

# 2025-26 Policy Priorities



Policy priorities are public facing legislative and/or administrative policy priorities of the Georgia Infant-Toddler Coalition.

## Full Coalition

**Priority #1:** Help families with young children afford diapers and other basic needs, such as by eliminating the state sales tax on diapers.

**Priority #2:** Ensure that Georgia is well-positioned to take advantage of all federal opportunities (e.g., meeting the state match for relevant programs serving young children and their families) and protect prior investments in key programs (e.g., Head Start, IDEA, Medicaid).

**Priority #3:** Work with government agencies to ensure that the design and delivery of publicly funded programs and policies are shaped by those who are most affected, including families and child-serving providers, to make them more accessible, responsive, and tailored.

## Child Care Affordability Committee

The Child Care Affordability Committee will work to mitigate the effects of the end of pandemic relief funding, which has been a historic and critical lifeline for Georgia child care providers and families, by ensuring an adequate mix of state and federal funding so that every family who needs affordable, high-quality care can access it and early childhood educators receive family-sustaining wages for their skilled, essential work. This includes increasing federal funding for critical programs (e.g., Head Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant) and establishing new state funding streams, namely a child care trust fund similar to New Mexico's model. Funding should:

**Priority #1:** Restore access to Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program to the 2023 high of 74,000 children served, in part by increasing income eligibility. At the same time, state leaders should maintain increased reimbursement rates to ensure providers can participate in CAPS.

**Priority #2:** In light of the early care and education workforce shortage, implement compensation strategies (e.g., ongoing supplements, bonuses) and support systems (e.g., educational pathways, recruitment strategies/incentives, benefits, professional and classroom supports) for child care staff, with a particular focus on addressing pay disparities for those with the similar levels of education and experience. Specifically, state leaders should provide funding to include the early care and education workforce as a priority group for CAPS to ensure these hard-working professionals can afford child care for their own children.

**Priority #3:** Support the capital needs of providers, including repairs, renovations, and expansion of child care centers and family child learning homes to support quality improvement, promote the health and safety of children, and ensure an adequate supply of care.

## Child Care Affordability Committee (Continued)

**Priority #4:** Reduce administrative barriers for child care providers when applying for and using early childhood programs (e.g., CAPS, grants), including ensuring adequate time to submit an application, prompt delivery of funding, and leeway to meet any new requirements.

**Priority #5:** Improve policies and procedures related to eligibility and enrollment to minimize disruptions to families' access to early childhood programs (e.g., increasing the eligibility period for CAPS).

**Priority #6:** Support the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) in improving Quality Rated for early and school-age care during the upcoming revisions, including:

- ensuring Georgia children, particularly those receiving CAPS scholarships, can access the highest quality care;
- promoting cultural responsiveness;
- supporting ongoing quality improvement through technical assistance and supports; and
- identifying and addressing bottlenecks in the process that slow down or prevent providers from receiving a star rating.

## Early Intervention (EI) & Family Well-Being Committee

**Priority #1:** Ensure that the needs of infants, toddlers, and their families are appropriately included in mental health legislation.

**Priority #2:** Advocate for state funding for evidence-based IECMH services, such as IECMH Consultation, screening, dyadic treatment, and parent skills training, and for additional state agency staff positions focused on IECMH.

**Priority #3:** Ensure adequate funding for maternal and child health programs by advocating for:

- Additional funding for Children 1st, evidence-based Home Visiting, and Babies Can't Wait; and
- Greater clarity, transparency, and regularity of reimbursement for Babies Can't Wait service coordination by CMOs.

**Priority #4:** Advocate for Medicaid reimbursement for evidence-based Home Visiting.

**Priority #5:** Enact multi-year continuous eligibility for children birth to three-years-old on Medicaid, in order to support continuity of preventive and sick care in the critical early years.