

Children, Families, and Communities Program

*Supporting children through
investments in the places they live,
the adults who care for them, and
the policies that impact their lives.*



The David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Children, Families, and Communities Program mission is to ensure that all children have access to the health and early learning opportunities they need to reach their full potential.

Our investments focus on supporting the adults in children's lives—parents, caregivers, health providers, and educators—so they have the information and resources they need to nurture the health, development, and learning of the children in their care.

As the political environment and coronavirus pandemic have created upheaval in the lives of many children and families, our work to invest in early learning, paid family leave, and children's health and nutrition has helped communities build a web of support around children and their families. We have supported work to learn from local partners, to test solutions to complex public problems, and to work toward policy change at all levels of government.



Photo Credit: Maryam Salassi



Photo Credit: Maryam Salassi

The program supports organizations working to:

- Improve **training and professional development** for child care providers and educators so they can support children's learning and growth.
- Provide parents, family, and friends that care for children with the **skills and support** they need to create nurturing environments for children.
- Ensure all children and their families can afford **comprehensive health insurance** coverage.
- Strive for **equitable access** to quality health care and nutrition services for children and their families.
- Support **comprehensive paid family leave policies** that allow adults to take the time they need to care for sick loved ones or nurture young children so that they grow up healthy, confident, and ready to learn.

Early Learning

Improving the quality of early learning and developmental experiences for all children in California from birth through age five.



Photo Credit: Maryam Salassi

The early learning strategy seeks to improve the quality of early learning and developmental experiences, in both formal and informal settings, for all children in California from birth through age five. It includes support for local, state, and federal policies that ensure kids come to preschool and kindergarten ready to learn and educators in every environment are able to connect with and help students learn and develop.



Photo Credit: Maryam Salassi

Starting Smart and Strong

This 10-year effort aims to ensure all children grow up healthy and ready for kindergarten by improving the quality of adult-child interactions across all settings where young children learn and grow. Investments in three California communities—Oakland, Fresno, and East San Jose—test solutions and scale what works. Based on data from the state assessment Desired Results Developmental Profile, among the Starting Smart and Strong classrooms in 2020, an average of 73 percent of children were ready for kindergarten (up from 58 percent since baseline).



* Source: Desired Results Developmental

The Road to Universal Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

In Fresno, a Model for Training Adults to Work with Young, Multilingual Learners

Beginning in 2016, with Packard Foundation support, Fresno began training adults who work with children who are dual language learners. Work began through a partnership between the school district and local early childhood practitioners. The training model focused on the value of and support for a child's home language, getting to know the child and family, and concrete strategies teachers can use to support linguistic growth. Educators and state policy leaders took notice. In 2020, the model expanded across the state with support from the California Department of Education. Today, some of these new practices are codified in California's policy and administrative guidance. The project is expanding to serve informal childcare providers—grandmas, neighbors, and aunts—who don't usually have access to training but play a key role in preparing children for a lifetime of learning.

“In California, 60 percent of children five and under speak a language other than English at home. This large and growing group of students requires support from teachers who are trained in the best practices to help them succeed in school and life. Packard's investments are helping to make this a reality in our state.”

— Patricia Lozano, Director, Early Edge California

Laying the Foundation

2003 CFC sets goal of achieving high quality preschool for all California 4-year-olds.

2006 Preschool for All ballot initiative defeated by California voters.



A Step Toward Universal Preschool

2010 Governor Schwarzenegger signs the Kindergarten Readiness Act, establishing Transitional Kindergarten a new grade in California's public schools to serve 4-year-olds with fall birthdays.

2013 CFC invests in TK impact study. Findings show TK improves students' math, problem solving, and literacy skills, putting them ahead of peers who did not attend.

Bumps in the Road

2012-2015 Advocates are successful in beating back cuts proposed by Governor Jerry Brown.



Success

2019 Governor Gavin Newsom takes office, makes preschool a top priority.

2020 California's Master Plan for Early Learning and Care calls for a year of publicly funded preschool for all children in California.

2021 2021 California Establishes a Universal Preschool Program. Newsom signs bill to gradually expand TK over four years.

2026

400,000

California will have the nation's largest public preschool program, serving up to 400,000 children.

Photo Credits: Maryam Salassi

Paid Family Leave

Paid family leave grantees are working toward comprehensive paid family leave policies that are equitable and accessible, so that families can be stronger, healthier, and set up for long-term success.



Photo Credit: Maryam Salassi

California Expands Access to Paid Family Leave

Though the state was the first to offer paid family leave, California is home to many parents, especially low-wage workers, people of color, and immigrants who couldn't afford to take advantage of this benefit. Legal Aid at Work participated in Governor Newsom's Paid Family Leave Task Force, which brought together members of the business, worker, and early learning communities to make recommendations to expand California's Paid Family Leave Program.

The Packard Foundation's investments supported participation, helping to create relationships, networks, and infrastructure that attorneys and advocates from Legal Aid at Work and their partners could lean on in their advocacy work. Recommendations from the Task Force led to the passage of two bills (one in 2020 and one in 2022) to expand job protections to more workers in California and to expand the share of workers' wages paid by the family leave program for those in lower-wage jobs.

“The investments in our work have really made a transformative difference.”

– Sharon Terman, Director of the Work and Family Program and Senior Staff Attorney, Legal Aid at Work

California's newest law will enable many more workers, especially low-paid workers and families of color, to be able to take paid leave to bond with a newborn baby or care for an ill family member.

Paid Family Leave Grantees in California



Support to **Legal Aid at Work**, a nonprofit legal services organization, accelerated advocacy for a more equitable and accessible paid family leave policy in California. Legal Aid at Work focuses on advancing the workplace rights and well-being of low-paid workers and their families and is nationally known for its leadership in this arena.



Federal Progress on Paid Family Leave

The United States is one of the few industrialized countries in the world without a national paid family leave policy. And though it has been challenging to elevate this issue among many competing federal priorities, recent years have brought several key successes. For the first time ever, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that would provide four weeks of paid family and sick leave to many workers, and the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act made paid parental leave available to federal employees.

The Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington, DC-based think tank, has been particularly instrumental in this progress. The center fosters bipartisanship by combining the best ideas from both parties. Support from the Packard Foundation has helped the center capitalize on recent momentum for reform and build support, laying the groundwork for federal activity on paid family leave into the coming years.

Children's Health

The children's health strategy seeks to give children access to quality care that will keep them healthy and give them a strong start.



Investments in federal and state advocacy, research and policy analysis, litigation, and communications raise awareness of the importance of health care and nutrition in supporting children's healthy development. Additional investments support the way health systems deliver services and promote the health and well-being of children and families.

Advocates Protect Health Coverage for Children During the Pandemic

The pandemic shined a spotlight on the critical nature of accessible, high quality, affordable health coverage for children and families. It also laid bare the importance of that coverage for all the adults in children's lives—their parents, their caregivers, and community members.

With leadership from the Georgetown Center for Children and Families and GMMB, the Foundation has built a network of state child advocates who together have advocated effectively for gains in child and family health coverage and fought back against regressive efforts to curb coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Joan Alker, the Executive Director of the Center for Children and Families at Georgetown who helps lead the initiative said this support has enabled advocates to be nimble and respond to opportunities and challenges as they arise. Additionally, Alker said the support has "helped ensure that the voices from those close to the communities are able to drive the agenda in their state in concert with the federal landscape, which is critical."

The network fought to protect Medicaid coverage for children and families during the pandemic. It is now working with state advocates to be ready to make sure children and families can retain their health coverage once the public health emergency is lifted. It is also supporting groundbreaking policy models like Oregon's plan to provide children eligible for Medicaid with continuous health coverage from birth to age 6 as a component of the state's school readiness and healthcare policy. This continuous coverage model is already being replicated in Washington State, New Mexico, and other states.

Getting to the Finish Line Initiative

The Packard Foundation launched Getting to the Finish Line, a national advocacy network in 2007 with the goal of insuring 95 percent of all U.S. children. Supported by the Georgetown Center for Children and Families and GMMB, the network is made up of state advocates fighting for affordable health insurance coverage and access to quality services for children and families.

About half of children in the U.S. (40 million) are now insured through Medicaid or CHIP.*



GOAL OF INSURING

95%

OF ALL U.S. CHILDREN

* Source: Georgetown Center for Children and Families

“We are in a change moment right now since the pandemic. Things are happening at an accelerated pace. But we’re also in danger because we have so much division in this county. Our network is uniquely suited to bridge some of those differences.”

— Joan Alker, Executive Director of the Center for Children and Families and a Research Professor at the Georgetown McCourt School of Public Policy

* Progress at Risk



Photo Credit: Maryam Salassi

An estimated **6.7 million children** are at risk of becoming uninsured when the public health emergency ends this spring.