estimate, these programs serve about 740,000 children, at a cost of over \$2.5 billion in state funds.³ Most state programs are part-day, part-year and targeted to a limited number of four-year-olds based on family income or other risk factors for school success. Six states—Georgia, New Jersey,⁴ New York, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Wisconsin—have policies in place or a goal to move toward universal access to pre-kindergarten, and other state leaders are contemplating universal access as well.

In delivering their pre-kindergarten programs, states are taking one of two principal approaches. States are choosing to:

¹ Gilliam, W.S., & Zigler, E.F. (April 2004). *State Efforts to Evaluate the Effects of Pre-kindergarten 1977 to 2003*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Child Study Center.

² Barnett, W.S., Hustedt, J.T., Robin, K.B., & Schulman, K.L. (2004). *The State of Preschool: 2004 State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

³ Barnett, W.S., Hustedt, J.T., Robin, K.B., & Schulman, K.L. (2004). *The State of Preschool: 2004 State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

⁴ New Jersey has two pre-kindergarten programs. The Abbott preschool program is working toward universal coverage in a set of disadvantaged school districts in the state, and the majority of children are served in non-school settings. The New Jersey Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) pre-kindergarten program serves 89 percent of the children in school-based settings. New Jersey data referenced in this paper are regarding the Abbott program.

- *Offer pre-kindergarten programs exclusively in public schools.* A handful of states limit delivery of all state-funded pre-kindergarten initiatives, either directly or by subcontract, to the public schools.⁵ Community-based providers might be used to provide extended-day services, but this is not part of the funding design of the pre-kindergarten program.
- *Offer pre-kindergarten programs in schools and other settings, including community-based child care.* The vast majority of states with a program are delivering pre-kindergarten in a mixed delivery model that includes schools and community-based settings, which may include privately operated child care and federally funded Head Start providers, among others. States may contract directly with these providers or may allow schools to subcontract with them to provide the pre-kindergarten program.

Of note is that all of the six states that offer or are working toward offering universal pre-kindergarten allow delivery of pre-kindergarten in community-based settings, and four of the six have or plan to have more than half the children in community-based pre-kindergarten settings. However, many of the states that allow a mixed delivery system have relatively small percentages of children in non-school-based settings or are unable to determine the exact proportions (see Table 1 on p. 12). Nationally, almost 30 percent of pre-kindergarteners are in non-school settings; a study by the National Institute of Early Education Research has estimated that 71 percent of children in a state pre-

⁵ A few national studies have looked at whether states specifically limit state-funded pre-kindergarten to schools. Our estimate is based on older baseline data in Schulman, K., Blank, H., & Ewen, D. (1999). *Seeds of Success: State Pre-kindergarten Initiatives 1998-1999*. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund, with added information from more recent data reported in Barnett, W.S., Hustedt, J.T., Robin, K.B., & Schulman, K.L. (2004). *The State of Preschool: 2004 State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, and on CLASP analysis of current state policies.

kindergarten program were served in a public school, 15 percent in child care centers, 7 percent in Head Start, less than 1 percent in family child care homes, less than 1 percent in faith-based settings, and the rest in other settings.⁶

This paper studies the emergence of the mixed delivery model, in which pre-kindergarten is delivered in community-based settings and schools. We focused our research specifically on the policies associated with implementing pre-kindergarten programs in community-based child care settings, as opposed to Head Start programs, community colleges, and other types of programs. As noted above, the majority of states implementing pre-kindergarten programs have opted for some version of mixed delivery. Moreover, the emergence of this model is significant to the future of early childhood education because it has the potential to:

- 1) break the traditional barrier between early education and child care policies and address the needs of children in working families in a coordinated way; and
- 2) strengthen the quality of community-based child care programs.

However, whether the promise is actually met depends on the policy choices made by states and the ways in which these choices are implemented.

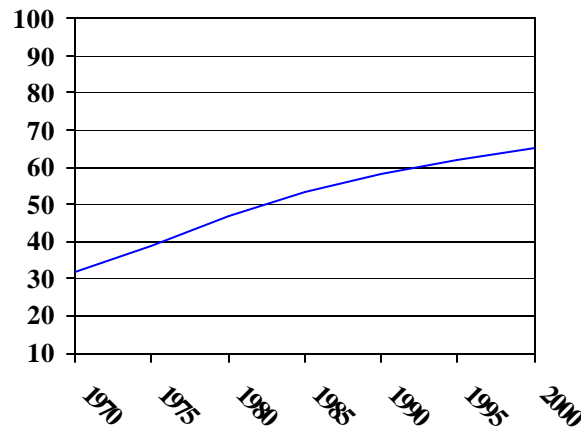
Seeking to address early education for children *and* the needs of working families in a coordinated way is crucial because most pre-kindergarten children have working mothers. The social context for the design and implementation of pre-kindergarten is very different from when kindergartens were established at the turn of the last century. Between 1970 and 2002, the percentage of mothers with children from birth to age five

⁶ Barnett, W.S., Hustedt, J.T., Robin, K.B., & Schulman, K.L. (2004). *The State of Preschool: 2004 State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

who were in the labor force grew from 32 to 64 percent.⁷ (See Figure 1.) The percentage of single, low-income mothers in the labor force reached 67 percent in 2002.⁸ Thus, more potentially at-risk young children are spending time in out-of-home child care settings. Many of these families need full-time care: 45 percent of three- and four-year-old children with employed mothers are in care for 35 hours or more in an average week, and an additional 26 percent are in care between 15 and 34 hours a week.⁹ While not every family needs a full-day, full-year pre-kindergarten opportunity, it is important that families who do need such programs have choices for obtaining them.

Figure 1. Young children more likely to have working mothers.

Labor Force Participation Rate of Mothers with Children under Age 6, 1970-2000



Source: U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means. (2004). *2004 Green Book*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

State pre-kindergarten policy choices need to be responsive to this new social policy context in order to reach all the children who may potentially benefit from

⁷ U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means. (2004). *2004 Green Book: Background Material and Data on the Programs Within The Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways And Means*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

⁸ Unpublished data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

⁹ Capizzano, J., & Adams, G. (2000). *The Hours That Children Under Five Spend in Child Care: Variation Across the States*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

participating. Working parents often seek full workday and full-year arrangements, so they may not choose part-day and part-year programs. Providing a full day of services at the same site also minimizes changes and disruptions over the course of the day for children. Finally, because children learn from their surroundings and caregivers at all times, and many children are already in need of or are experiencing extended day and year non-parental care, it behooves states to structure school readiness initiatives that address as much of that time as possible.

State pre-kindergarten policy choices also have the potential to strengthen the quality and program standards of community-based child care programs. State child care licensing standards primarily focus on assuring basic health and safety protections and do not usually provide support to improve and strengthen quality, although many states also require limited program activities related to general educational content.¹⁰ State child care subsidy programs, which responded to increased funding in the 1990s by expanding access and making some investments to improve quality, are now moving backwards. According to the Government Accountability Office, at least 23 states have limited child care assistance for some families since 2001, and many have also made cuts in their activities to improve child care quality.¹¹ Coordinated planning and implementation between state pre-kindergarten and child care programs, and increased resources to integrate early education standards in child care, have the potential to increase quality across the variety of settings preschool-age children are experiencing, often in the same

¹⁰ Morgan, G., & LeMoine, S. (2004). *Do States Require Child Care Programs to Educate Children? (Discussion Draft)*. Vienna, VA: National Child Care Information Center.

¹¹ General Accounting Office. (May 2003). *Recent State Policy Changes Affecting the Availability of Assistance for Low-Income Families*. Washington, DC: Author. See also Schulman, K., & Blank, H. (September 2004). *Child Care Assistance Policies 2001-2004: Families Struggling to Move Forward, States Going Backward*. Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center. This study found that between 2001 and 2004, 31 states reduced the income eligibility limit for families to qualify for child care subsidies, compared to the federal poverty level.

day. This could lead to a system in which children can experience the same level of program quality whether they spend their days in a school, a child care program, or a Head Start program. Integrated policies across child care and school systems could also increase standards and resources for quality improvements in child care that will benefit children as they grow from infancy to their preschool years, and on through their time in elementary school.

While there are important potential advantages in the community-based model, there is no guarantee that implementation will result in policies and programs that meet the model's potential. The process of engaging multiple public and private providers from a range of settings in service delivery can present significant challenges. There may be wide variation in the initial or subsequent quality levels of participating providers, and it may be difficult to monitor and track provider performance. Some providers are likely to need far more technical assistance and support than are others. It may be more difficult to encourage or require consistent standards, compensation, and benefits for teachers across multiple settings in a mixed delivery model.¹² And, expansion of pre-kindergarten in community-based settings would require support services and ongoing monitoring that is targeted to these types of settings.

To date, there has been very little data collected about the policy choices made by states in the implementation of community-based pre-kindergarten with a mixed delivery approach. This paper describes findings of a Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) survey of states that was undertaken to understand the policy choices, opportunities, and

¹² Bellm, D., Burton, A., Whitebook, M., Broatch, L., & Young, M. (2002). *Inside the Pre-K classroom: A Study of Staffing and Stability in State-Funded Prekindergarten Programs*. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce. http://www.ccw.org/pubs/ccw_pre-k_10.4.02.pdf.

challenges of including community-based child care providers in their pre-kindergarten programs. The following sections:

- Summarize the methodology CLASP used to conduct the survey;
- Describe the policy choices that states are making in implementing pre-kindergarten in community-based child care programs, including illustrative examples; and
- Discuss the emerging implications of the findings and offer a set of policy and research recommendations for state policymakers to consider as they design and implement pre-kindergarten programs.

CLASP's Study: The Focus and Process

This paper draws on a subset of data from CLASP's national study of policies of state pre-kindergarten programs that are delivered in settings that include community-based child care providers. Our study focused on child care providers, although in the process we did also find many states that deliver pre-kindergarten programs in federally funded Head Start programs as well.

In this study, we first established criteria for determining whether a state's pre-kindergarten program would be included. Included state programs meet four criteria:

1. The state has a pre-kindergarten program that is in addition to other federal funding streams and state initiatives, such as funding for child care assistance for low-income families or administration of the preschool component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). (About 19 states provide funding to supplement the federal Head Start program, often to give state dollars to federal grantee agencies to add children or enhance quality. This study includes those states for which the state replicates the Head Start program as a state administered pre-kindergarten program.)
2. The pre-kindergarten program policies allow services to be delivered in community-based child care settings, not just in the public schools.
3. The pre-kindergarten program serves three- and/or four-year-olds. (Some may serve younger children as well.)
4. The pre-kindergarten program requires at least one of the following for participating providers:
 - a. pre-kindergarten program standards;

- b. pre-kindergarten teacher education and qualification standards; or
- c. pre-kindergarten monitoring and evaluation requirements beyond child care licensing rules or self-reporting.¹³

At the conclusion of our study period (November 2004), we found at least 29 states that are currently operating a pre-kindergarten program that met this set of criteria (some states have multiple programs). Those states are: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. (See Figure 2.)¹⁴ Other states, for example Florida, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, are considering or expanding pre-kindergarten policies that would qualify but were not yet established enough in formal policy to be included in our study now.

¹³ In practice, we did not find any state with a program that we considered pre-kindergarten that only had monitoring and evaluation requirements beyond child care licensing rules; the studied states all had additional program or teacher qualification standards.

¹⁴ CLASP has compiled individual state responses to the survey protocol document for the 29 states. These are available to those interested in learning more about how a state pre-kindergarten program and policies integrate with community-based child care.

administrator. Where many of the policy choices were made at the local school district level, we sought to talk to at least one district official in the state to learn more about how decisions were made locally.

For this paper, we reviewed data for the 29 states we interviewed to develop descriptive answers to the following eleven questions:

1. Does the state allow or require inclusion of community-based child care providers in the pre-kindergarten program?
2. Which types of provider are eligible to participate?
3. Who decides which community-based providers receive funds to participate?
4. Who hires the teachers?
5. Does the pre-kindergarten program pay for a full working day?
6. Are pre-kindergarten program standards and teacher qualifications the same for community-based providers and school-based providers?
7. Are there resources and supports in place to help community-based providers meet standards?
8. How are pre-kindergarten payments to programs set?
9. Can community-based providers add pre-kindergarten funds to child care subsidies?
10. Are state child care agencies and pre-kindergarten agencies required to coordinate policies?
11. Are pre-kindergarten program and evaluation data collected from community-based child care and is that data used to improve program quality?

It should be noted that this paper focuses on a subset of the data collected in this study and mostly provides illustrative examples of state policies from their pre-kindergarten programs at a point in time. (See Table 1 for a list of the state programs.) In addition, we recognize that state policies are continually evolving, and this represents a snapshot of states and policies that will need to be updated in the future.

Table 1. State Pre-kindergarten Initiatives Included in CLASP Study

State	Program	Total Enrollment (year)	Percentage of Children in Non-school Pre-k Settings¹⁵
Alabama	Alabama Pre-kindergarten Initiative	936 (2003-04)	58%
Arizona	Early Childhood Block Grant Preschool Program	4,092 (2002-03)	12%
Arkansas	Arkansas Better Chance for School Success	3,086 (2002-03)	N/A
California	California State Preschool Program	152,701 (2002-03)	23%
Colorado	Colorado Preschool Program	8,050 (2003-04)	37%
Connecticut	School Readiness and Child Day Care Grant Program	6,531 (2003-04)	85%
Delaware	Early Childhood Assistance Program	843 (2002-03)	73%
Georgia	Georgia Pre-K	68,155 (2003-04)	57%
Illinois	Early Childhood Block Grant	55,984 (2002-03)	N/A
Iowa	Iowa Shared Visions Preschool Program	2,360 (2002-03)	46%
Kentucky	Kentucky Preschool Program	18,882 (2002-03)	5%
Massachusetts	Community Partnerships	14,894 ¹⁶	72%

¹⁵ Although this paper focuses on the policy issues in integrating pre-kindergarten into community-based child care, many states only report school and non-school data for where children are served. Programs provided in child care, Head Start, and other early education programs are included in the non-school figures.

¹⁶ The Massachusetts figure may overstate the actual percentage, as children served in two community-based settings may be counted twice. Massachusetts allows individual children to be served in multiple settings, as long as each setting meets the Community Partnerships for Children program requirements, and

State	Program	Total Enrollment (year)	Percentage of Children in Non-school Pre-k Settings ¹⁵
	for Children	(2003-2004)	
Michigan	Michigan School Readiness Program ¹⁷	25,712 (2003-04) ¹⁸	19%
Minnesota	Minnesota School Readiness	38,063 (2002-03)	N/A
Missouri	Missouri Preschool Project	4,840 (2002-03)	22%
Nevada	Nevada Early Childhood Comprehensive Plan	1,027 (2002-03)	20%
New Jersey	Abbott Preschool Program	38,000 (2003-04)	68%
New York	Universal Prekindergarten	58,316 (2002-03)	63%
North Carolina	More at Four	N/A	54%
Ohio	Head Start Plus	9,030 (2004-05) ¹⁹	89%
Oklahoma	Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program	30,180 (2003-04)	N/A
Oregon	Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten Program	3,869 (2002-03)	83%
South Carolina	South Carolina 4K Program	N/A	N/A
Vermont	Early Education Initiative	1,110 (2002-03)	N/A
Virginia	Virginia Preschool Initiative	10,899 (2004-05)	N/A
Washington	Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program	6,882 (2003-04)	42%
West Virginia	West Virginia Pre-K	7,761 (2003-04)	8%
Wisconsin	Wisconsin 4K	16,968 (2003-04)	N/A

Source: Percentages calculated by CLASP based on enrollment figures provided by state pre-kindergarten administrators or percentages provided by state pre-kindergarten administrators.

in this way paid for 18,293 placements in various settings in 2003-2004. The percentages shown here for children served in settings outside of the public schools reflect the fact that individual children may be in more than one setting each day or week.

¹⁷ The Michigan School Readiness Program has two components with two separate funding streams: one school-based and one offered on a competitive basis to eligible non-school providers. These data are for the whole program. Both components appear to follow the same rules and standards, with the exception of the teacher qualifications, for the purposes of the information we report in this paper.

¹⁸ The Michigan figures are based on funded slots, not actual enrollment. A very few of the Michigan School Readiness Program community-based providers may subcontract with schools, so the proportion of children in non-school settings figure may be slightly lower than 19 percent.

¹⁹ Ohio's program is new this year, so the figures here are funded slots, not actual enrollment.

1. Does the State Allow or Require Inclusion of Community-Based Child Care Providers?

While 29 states have legislation or regulations that specify that community-based child care programs can be pre-kindergarten providers, not all of them require that such providers be included in the program. We identified three principal models for including community-based providers:

- *Require that a certain percentage of pre-kindergarten programs operate in community-based child care settings.* Two states have specific percentage requirements. **New York**'s statute mandates that each school district subcontract a minimum of 10 percent of their total grant award, and they may subcontract up to 100 percent of the program to eligible community agencies. **West Virginia** requires that at *full implementation* of universal pre-kindergarten (in 2012), a minimum of 50 percent of classrooms must be provided through contractual agreements with community programs unless they do not exist, cannot meet the standards, or choose not to participate. The program guidelines advise, "Counties shall explore all feasible support to enable community partners to meet the requirements of this policy, including providing certified teachers in community programs, before determining that programs cannot meet the mandates." By 2004-05, every county must have at least one community-based setting.
- *Allow community-based providers to participate, without requiring that a specified percentage be allowed.* There are a range of methods and governing language that states have adopted to allow community-based providers to participate in the pre-kindergarten initiative. Some include language in the statute

that requires community-based settings to be included in the initiative, although they do not set minimum percentages. Some make the requirement clear in regulation. Others allow the participation of these providers but leave the decision of whether they are included up to local school districts or councils. For example: **Alabama**'s statute provides that private programs may choose, but shall not be required, to participate in the programs and services administered by the state's Office of School Readiness. **Arkansas**' legislation allows that "any early childhood program accredited and quality approved by the Department of Human Services according to standards approved by the Department of Education may apply for funding." **Wisconsin**'s statute authorizes local school boards to partner with community providers, by "enter[ing] into an agreement with a licensed public or private nonsectarian day care center to lease space for pre-kindergarten...programs offered by the school district or to place school district employees in day care centers to provide instruction in pre-kindergarten...." **Georgia**'s statute makes no mention of authorized settings, but the pre-kindergarten guidelines note that the state shall contract with both public and private providers for pre-kindergarten services.

- *Establish a separate program that contracts with community-based child care programs to provide pre-kindergarten.* Two states fall into this category.

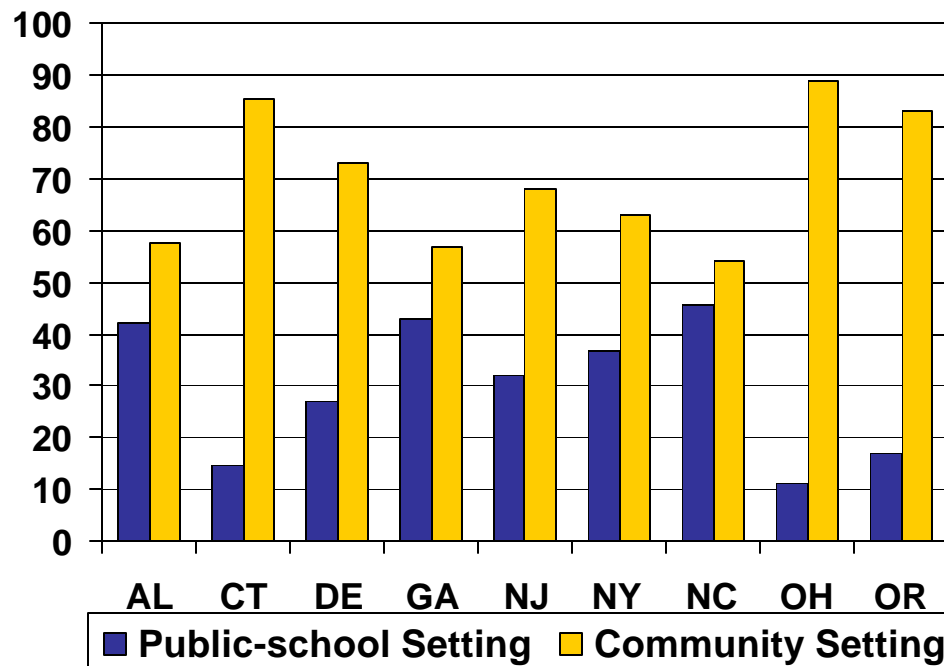
Michigan has two state pre-kindergarten funding streams. One is state aid, distributed to schools based on a funding formula.²⁰ A smaller program provides funds to community-based providers through competitive grants. Similarly, **South Carolina** has two funding streams for its 4K program. The major funding

²⁰ Michigan also allows school-based pre-kindergarten to subcontract with community-based providers.

pays schools to provide the program; a smaller funding stream funds 14 child care or Head Start programs to deliver 4K.²¹

Although not all states can report the share of children served in school-based and non-school settings, the majority of children are in non-school settings in **Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Oregon.** (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Some states deliver pre-kindergarten extensively in community settings.
States with More than Half of Pre-kindergarten Children in Non-School Settings²² (Percentage)



²¹ South Carolina’s school-based 4K allows schools to sub-contract with community providers, but none do at this time.

²² Although this paper focuses on the policy issues in integrating pre-kindergarten into community-based child care, many states only report school and non-school data for where children are served. Programs provided in child care, Head Start, and other early education programs are included in the non-school figures.

2. Which Type of Providers Are Eligible to Participate?

The 29 states identified as allowing community-based providers to participate in a pre-kindergarten initiative have adopted a wide range of definitions for which entities can apply for this funding. For example, states may include:

- *Center-based providers.* All studied states allow center-based providers. Some states specifically identify the categories of community-based providers eligible to participate in their pre-kindergarten initiatives (e.g., qualifying private for-profit and non-profit child care centers, Head Start centers,²³ child development programs run through colleges and universities, parent-child centers, and churches).²⁴ Other states simply provide that eligible providers can be public organizations and community agencies that meet program criteria. In **North Carolina**, for example, eligible providers are Head Start or private or nonprofit child care centers licensed by the Division of Child Development. Some states limit the program to qualified not-for-profit providers, while others, such as **Oregon** and **Washington**, do not allow sectarian providers to participate.

- *Family child care providers.* Thirteen states (**Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin**) explicitly named family child care providers as eligible providers in our survey, although they may not be eligible directly, but rather as subcontractors, and are generally not widely participating in

²³ This discussion does not include those states that have provided their pre-kindergarten initiative solely through Head Start.

²⁴ Oklahoma also allows school districts to contract with any community partner based on selection criteria determined by the district for a space that can be used for the pre-kindergarten program, whether there is an existing early childhood program there or not. This provision allows schools to be very flexible when seeking new space.

pre-kindergarten programs. There are a number of variations in how family child care providers participate in pre-kindergarten initiatives, ranging from offering a classroom for the pre-kindergarten program to providing wraparound or other support services for families. **Missouri** requires home providers to be group family home providers. In **New York**, group (or large) family child care providers use their larger size to provide a pre-kindergarten setting similar to that of a center.²⁵ Local communities in other states, such as **Delaware**, **Ohio**, and **Washington**, use family child care providers as partners in subcontracting relationships, where the providers may participate in a variety of ways—offering direct provision of the pre-kindergarten services; providing full-day, full-year opportunities; and making support services available to children and families participating.

3. Who Decides Which Community-Based Providers Receive Funds to Participate?

States use a variety of mechanisms to distribute funds from the state to local to program level, and these choices tend to drive where and how decisions are made about whether community-based child care is integrated in pre-kindergarten systems. We identified five main funding mechanisms:

- *State agency funds community-based providers directly.* Several states determine at the state level which individual programs or communities at the local level will provide pre-kindergarten services. Most of these states distribute new funding through a competitive process that requires applicants to describe how their

²⁵ Based on a focus group with New York City family child care providers participating in pre-kindergarten conducted by CLASP staff, April 2004.

program will meet certain criteria, and then they select the most qualified providers based on areas of most pressing demand and need in the state. The application will generally require local providers to demonstrate that they meet the program standards in place for the pre-kindergarten program and may ask providers to discuss how they meet other goals, such as local coordination and support for working families. For example, in **Delaware**, each contracting provider is required to establish written agreements within the provider's respective service area with its local Head Start and/or other early childhood initiative providers, as well as with the local school district, to address issues including, but not limited to, service areas, recruitment and transition of children and families, and sharing resources and information. In **Iowa**, programs are evaluated on the degree to which they are integrated with existing community resources and have the support of the local community.

- *Local school districts decide whether to include community-based child care with required input from the community.* States vary on the extent and frequency of the input they require. For example, in **Colorado**, local school district superintendents must appoint a district council to develop the local plan for preschool, to meet four times annually, and to create a request for proposals (RFP) and solicit new community providers every five years. That council must include a representative from a publicly funded early childhood care and education facility (e.g., Head Start or a community college) and a privately funded early childhood care and education facility. In **New York**, the school district must convene a pre-kindergarten advisory board prior to requesting pre-

kindergarten funds from the state. This advisory board develops the implementation plan for the district, which may include decisions on the degree of involvement of community-based providers. Providers are then included through an open competitive process. The school district is not required to continue the advisory board past the planning phase, although some districts continue to convene their boards.

- *Local school districts have the authority to subcontract with community-based providers.* Under this model, states allow the local school district discretion in including community-based providers in their program. In some states, such as **Oklahoma** and **Wisconsin**, local school districts decide whether to subcontract with community-based providers, without any requirement for input from an advisory council or outreach to community-based providers. **Wisconsin** is unique in that the state education agency is actively engaged in encouraging local districts to work with community-based providers, including providing statewide conferences and technical assistance focused on partnering with community providers.
- *Local community councils or boards administer funds and set policy to determine whether and how local providers participate.* The level of ongoing oversight that community councils have varies. For example, in **North Carolina**, the local More at Four County (or Regional) Committee must sign off on a plan that demonstrates support by the key community agencies, including public schools; local Smart Start partnerships; county departments of human services, health, and mental health; Head Start, child care resource and referral, and private child care

providers; and other relevant service delivery organizations. Planning and advisory committees must be co-chaired by the local superintendent of schools and the local Smart Start board chair. In **Massachusetts**, an ongoing active Community Partnerships for Children Council is required, which includes representation from parents, early care and education providers, family child care providers, Head Start, and the public school principal. All members of the Council must sign off on the proposed plan submitted annually to the state department of education, or explain why they have not signed.

- *Local city officials determine the agency that administers the funds with the input of a representative community advisory council.* In **Connecticut**, the mayor and the superintendent in the eligible communities jointly convene a local School Readiness Council composed of themselves (or their designees); parents; representatives from local early care and education programs, including family child care providers; and other community representatives who serve children. These Councils identify local needs for the school readiness program and make recommendations for how to use their pre-kindergarten allocation to purchase capacity in schools and community-based providers that meet the requirements of the school readiness legislation. The mayor and superintendent jointly submit the final community proposal to the state department of education for approval and make final decisions on the details of the proposal.

4. Who Hires the Teachers?

The relationship between the pre-kindergarten teacher, the school, and the community-based provider can vary at the local level, even within an individual state. The entity responsible for hiring the teacher is responsible for ensuring that teacher meets applicable teacher education standards. For example:

- *The school district hires the teacher to provide the pre-kindergarten part of the day in the community-based setting.* In this model, children attend pre-kindergarten programs at a community-based site, and the school district or some other entity hires an outside teacher meeting pre-kindergarten qualifications to come into the child care setting just for the pre-kindergarten portion of the day to deliver the program. For example, in **Oklahoma**, the public school generally hires the teachers and sends them into the community-based settings, either for a half-day or full-day program, based on a local decision. Teachers are school employees, and the school district ensures that the teacher meets all standards. In **West Virginia**, the statute requires schools to attempt to provide a public school teacher to provide pre-kindergarten in the community-based settings if there are not enough eligible providers in the community. In **Alabama**, some public schools loan teachers to private providers for a specified amount of time. The community-based provider is responsible for paying the salary of the teacher, but the teacher continues to receive benefits from the school system.
- *The community-based provider hires the teacher.* In this model, the community-based program receives pre-kindergarten funding to hire the teachers and deliver the program. Pre-kindergarten funds are targeted to part of the day and year, and any required pre-kindergarten program and teacher standards are required to apply

only to that timeframe, although the same teacher may be available for the full day. For example, in **Georgia**, individual programs hire the teacher and ensure that the teacher meets a minimum education level, with programs receiving higher payments in part linked to the education level of the teacher. In **Arkansas**, participating programs hire the teachers, and must meet the teacher standards at the time the proposal is submitted. Teachers must have a minimum of a four-year college degree at the time the proposal is approved but may work toward completion of the required early childhood licensure under a plan approved by the state Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. In **South Carolina**, the community provider hires the teachers, but all teachers are on school district payroll and are supervised and trained through the district.

5. Does the Pre-kindergarten Program Pay for a Full Working Day?

Most pre-kindergarten programs we reviewed are not designed or funded to provide early education services for the full workday through the pre-kindergarten program funding stream. Most states reported that the pre-kindergarten funding was designed to fund less than a full school day, which is much less than the standard of at least 10 hours offered by most child care centers. The number of hours of pre-kindergarten funded ranged from 2.5 hours to 6.5 hours, or up to local discretion. Several states do address working families in their pre-kindergarten policies but do not necessarily fund a 10 hour pre-kindergarten day, 52 weeks a year. States vary in whether and what they require to address the needs of working families and whether the state then assures that funding will be available to provide such services to low-income working

families who may not otherwise be able to choose pre-kindergarten. Where states were addressing the needs of working families through formal policies, we found three main approaches:

➤ *State policies require that the pre-kindergarten program address the needs of working families in some way, either by allowing state pre-kindergarten funds to be used to meet this goal or through intentional state-level coordination to help programs combine multiple funding streams.* We found two approaches:

a. *The state pre-kindergarten program rules require a portion of programming address working families' needs and allow pre-kindergarten funds to be used to provide those services.* Two states reported this approach. In **Massachusetts**, the legislation requires that “not less than one-third of the total slots funded shall provide full-day, full-year care that meets the needs of parents who work full-time.” The department of education has defined full-day as six or more hours to align with the child care subsidy definition of full-day. In **Ohio**, the new Head Start Plus pre-kindergarten program is intended to promote school readiness and kindergarten success for children in low-income working families under 150 percent of the poverty level, with a parent who is working or in education or training. The state RFP outlines 40-hour-a-week delivery models of early education and comprehensive services that should follow the standards of the Head Start program.

b. *The state pre-kindergarten program rules require a portion of programming address working families' needs, and the state actively coordinates state policies across funding streams to provide pre-kindergarten services during the hours families are working.* In this manner, the state policies make it easier for providers to put funding streams together to meet working families' needs for children in pre-kindergarten. In **New Jersey**, the state departments of education and human services have created a formal process that allows providers participating in the pre-kindergarten program to support a 10-hour/245-day full-day, full-year program, with some costs shared between the two agencies.

➤ *The state requires that pre-kindergarten address working families, but does not provide all the funding needed to make these services available nor does it coordinate state policies to assure working families have access to these services.*

In **Connecticut**, a minimum of 60 percent of programs in each school readiness council area must be full-day, full-year (10 hours per day, 52 weeks per year), based on local needs assessments. The school readiness funding provides \$7,500 per child to a full-day, full-year program and expects a combination of child care subsidies and parent fees will cover the rest of the state's projected cost of \$10,000 per child for full-day and full-year quality pre-kindergarten services. Providers can receive both full-time child care subsidies and full-day, full-year school readiness payments to pay for pre-kindergarten for qualifying low-income

working families. The state also has an “extended day” model in which school readiness funds can be used to wrap around an existing pre-kindergarten program funded through other means. In **South Carolina**, the pre-kindergarten RFP requires participating programs to ensure that services are available to children of working parents, including requiring the provision of before- and after-care at cost or with available child care subsidies, in addition to the free 6.5-hour 4K-funded day.

- *State policies encourage programs to address the full-day, full-year needs of families through coordination, but do not require, coordinate, or fund these activities.* In **Colorado**, school district councils are encouraged to explore coordination with community providers to create extended-day services, but that is not required or funded with pre-kindergarten funds. **Iowa** and **Illinois** give some priority to the applications of programs that are addressing working families’ needs with full-day services in the RFP process.

Some states also report requiring pre-kindergarten program standards be maintained for the full day of services, regardless of funding source. In **Massachusetts** and **Ohio**, when pre-kindergarten funds are used to pay for the full-day, full-year model, the standards would apply for that time.²⁶ **Connecticut**’s School Readiness providers are expected to provide the full day and year of services that meet the school readiness program standards.

²⁶ Ohio specifies that the program include a minimum of 875 hours a year of instructional time aligned with Ohio’s Early Learning Content Standards.

6. Are Pre-kindergarten Program Standards and Teacher Qualifications the Same for Community-Based and School-Based Providers?

Every state pre-kindergarten program establishes program standards—for example, teacher to child ratio, group size, teacher qualifications, curriculum requirements, and other service requirements—that all providers must meet in order to be eligible to participate in the pre-kindergarten program. These standards typically exceed state child care licensing requirements for program quality but in general are only required during the hours funded by the pre-kindergarten program.

We found that most states required all pre-kindergarten providers to ultimately meet the same program standards regardless of setting, but many have limited phase-in periods that allow programs extra time to meet the standards or allow for different standards for different settings.²⁷ We found four principal approaches:

- *All programs—including community-based child care and schools—are required to meet the same program and teacher standards as soon as they begin to receive pre-kindergarten funds.* Some states require that every program that chooses to receive pre-kindergarten funds meet all standards in order to participate. The standards range from requiring accreditation,²⁸ to following Head Start standards, to mandating teacher qualifications, ratios, group size, and curriculum. In

²⁷ The scope of this study did not include an assessment of the appropriateness and effectiveness of program standards but simply looked across settings to determine whether the standards were similar or different. For more information on state quality program standards, see Barnett, W.S., Hustedt, J.T., Robin, K.B., & Schulman, K.L. (2004). *The State of Preschool: 2004 State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research; and Schumacher, R., Irish, K., & Lombardi, J. (2003). *Meeting Great Expectations: Integrating Early Education Standards in Child Care*. Washington, DC: CLASP.

²⁸ Accrediting bodies included by states are: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), American Montessori International (AMI), National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA), National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs, Association for Christian Schools International (ACSI), American Montessori Society (AMS), or a separate state accreditation.

Illinois, all programs applying to participate in the program must demonstrate how they meet the required criteria, including staff requirements and education components, in their grant proposal. State rules may specify, as do **Kentucky**'s, that if a participating site uses multiple funding streams and follows multiple sets of standards, where standards are different, the most stringent requirement must apply.

- *All programs are required to meet the same standards, but some are allowed a grace period to comply with specific standards.* We found two major policies for which some states allow phase-in: for achieving accreditation and for meeting teacher education and certification requirements. In some cases, the phase-in period only applies to community-based providers. **Arizona** allows a set period of time for programs to achieve national or state accreditation after they begin to participate in the pre-kindergarten initiative. **New Jersey** phased in the teacher education standards over six years. In **New York**, teachers in community-based settings currently have until September 2005 to comply with the teaching certification requirement.²⁹ **North Carolina** is working toward a universal requirement for bachelor's degrees, including a Birth-Kindergarten (B-K) License, for lead teachers, but currently lead teachers in community-based settings may have an associate's (AA) degree and be working toward the B-K licensure.
- *Different standards are in place for some settings.* In several states, while the majority of standards are consistent across settings, community-based providers

²⁹ The phase-in period for New York's teacher certification requirement in community-based settings has been extended several times.

may have lower requirements in some areas, including teacher requirements. For example, **Iowa**'s teacher standards vary by program sponsor; public schools require a bachelor's degree and early childhood certification/specialization, Head Start teachers must have at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) or an AA with specialization in early childhood education, and child care teachers must meet only child care licensing requirements, which do not specify any educational degree. **Michigan** teachers in public schools must have a valid teaching certificate with an early childhood specialist endorsement, but lead teachers in community-based settings that contract directly with the state are required to have only an AA and a CDA.³⁰

- *Local communities establish their own standards, with no requirement that they be the same across settings.* Some states allow local control over the development of some or all standards. For example, **Minnesota** and **Wisconsin** allow local school boards to determine program standards. In **Minnesota**, the boards must consider including the eight program goals listed in the statute in designing their standards. These include a development and learning component to support the development of children's social, cognitive, and physical skills and emotional well-being and a health referral services component that includes medical, dental, mental health, and nutrition referrals. **Wisconsin** school districts must require that teachers meet the certification requirements but have flexibility

³⁰ In reality, most lead teachers in community-based settings have a bachelor's degree with a specialization in early childhood. If a school district in Michigan chooses to subcontract with a community-based provider, teachers in such a setting are required to have a valid teaching certificate but can substitute a CDA for the early childhood specialist endorsement.

to set all other program standards for participating schools and child care programs.

7. Are There Resources and Supports In Place to Help Programs Meet State Pre-kindergarten Standards?

Many states recognize that it can be challenging for some programs, especially community-based providers, to meet the higher standards of the pre-kindergarten initiative. In order to facilitate the participation of a range of providers, some states have developed policies to help providers start programs and meet standards, and states make resources available in addition to those from the state child care subsidy system.³¹ These policies may include extensive state technical assistance and monitoring that exceeds that available through child care licensing and is designed to help programs meet higher standards and address the educational component of pre-kindergarten.

Of particular concern to states are the pre-kindergarten teacher education requirements. Pre-kindergarten teacher standards typically far exceed those required by state child care licensing systems. The low salaries of community child care teachers make it difficult for child care programs participating in pre-kindergarten to require the higher credentials—and to then retain these qualified teachers who can now work for better pay in school-based settings.³² Although states recognize this barrier, only a handful have pre-kindergarten funding available and policies designed to give community-based providers access to higher education and higher wages specifically so

³¹ These supports may be available to any program participating in the pre-kindergarten program, whether they are community-based or school-based.

³² Bellm, D., Burton, A., Whitebook, M., Broatch, L., & Young, M. (2002). *Inside the Pre-K Classroom: A Study of Staffing and Stability in State-funded Prekindergarten Programs*. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce. http://www.ccw.org/pubs/ccw_pre-k_10.4.02.pdf.

that they can teach in the pre-kindergarten system. Rather, many states rely on pre-existing state scholarship programs for child care teachers, such as T.E.A.C.H.®, that are available in some states; but these initiatives only meet a proportion of potential demand in the child care workforce.³³ The majority of states reported that potential pre-kindergarten teachers in community-based child care settings were eligible for these types of programs, but few provide pre-kindergarten dollars to ensure access for pre-kindergarten teachers. The following are examples of state strategies to help pre-kindergarten providers meet the program standards:

- *Provide start-up funds.* For example, **California** allows a provider to use up to 15 percent of the first-year contract to cover start-up costs. **Connecticut** allows communities to award up to \$20,000 to a first-time pre-kindergarten classroom serving at least 16 children, depending on community decision. First-time programs in **Michigan** receive full reimbursement but are only required to provide services for two-thirds of the required program year. In **North Carolina**, programs receive \$500 per child for start-up costs as providers begin operating. In state fiscal year 2003-2004, North Carolina programs received \$2.2 million in start-up funds, approximately 5 percent of the More at Four budget. In **Arkansas**, new programs receive \$5,000 per classroom for supplies and equipment. **Oregon** allows start-up funding to be used for equipment, books, curriculum materials, etc.

³³ The most common of these is T.E.A.C.H.®, a program that operates through public and private funds in 23 states to provide scholarships and other supports to help providers gain additional education. Several states and local communities have also created programs that make higher compensation available to providers who have gained additional education. These include the WAGES program in North Carolina, Great START in Illinois, and the CARES program in California.

- *Provide funds for professional development.* In **Oregon**, the state requires that a minimum of 2.5 percent of the pre-kindergarten grant be used for training and staff development. **Massachusetts** and **West Virginia** allow contracts to include dollars for professional development. **New Jersey, North Carolina,** and **Missouri** provide pre-kindergarten funding to expand the state effort to educate early care and education teachers to address increased demand among pre-kindergarten teachers to meet requirements. In **New Jersey**, teachers receive scholarships to attend school to meet the teacher standards. Using available federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, the state began a targeted scholarship program for teachers in community-based settings in the pre-kindergarten program to pay for tuition and fees related to obtaining an early childhood education associate's or bachelor's degree and the preschool through grade three certificate. The scholarship program includes stipends to assist with books and other non-tuition expenses. Scholarships include tuition and stipends for books and other expenses.³⁴ **Missouri** is unique in requiring that each lead agency grantee use 10 percent of its funding to support professional development for licensed child care providers in the program area.
- *Require that salaries be the same across settings.* A few states have implemented policies that ensure that teachers in community settings receive the same salaries as their counterparts in the public schools. **Alabama** and **Arkansas** require that all lead teacher salaries be based upon their respective department of education teacher salary schedules. **Oklahoma** requires salaries and fringe benefits for

³⁴ Coffman, J., & Lopez, M.E. (2003). *Raising Preschool Teacher Qualifications*. Retrieved December 2, 2004 from <http://www.trustforearlyed.org/docs/NJAbbotBrief.pdf>.

teachers in contracted programs to meet the amounts specified in the state public school required teacher salary schedule. **New Jersey** and **North Carolina** require pay and benefits equity for all pre-kindergarten certified teachers, regardless of where they teach.

- *Create monitoring systems combined with ongoing, responsive state-level technical assistance.* **Alabama**'s on-site monitoring is conducted by a technical assistant assigned to the site by the Office of School Readiness. The technical assistant's other duties to the program include working closely with directors, teachers, and assistants throughout the year to provide consultation on questions about the program; handling problems with maintaining enrollment expectations; approving equipment, materials, or supplies requests; assessing training needs; and providing other assistance. In **Georgia**, state agency staff consultants are available to work with providers year round. These staff conduct on-site monitoring visits, both announced and unannounced, and program quality assessments. Staff members then work closely with sites with identified technical assistance needs in order to bring them into compliance and allow them to maintain funding.
- *Provide funds for supplies or curriculum materials.* In **West Virginia**, the contract between the school board and the community-based provider includes funds for materials. The amount is negotiated on an individual contract basis.
- *Provide supports to help programs become accredited.* **Connecticut**, **Iowa**, and **Massachusetts** offer programs or allow funds to be used to help providers achieve accreditation, which is a requirement for participating providers.

- *Allow pre-kindergarten funds to help adapt facilities.* **Colorado** allows pre-kindergarten funds to be used for facility renovation. **Connecticut** allocates separate state funds that can be used for renovations and construction of pre-kindergarten facilities.

8. How Are Pre-kindergarten Payments to Programs Set?

We found a set of methods used to determine pre-kindergarten funding levels for programs participating in the state initiative. Some states assure that community-based providers are paid amounts equal to or higher than that paid to school-based providers and some states do not:

- *Funding level set by state agency uniformly per child or per classroom.* These states determine a per child or per classroom allocation, regardless of setting, based on the estimated costs of providing the program or the actual funding available. The amount is the same whether children are in schools or community-based child care. For example, **Alabama** provides \$60,000 per classroom of 18 children; **Delaware** allocates a set \$5,200 per child for its pre-kindergarten program, which includes comprehensive early education and family support services modeled after the federal Head Start program. In **Tennessee**, programs receive approximately \$65,000 per classroom (or \$3,250 per child).³⁵
- *Funding level set by a central agency and varies based on specific criteria, such as teacher qualifications, geographic location of program, or type of setting.* In **Georgia**, the payment rate varies depending on the qualifications of the teacher

³⁵ Prior to FY 2003, when cuts were made in state funding, Tennessee based the reimbursement on a study that estimated the cost of the pre-kindergarten program at \$5,000 per child for a class of 20. The state assumed a local match of \$100 and provided \$4,900.

(vocational degree, four-year degree, or certified teacher), the geographic location of the program (Atlanta metro area, non-metro area), the number of children enrolled in the classroom, and whether the program is public or private.

- *Funding level set through negotiation with each eligible contracted provider, either at the state or local level.* States or school districts may negotiate a payment rate with each community-based child care program individually. This process may be used to maximize the funds available for pre-kindergarten, recognizing that some settings have higher costs than others. For example, some programs may have to rent additional space while others may have space available. This may result in different providers receiving different amounts of funding, whether they are in schools or other settings. In **Arizona**, some contracts may involve funding for a set number of children, while others may cover only the cost of a part of the program, such as teacher salary. In **Nevada**, the state requires that, at a minimum, the pre-kindergarten funds pay for a certified teacher. Other expenses are negotiated during the proposal process based on a review of other resources and supports available to the provider. In **New York**, districts receive between \$2,000 and \$4,000 per child based on a formula, and then each school district enters into individual contracts with eligible providers and negotiates the amount of funds that the providers will receive. This may be the same per-child allocation as the school is spending, or it may vary depending on the individual needs of the community-based provider or on the level of supervision, staff development, and oversight provided by the district. In **New Jersey**, allocations are based on the unique needs of each provider and/or site.

The Office of Early Childhood Education (OECE) has provided districts and providers with detailed Program Implementation Guidelines and budget guidelines that describe the department's view of what constitutes a high-quality, comprehensive preschool program, from classroom materials to certified teachers to professional development to support services to administration.

9. Can Community-Based Providers Add Pre-kindergarten Funds to Child Care Subsidies?

Each pre-kindergarten program that includes community-based providers must determine the relationship between pre-kindergarten payments and child care subsidies. Will a provider be eligible for both, and, if so, will the child care subsidy amount that the provider can receive be reduced when a provider also receives pre-kindergarten funds? The issue is important for community-based providers since they most often lack the resources available to public school-based pre-kindergarten and may need additional funding beyond what they can capture from parent fees or state child care subsidies to meet pre-kindergarten program standards. None of the state pre-kindergarten programs reported that they would prohibit a child participating in pre-kindergarten from also receiving a child care subsidy, but some states report that child care subsidies are reduced below the full-day rate for families participating in the pre-kindergarten program.

- *State child care assistance policies allow programs to receive both pre-kindergarten and child care subsidy funds for the pre-kindergarten portion of the day. Providers in **Connecticut** can receive full-day child care subsidies and full-day/full-year school readiness payments. **West Virginia** policymakers have*

determined that pre-kindergarten is an “enhanced service” in order to ensure that full-day subsidies are available for any program that provides more than four hours of services a day. In **Delaware**, if a provider cares for a child more than four hours in addition to the four hours provided as pre-kindergarten, then that program can receive a full-day child care subsidy payment and full pre-kindergarten funding for the same child. In **North Carolina**, county child care subsidy offices can pay up to 75 percent of the full-day child care subsidy for a six-hour-a-day pre-kindergarten program. Up to 100 percent of the subsidy can be requested if the provider cares for the child during a full workday. In **Wisconsin**, the Department of Workforce Development implemented a policy authorizing subsidy payment for all the hours that a child is in a blended program. In **Oregon**, the Department of Human Services has a contracted child care program in which pre-kindergarten programs can participate to provide full-day, full-year services and receive a full-day subsidy rate in addition to their pre-kindergarten allocation. Children in this full-day, full-year pre-kindergarten option retain their child care funding eligibility for the full school year, regardless of changes in family income or status.

- *States adjust how providers combine pre-kindergarten and child care subsidy funds.* In **Georgia**, when a child is enrolled in pre-kindergarten during the school year, a provider may only qualify for a part-day rate from the subsidy program because the pre-kindergarten program covers 6.5 hours. During the summer, when pre-kindergarten is not available, providers can get the full-day subsidy. In **New York**, pre-kindergarten funding can reduce the subsidy amount if the hours

of care outside of the program are less than 30 per week. For example, if a family qualifies for 40 hours of subsidized child care a week and receives 12.5 hours of pre-kindergarten during that 40 hours, the maximum subsidy available to the family would be reduced from a full-time rate to a part-time rate. In **Michigan**, child care subsidies are prorated on an hourly basis to pay for the actual number of hours a child is in care outside of the 2.5-hour-per-day pre-kindergarten program.

10. Are State Child Care and Pre-kindergarten Agencies Required to Coordinate Policies?

The locus of control for state-level pre-kindergarten policymaking is most often in the state department of education. There are variations in the level of involvement and coordination between departments of education and state child care agencies, and this research found that these relationships evolve over time. For example, the administering agency for **Georgia** Pre-K was originally given authority over licensing those child care centers that also were Georgia Pre-K providers, but new legislation provides that agency with expanded responsibility for all child care licensing in the state and authority over Georgia's federal child care block grant quality set-aside funds. This new department will be instrumental in establishing a statewide plan for quality improvement and early childhood learning. In **Massachusetts**, 2004 legislation has established a new board and Department of Early Education and Care that will bring child care and the state Community Partnerships for Children early education program under the same authority. A few states report formal statutory or regulatory requirements for coordinated

policymaking between the education and child care administrative agencies, and many reported informal collaborative relationships across agencies.

- *State-level coordination is required.* These models include shared interagency responsibility and/or public-private advisory councils or boards that assist state departments of education in governing tasks. The **West Virginia** Board of Education and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) have joint oversight responsibility of the pre-kindergarten program. At the state level, a DHHR technical assistance team reviews county plans first and recommends for or against approval to the Secretary of the agency, who then forwards them to the Board of Education for final approval. In **North Carolina**, the More at Four pre-kindergarten program is housed in the Governor's office, with cross-agency collaboration and guidance structured through the More at Four Task Force. The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Superintendent of Department of Public Instruction jointly chair the Task Force. It includes representatives from the state and local North Carolina Partnership for Children (that heads the Smart Start initiative), representatives from Head Start, parents, teachers, providers, and other experts. In **Ohio**, the law requires an interagency agreement between the department of education and the department of job and family services, which administers the child care subsidy program.
- *Informal state-level coordination occurs, but there is no statutory requirement.* Even without formal structures, informal collaborative efforts occur at the state level usually through interagency meetings or committees. However, in these

cases, the ultimate decision-making power remains with the departments of education, and the degree of joint policymaking may depend on the personal relationships between the heads of these agencies. For example, in **Missouri**, the state convened an advisory group, which included representatives from the education, child care, and higher education agencies and communities, to develop the pre-kindergarten program. Although the advisory group was then disbanded, the state has discussed reconvening the group as a part of revising the program guidelines. In **Oregon**, where the state pre-kindergarten program is modeled after the federal Head Start program, there is an ongoing and informal work group that includes staff from the education and child care agencies, the child care resource and referral agencies, and the Head Start community.

11. Are Pre-kindergarten Program and Evaluation Data Collected from Community-Based Child Care and Is that Data Used to Improve Program Quality?

States collect different types of data on their pre-kindergarten programs and the children those programs serve, and they use that data in a variety of ways in policy and planning. Program evaluation that is designed to “evaluate how well a program is meeting its goals for children”³⁶ is a critical component of successful and high-quality pre-kindergarten programs. A program assessment of this sort requires the state to examine the components of the program, evaluate outcomes, and include resources to help programs improve the quality of instruction and supports for children and families—whether in schools or community-based settings. A review of state-funded pre-

³⁶ Epstein, A.S., Schweinhart, L.J., DeBruin-Parecki, A., & Robin, K.B. (2004). *Preschool Assessment: A Guide to Developing a Balanced Approach*. Rutgers, NJ and Ypsilanti, MI: National Institute for Early Education Research and High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

kindergarten programs notes that, “process evaluation measuring program implementation and quality should be an essential first step to program evaluation.” Yet the same research finds that very few states had current, scientifically sound evaluations and that most evaluations had methodological weaknesses that limited their capacity to inform solid conclusions about the effectiveness of pre-kindergarten.³⁷ In pre-kindergarten programs that are using a mixed delivery system, program evaluation is particularly important to ensure that every setting is providing a high-quality program that meets the established standards and that resources and technical assistance are in place to help providers continue to improve the quality of their programs.

➤ *Most states do collect some descriptive information on programs and/or children participating, including family characteristics, demographic information, and program characteristics. Where states are doing such data collection, they include data from all settings, including community-based providers. For example, **Massachusetts** collects extensive data from all participating Community Partnerships for Children providers on all children and on program quality. In nearly every state, when data or information is collected, it is collected from all programs regardless of setting type or from a representative sampling of programs.*

➤ *Some states use program quality and child outcomes data to provide assistance for ongoing program improvement regardless of type of setting.*

For example, **California** collects provider characteristics and tracks information on whether children are reaching state-established “desired

³⁷ Gilliam, W., & Zigler, E. (2001). A critical meta-analysis of all impact evaluation of state-funded preschool from 1977 to 1998: Implications for policy, service delivery and program evaluation. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15, 441-473.

levels.” This data is used to help practitioners improve their services. **Nevada** collects child outcome data; the data are primarily used to identify areas for individual program improvement plans.

Policy and Research Recommendations

In this research, we were interested in two fundamental areas of opportunity presented by the community-based pre-kindergarten model. Specifically, do states implementing the model:

- Address early education for children and needs of working families in a coordinated way?
- Strengthen the quality and program standards of community-based child care programs?

Our review of state policies suggests that inclusion of community-based child care in a mixed-delivery pre-kindergarten model can help realize this potential, but opportunities are being missed as well. Further research is also needed to delve more into what these programs look like on the ground, and what they look like to children and families. We would anticipate that some approaches will be more successful than others in creating a program that fully integrates community-based providers and addresses the dual goals of school readiness and support for working families. For every policy lever that we examined, we saw instances in which states were working toward these goals as well as where states were creating barriers or missing opportunities. What follows reflects our current thinking, but we invite reader reactions and expect ongoing development of our ideas as we continue this research.

Addressing Early Education for Children and Needs of Working Families in a Coordinated Way

Perhaps the most fundamental opportunity presented by the community-based pre-kindergarten model is that more working parents could choose a single setting where school readiness and full-day, full-year care needs would be met, rather than having to cobble together multiple education and care settings. However, parents' ability to choose a community-based pre-kindergarten program that can meet full-day, full-year needs may be limited if state policies do not ensure inclusion of such programs in every community or if state policies inadvertently create barriers to participation for community-based providers who traditionally serve low-income working parents full-day and full-year.

Some states are using policy levers that we believe are more likely to help realize the opportunity to address early education and work support needs together. To better coordinate early education with the needs of working families states should:

- **Require a minimum proportion of pre-kindergarten be delivered in child care, and that some portion of pre-kindergarten be provided in settings that have the capacity to provide full-day, full-year services.** A minimum proportion requirement can help guarantee that parents are able to choose a child care setting. It also sends a clearer signal that community-based providers are a part of the pre-kindergarten delivery system. A few states already have set minimum requirements that some proportion of pre-kindergarten be delivered in community-based settings, but most states allow significant discretion to the state agency, school district, or local level about whether to include child care programs. Great variation in uptake may occur under either policy. For example,

in **New York**, where a minimum of 10 percent of each district's grant must go to collaborative pre-kindergarten, there are about 60 percent of children in non-school settings. In several states where every school district has the option to include community-based providers, only a handful do so, but some of the districts do so extensively. Without a policy that also specifies a portion of pre-kindergarten settings be able to provide full-day, full-year services, there is no guarantee that delivering pre-kindergarten in community-based settings will result in more full-day, full-year opportunities. **Connecticut** requires that at least 60 percent of its programs provide a full-day, full-year service. While most state pre-kindergarten programs are not required to provide pre-kindergarten in a full-day setting, many states encourage consideration of working families' needs through the pre-kindergarten RFP or other selection and planning processes.

- **Identify and eliminate state child care subsidy policies that may prevent participation of community-based providers in the pre-kindergarten program.** The policies that states put in place to implement the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), including payment rates, payment rules, parent fees, eligibility tied to parental work status, and other decisions, can affect the availability, stability, and quality of community-based programs and can limit the ability of these programs to enter into partnerships or contracts with the state or local pre-kindergarten program administrator. Federal guidelines say that states can align the eligibility period for child care subsidies with the program year of a collaborative pre-kindergarten program for children who could participate in both programs. Aligning eligibility periods between child care

subsidy and the pre-kindergarten program ensures that children's learning opportunities are not disrupted, and providers can budget knowing that children will not be deemed ineligible in the middle of the program year.³⁸ For example, **Illinois** created a special child care collaboration program for families participating in a community-based pre-kindergarten program and receiving child care subsidies. The program allows certain rule exceptions, such as annual re-determination of family eligibility. Federal CCDBG rules allow states to use contracts as well as vouchers as part of a mixed delivery system of child care subsidies.³⁹ Federal guidance also allows states flexibility in some CCDBG rules when blending the funding with state pre-kindergarten programs.⁴⁰ States may then layer a child care contract on top of pre-kindergarten to extend the day and year of services, and assure continuity of the full-day, full-year program. In **Oregon**, for example, pre-kindergarten programs can also participate in the state's contracted child care program. Children in this full-day, full-year option retain their child care funding eligibility for the full school year, regardless of changes in family income or status.

- **Allow pre-kindergarten payments to augment other child care funding without reducing existing resources, thereby assuring full workday coverage for low-income families in a setting that maintains consistent quality.** Given that the vast majority of states do not provide full workday pre-kindergarten

³⁸ Child Care Bureau. (February 1999). *Eligibility Determination for Head Start Collaboration* (ACYF-PIQ-CC-99-02). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

³⁹ Schumacher, R., Irish, K. & Greenberg, M. (2003). *Untapped Potential: How States Contract Directly with Providers to Shore Up Child Care Choices for Low-Income Families*. Washington, DC: CLASP.

⁴⁰ See ACYF-PIQ-CC-99-02 at the Child Care Bureau website, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/policy1/archives/pq9902/pq9902.htm>.

options, many working parents may need help to afford the cost of keeping their children in high-quality settings for the rest of the day and year. States have leeway both to set state-funded pre-kindergarten policies and to set payment policies under the rules of CCDBG. Some states have chosen to adopt specific policies that allow community-based child care providers to add state pre-kindergarten funds to the full-day, full-year child care subsidies they are receiving for qualifying low-income children. Others only allow a part-day subsidy for a child in part-day pre-kindergarten, which may not be sufficient for a community-based provider to provide a high-quality program for the full workday a child is in the setting.

- **Redesign state governance structures to formalize policy and planning coordination among agencies responsible for early education and child care.** Linked governance structures can promote more coordinated and efficient cross-agency planning, policymaking, quality enhancement strategies, and data collection/analysis. Formal structures and arrangements are more likely to outlast informal collaboration. While the locus of control for state-level pre-kindergarten policymaking is most often in the state department of education, some states are developing explicit requirements for coordinated policymaking between the education and child care subsidy agencies, although usually states are relying on informal collaborative relationships across agencies. For example, the **West Virginia** Board of Education and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources have joint oversight responsibility of the program. **Massachusetts** is beginning to develop a Department of Early Education and

Care that will bring child care and the state Community Partnerships for Children early education program under the same authority.

- **Require and support joint planning at the local level to bring together early education and child care constituencies.** Joint local planning can promote efficient use of local facilities and resources and can break down barriers between school and community-based providers. Several state pre-kindergarten policies require local representative advisory councils that include community-based child care or use the RFP process to encourage local community collaboration among schools and community-based players. Some states provide technical assistance at the community level to encourage integration of their decision-making processes. However, in many states where funds flow to school districts, the school districts may need increased regulation or guidance to assure they are consistently and fairly informing community providers, making decisions in partnership with the community, choosing providers, determining funding levels, and monitoring program quality.
- **Conduct thorough outreach and disseminate information to all potential pre-kindergarten providers.** In some cases, potentially eligible child care providers may not know about the opportunity to be a pre-kindergarten provider. States rarely require that all licensed community-based child care facilities receive notifications of this opportunity. If decision-making is not centralized in a state agency, outreach is left to local councils or schools to determine. For example, when new funds are available in **Tennessee**, the Department of Education posts program application information on its website and sends notification to all

schools through a listserv, the child care resource and referral agencies send a notice to all of their child care constituents and consultants, and the Head Start Collaboration Coordinator notifies all Head Start grantees.

Strengthening the Quality and Program Standards and Providing Resources in Community-Based Child Care Programs

Research has demonstrated that the quality of many child care providers is mediocre at best.⁴¹ The community-based pre-kindergarten model has the potential to strengthen the quality of community-based child care services and teachers, both for the full day and year. This could positively affect the preschool-age children and potentially the younger children in the same community-based program. State pre-kindergarten policies can provide resources and support to help raise the quality of community-based providers, or they can indirectly exclude them by setting important but unreachable goals for quality and standards without providing resources and supports. We believe that that some states are using policy levers that are more likely to strengthen community-based child care, but others are missing these opportunities. States interested in strengthening the quality and program standards of community-based child care settings through this model should:

- **Set pre-kindergarten payments and provide dedicated resources that cover the cost of providing a high-quality pre-kindergarten program.** Data from a national study of state investments in pre-kindergarten show that only a handful of states provide funding that is adequate to support a quality program during the

⁴¹ Helburn, S., Culkin, M., Howes, C., et al. (1995). *Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers, Executive Summary*. Denver, CO: University of Colorado.

hours that services are intended to be provided.⁴² Several states in our study reported that they do not provide the full amount needed through the pre-kindergarten initiative because they want to encourage blending of child care and education funding sources, have experienced state budget cutbacks or frozen funding for pre-kindergarten, or because a local match is required. It also is likely that the costs of providing the same pre-kindergarten program will vary depending on the location of the program. Public schools have large economies of scale and low overhead costs. Community-based programs are smaller operations and may have high overhead if, for example, they use rented space. How payment levels are set must acknowledge the costs of any type of participating program site to meet the program standards of pre-kindergarten. Some states set higher payment levels for community-based programs than for school classrooms with access to other resources. Some states examine an applicant's budget in detail to determine what the right payment level would be to deliver the quality of services needed. Other states simply set one level across all settings or only offer community-based programs a stipend for accepting a school district teacher on-site for part of the day. It is crucial that the pre-kindergarten funding that requires higher standards pays for those standards.

- **Set equivalent program standards for all communities and pre-kindergarten settings.** Setting equivalent standards helps to assure that the pre-kindergarten program provides a comparable experience for children no matter where they attend. Most states set the same standards for all settings; some allow a phase-in

⁴² Barnett, W.S., Robin, K.B., Hustedt, J.T., & Schulman, K.L. (2003). *The State of Preschool: 2003 State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

period for some of the standards. Others allow variation by setting or community.

While the goal of equivalent standards for all pre-kindergarten settings is important, this policy must be paired with supports to help programs reach the standards in order to expand access to pre-kindergarten in community-based settings.

- **Invest in the community-based child care teacher workforce by providing targeted resources to help teachers meet pre-kindergarten teacher education standards—and receive comparable wages.** The biggest barrier to community-based programs providing pre-kindergarten appears to be meeting and maintaining teacher education and certification requirements without adequate funding and supports. Most states require the same teacher education level regardless of setting, but most teachers in community-based programs do not meet these standards because current child care licensing requirements for teachers tend to be significantly lower than those set for the pre-kindergarten program. To bridge this gap, **New Jersey** worked across systems to develop a multi-pronged professional development initiative. The state showed that concerted efforts can greatly increase the teacher education levels in community-based settings. New Jersey, however, is an exception: we found very few states that allocate pre-kindergarten funds to help community-based child care teachers achieve their bachelor's degrees. Similarly, only a handful of specific state policies assure access to wages and benefits for community-based child care teachers that are comparable to public school teachers in the pre-kindergarten system.

- **Make resources and technical assistance available to improve the content of early education services in community-based child care programs.** States are offering a range of other supports and technical assistance which community-based providers in state pre-kindergarten programs may access that typically exceed what would otherwise be available for licensed child care programs. However, most states do not offer targeted assistance designed to help community-based providers meet and maintain pre-kindergarten standards. There is reason to hope that such supports will not only help improve the delivery of pre-kindergarten but also result in a better program for the other age groups in the community-based child care settings. A few states offer ongoing, responsive technical assistance and monitoring. For example, **Alabama**'s on-site monitoring is conducted by a technical assistant assigned to the site by the Office of School Readiness. The technical assistant's other duties to the program include working closely with directors, teachers, and assistants throughout the year to provide consultation on questions about the program; addressing problems with maintaining enrollment expectations; approving equipment, materials, or supplies requests; addressing training needs; and providing other assistance. Several states and school districts partnering with community-based child care make professional development and ongoing training available to all teachers in partnering community-based programs, not only those participating in the pre-kindergarten classroom. For example, **Missouri** requires each lead agency grantee to use 10 percent of its funding to support professional development for licensed child care providers in the school district area.

- Provide resources and technical assistance to improve quality of settings for children who are too young to be eligible for pre-kindergarten.** Some states have recognized that where children are before they enter pre-kindergarten also impacts the success of their pre-kindergarten program. In addition, child care agencies most often care for children in a broader age range than the preschool years of three and four. Through our research and that of others,⁴³ we know that a handful of states direct a portion of pre-kindergarten funding to improve the quality of infant and toddler care. For example, **Illinois'** Early Childhood Block Grant funding stream includes an 11 percent set-aside for infants and toddlers.
- Link policies to enhance program quality across pre-kindergarten and child care.** Many state policymakers are interested both in improving quality of child care and in expanding pre-kindergarten, but often these discussions are not linked. For example, at least 32 states operate tiered quality rating systems.⁴⁴ These systems are designed to assess all licensed child care providers or subsidized child care providers against an objective measure or multiple standards of quality, such as an environmental rating scale score or achieving accreditation. Some states provide extensive support to help child care programs reach higher tiers. Tiered quality systems and supports could be designed to help more community-based providers meet pre-kindergarten standards. However, in their current designs, state child care tiered reimbursement systems rarely have any relation to the

⁴³ Lombardi, J., Cohen, J., Stebbins, H., Lurie-Hurwitz, E., Chernoff, J.J., Denton, K., Abbey, R., & Ewen, D. (2004). *Building Bridges from Prekindergarten to Infants and Toddlers: A Preliminary Look at Issues in Four States--A DISCUSSION PAPER*. Washington, DC: Zero to Three.

⁴⁴ Collins, J., & Dry, T. (August 2004). *National Overview of Tiered Quality Strategies: A Preliminary Analysis*, presentation at the State Child Care Administrators meeting, Washington, DC.

state's pre-kindergarten program standards, thus missing an important opportunity to coordinate quality initiatives.

- **Collect data and evaluate program quality and impact across settings to continuously improve performance.** Descriptive program and evaluation data will be needed to determine if and how much the quality of community-based providers increases through their involvement with the pre-kindergarten program. Without an investment in evaluation, it will be difficult to determine whether the pre-kindergarten program is having desired results and whether providers need additional resources and supports to meet program goals.

Addressing Early Education and the Needs of Working Families in a Coordinated Way

States interested in improving access to early education for working families through a mixed delivery system should:

- ❑ Require that a minimum proportion of pre-kindergarten be delivered in non-school settings, and require that a proportion of settings have the capacity to provide full workday and year services.
- ❑ Identify and eliminate state child care subsidy policies that may prevent participation of community-based providers in the pre-kindergarten program.
- ❑ Allow pre-kindergarten funding to augment other child care funding without reducing existing resources to assure full workday coverage for low-income families in a setting that maintains consistent pre-kindergarten quality all day.
- ❑ Redesign state governance structures to formalize policy and planning coordination among agencies responsible for early education and child care.
- ❑ Require and support joint planning at the local level to bring together early education and child care constituencies.
- ❑ Conduct thorough outreach and disseminate information to all potential community-based providers.

Strengthening Quality and Program Standards and Providing Resources in Community-Based Child Care Programs

States interested in strengthening the quality and program standards of community-based child care settings in a mixed delivery model should:

- ❑ Set pre-kindergarten payments and provide dedicated funds that cover the cost of providing a high-quality early education program.
- ❑ Set equivalent program standards for all communities and pre-kindergarten settings.
- ❑ Invest in the community-based child care teacher workforce by providing targeted resources to help teachers meet pre-kindergarten teacher education standards—and receive comparable wages to similarly educated school teachers.
- ❑ Make resources and technical assistance available to improve the content of early education services in community-based child care programs.
- ❑ Provide resources and technical assistance to improve quality of settings for children who are too young to be eligible for pre-kindergarten.
- ❑ Link policies to enhance program quality across pre-kindergarten and child care.
- ❑ Collect data and evaluate program quality and impact across settings to encourage ongoing program improvement.

In addition to highlighting the policy choices states have in designing a pre-kindergarten program, this paper also emphasizes the need for future research to build on this initial baseline study of state policy data. The differences between the mixed system and school-based models, and the wide range of policy options among community-based states, suggest a number of possible questions, including:

- What do parents prefer in selecting pre-kindergarten providers?
- Do parents want extended-day programs at a single site, and what choices of community-based providers (center-based and family child care homes) would they prefer?
- What are the most promising policies within each pre-kindergarten delivery model to ensure responsiveness to the needs of working families, and are these best practices more likely to occur in either model?
- What state policy choices and pre-kindergarten program approaches actually strengthen the quality of an expanding base of community-based child care providers?
- What is the impact of child care subsidy policies on whether community-based providers can participate in the pre-kindergarten program?
- Which state policies do the most to strengthen quality beyond the pre-kindergarten program?
- Does the choice of including community-based child care providers have an impact on the continuity of education and services between the pre-kindergarten and later years of schooling?
- What is the appropriate role of family child care?

- Do child outcomes vary by setting in states that allow community-based pre-kindergarten, and, if so, what factors might account for this variation?
- Do states that include a community-based approach in a mixed delivery model attain different levels of child outcomes over time compared to states with only school-based models?

Conclusion

Including community-based child care in state pre-kindergarten programs presents an important opportunity to bring together the dual goals of promoting early learning and supporting working families. Our review of state policies suggests that, in some instances, state policies have been designed to build on potential advantages of this approach, although there is also ample evidence of missed opportunities. More research is needed to determine how implementation of these policies has impacted children, families, and programs in communities, since our review focused on formal state policies. We found promising initiatives, but more research is still needed to fully assess whether this approach results in high-quality pre-kindergarten programs that are more responsive to the needs of working families, and will this approach raise the quality of child care in ways that benefit both pre-kindergartners and other children and families?

While this paper has focused on variations in policy choices, a fundamental issue faced by every state seeking to expand access to pre-kindergarten through inclusion of child care is the inadequacy of funding for pre-kindergarten and community-based child care. Similar to the findings from national studies, several of the states we studied reported recent cuts or stagnant pre-kindergarten funding, affecting both access and

quality of the programs.⁴⁵ Federal and state funding for child care subsidy programs should be greatly increased; at current levels it is inadequate to meet the needs of low-income working families, hundreds of thousands of children are on waiting lists for help, and most states set child care subsidy payment rates well below what states pay pre-kindergarten programs for a similar number of hours of service.⁴⁶ State pre-kindergarten initiatives will not be able to find high-quality community child care partners without an adequate foundation of federal and state child care funding, making the promise of including community-based child care providers in pre-kindergarten delivery an empty one. States will not be able to fulfill their goals for expanding access to pre-kindergarten; child care providers, and the working lower income families they serve, will be left out of the promise.

While funding is crucial, it is not the only issue that states must address in program design and implementation. The decision to use schools and non-school providers for a pre-kindergarten program is a first threshold choice, but whether the community-based model fulfills its potential ultimately depends on the vision, planning framework, funding, design choices, and whether adequate supports to reach and maintain quality program standards are provided in implementing the model. The model

⁴⁵ See, for example, Trust for Early Education. (2004). *Governors' Pre-Kindergarten Proposals Too Limited, But Still More Generous than the President's*. Washington, DC: Author.

⁴⁶ The majority of states continue to face budget shortfalls, which has led to cutbacks in state resources for child care subsidies. The GAO found that at least 23 states have limited child care assistance for some families since 2001. See, General Accounting Office. (May 2003). *Recent State Policy Changes Affecting the Availability of Assistance for Low-Income Families*. Washington, DC: Author. See also Schulman, K., & Blank, H. (September 2004). *Child Care Assistance Policies 2001-2004: Families Struggling to Move Forward, States Going Backward*. Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center. This study found that between 2001 and 2004, 31 states reduced the income eligibility limit for families to qualify for child care subsidy, compared to the federal poverty level. Recent data released by the Child Care Bureau as part of a pilot study on payments found that, of the 11 states studied, seven had decreased the number of children served between 2001 and 2002. See, Improper Payments in the Child Care Program Pilot Project on the Child Care Bureau website, "Summary of the Diversity of States Partnering with the Child Care Bureau" table. Retrieved September 2004 from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/ta/ipi/state_diversity.htm.

provides an important opportunity to bridge the historic gap between early education goals and addressing the work support needs of families; the next step for researchers and policymakers is to learn from and build on the initial experiences of state implementation.