

# FAQS: 2026 Top Child Care Policy Priorities

(January 2026)

## Permanent investment in child care compensation

### **What is in the Executive Budget for the child care workforce?**

The Executive Budget allocates **no funds** for the child care workforce. If no funding is added before the budget is finalized, this will be the second year in a row since the pandemic that there are no funds for the child care workforce. In 2023, one-time [retention bonuses](#) were awarded to child care educators: \$3,000 full time; \$2,300 afterschool. In 2024, bonuses of \$2,250 for full time educators; \$1,725 for afterschool.

### **Why is the ESCCC asking for ongoing \$12,000 workforce supplements?**

Finding and retaining child care educators and those in supporting roles is the number one issue we hear from the field. We cannot achieve universal child care without recruiting and retaining far more professionals in the field. The average wage for the child care workforce (94% women, and more than 53% people of color) is approximately [\\$38,000](#), with family-based providers earning even less. In contrast, the median annual salary for full-time New York workers is approximately [\\$67,000](#) per year. The \$12,000 compensation supplement is similar to the \$14,000 supplement (on average) that [Washington D.C.](#) implemented in 2022, which has been [credited](#) with significantly reducing turnover in the field, boosting child care educator employment, and expanding capacity. Looking ahead, New York must establish a minimum pay scale and career ladder based upon agreed upon criteria. This pay scale will inform compensation supplement levels after the base pay scale for all has been increased.

## Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) shortfalls

### **We've heard a lot about CCAP waitlists and enrollment closures – what is the status?**

CCAP currently helps approximately 165,000 low-income families around New York State afford child care. For those families able to access CCAP, this assistance can be life-changing. They can see their annual child care bill for one infant in home-based child care drop from [\\$16,000 to \\$500](#). Unfortunately, notwithstanding a surge in state funding into the CCAP program in recent years, demand still far outpaces funding. To manage this shortfall, as of January 2026, [33 counties and NYC](#) have closed enrollment or started waitlists, leaving thousands of eligible families across the state scrambling to patch together care for their children, with some having to reduce their work hours, or leave the workforce altogether.

### **What is in the Executive Budget to end the child care assistance waitlists and closures?**

The Executive Budget proposes \$1.2B in new, recurring funding for CCAP - the largest increase to CCAP in NYS history. Unfortunately, even this historic level of investment is unlikely to permanently end waitlists and closures across the entire state. We will continue to advocate for additional funding, as necessary, to ensure all eligible families seeking CCAP can access it.

***Note: CCAP funding in the NYS budget generally does not flow until the October after the final budget is passed – following the federal fiscal year. The Executive Budget makes some of the CCAP funds available to counties immediately upon passage of the budget, but includes requirements that may make it difficult for counties outside of NYC to access those funds. We will be working with lawmakers and the Executive to secure language changes to ensure those funds get to counties as soon as the budget is finalized to reopen CCAP enrollment across NYS as soon as possible.***

# Universal Child Care

## **Does the Executive Budget advance our vision of statewide universal child care as set forth in the ESCCC’s [NYS Child Care for All](#) plan?**

Overall, the Executive Budget reflects many of the ESCCC’s principles for an equitable rollout of universal child care. Most significantly, the proposed historic, sustained increase in CCAP funding indicates a commitment to prioritizing low-income families as the state builds toward statewide universal child care. The Community Care models and 2-Care (in NYC) represent an important step away from the traditional model of providing child care only to families that meet onerous income, immigration status and activities tests toward a model that recognizes child care is a public good that should be available to all children and families.

Where the Executive Budget diverges from ESCCC’s vision for universal child care is its lack of investment in the child care workforce. In addition, we will be continuing to urge lawmakers to recognize that universal child care must include children ages 0 through 12 because families’ need for child care does not end when a child enters elementary school.

## **What about the “Community Care” models and 2-Care?**

The Executive Budget proposes to invest \$66M to support Community Care models in three communities outside of NYC (Broome, Dutchess, and Monroe counties) for children ages 0 to 3. For NYC, the Executive Budget proposes \$73M to help NYC launch 2-Care which will initially focus on high-need areas and is expected to reach approximately 2,000 children this fall.

To align with our plan and principles, we will be advocating for the Community Care models and 2-Care to be truly universal – meaning without subjecting families to income, immigration status, or activities tests, and that they are treated not as one-time pilots, but as a bridge to statewide universal child care, with commitments made to add more communities without delay. Further, they must incorporate all modalities of care – including home-based child care – to meet the needs and preferences of families and communities, and should offer care that spans a traditional work day, not just a school day, with some programs offering care in the evenings and weekends to meet the varied schedules of parents.

## **How does the Executive Budget’s proposed investment in Pre-K advance the goal of statewide universal child care?**

Expansions of Pre-K for four-year olds along with 3K and 2-Care in NYC - if undertaken in a manner that fully integrates center and home-based child care programs into the expansions, and at a rate that is high enough to cover the cost of providing high quality care, and paying the workforce a thriving wage – can help NYS achieve universal child care, and ensure expansions do not unintentionally destabilize child care programs and lead to a greater shortage of infant and toddler seats. The Governor’s proposal to create a uniform statewide Pre-K grant funded at the higher of either \$10,000 or the district’s current selected Foundation Aid per pupil is an important step toward paying an adequate Pre-K rate. Looking ahead, there need to be assurances of investment in afterschool care because most parents’ work days do not end at 3:00 when the Pre-K and elementary school day ends. New York State will also need to rapidly expand community care models throughout the state to ensure there is sufficient infant and toddler care for every family that seeks it.