



May 2019

CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION

Most States Offer Preschool Programs and Rely on Multiple Funding Sources

Accessible Version

Highlights of [GAO-19-375](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Each year, millions of children age 5 and under receive publicly funded early care and education services. Federal appropriations for Head Start and the Child Care and Development Fund were \$9.8 and \$8.1 billion respectively in fiscal year 2018. However, comprehensive information on ECE programs created and funded by states is not available. GAO was asked to identify and describe all state ECE programs.

This report examines (1) the number and characteristics of state ECE programs and the extent to which they share characteristics or overlap with federal or other state programs; and (2) how states fund their ECE programs, including any related benefits and challenges reported by states. GAO sent two surveys to program officials in 50 states and the District of Columbia. The first survey identified state programs providing early learning or child care services to children from birth to age 5, and the second gathered more information about the programs identified, including their characteristics and funding sources. GAO analyzed the survey data to determine which characteristics state programs shared with Head Start, the Child Care and Development Fund, and other state programs, as well as the benefits and challenges of using multiple funding sources.

View [GAO-19-375](#). For more information, contact Kathryn Larin at (202) 512-7215 or larink@gao.gov.

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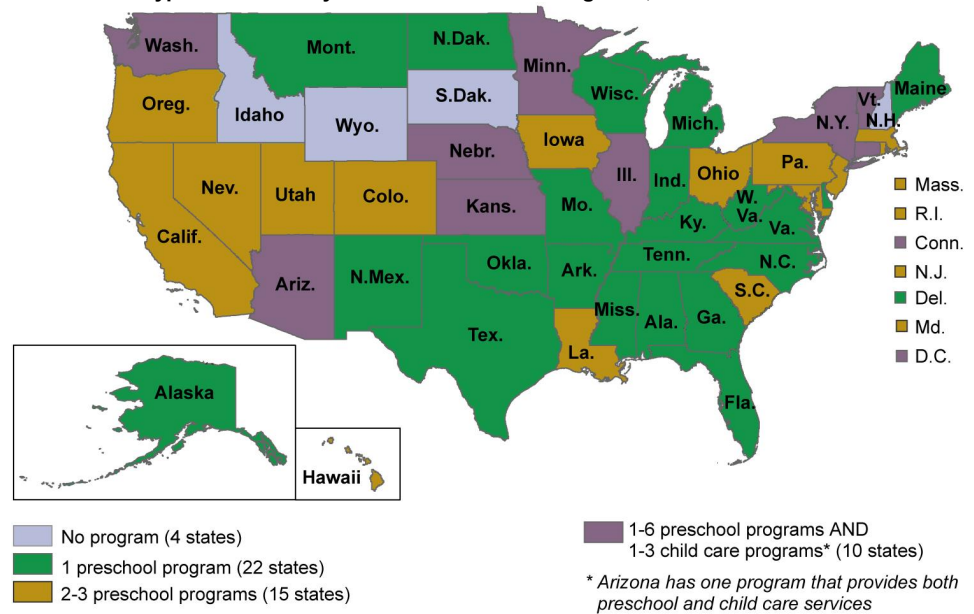
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Most States Offer Preschool Programs and Rely on Multiple Funding Sources

What GAO Found

GAO's national survey of state program officials identified 86 state early care and education (ECE) programs: 73 preschool programs serving 3- to 5-year-olds and 13 child care programs serving 0- to 2-year-olds. According to GAO's survey, most programs focused on helping at-risk children become ready for school and improving the quality of their care. In 18 states, survey responses showed that at least two ECE programs shared characteristics, offering similar services (e.g., teacher training) or prioritizing enrolling similar groups of children (e.g., low-income children). Additionally, most state ECE programs offered at least one of the same services or prioritized at least one of the same groups as the federal Head Start program or programs funded by the Child Care and Development Fund. For example, program officials reported that some state ECE programs mirror Head Start so that they can enroll additional children or offer more hours of care per day.

Number and Type of State Early Care and Education Programs, 2018



Sources: GAO survey of state program officials. MapInfo (map). | GAO-19-375

Officials from most state ECE programs GAO surveyed reported using multiple sources to fund their programs. Of the 86 surveyed state ECE programs, 55 reported using at least one funding source in addition to state funds in 2018, and 31 reported using at least two additional sources beyond state funds. Integrating state funds with federal and local funds may broaden the effect and reach of services provided to children and families. Program officials reported a variety of benefits of using multiple funding sources, such as an increased ability to serve more families from targeted populations, as well as challenges such as reconciling different eligibility and reporting requirements.

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Abbreviations

CCDF	Child Care and Development Fund
ECE	early care and education
Education	U.S. Department of Education
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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May 8, 2019

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member, Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives

Dear Dr. Foxx,

Each year, millions of children aged 5 and under receive publicly funded early care and education services. Research has shown that participation in high-quality early care and education (ECE) programs¹ can improve children’s developmental outcomes and their readiness for school, particularly for children from economically disadvantaged families.² Federal and state support for ECE programs has evolved over time in response to emerging needs. The vast majority of federal funding in this area is concentrated in two programs administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): Head Start and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), which provides funding for state child care programs. Information on ECE programs created and funded by states is less readily available.

You asked us to identify all ECE programs created and funded by states. This report examines (1) the number and characteristics of state ECE programs and the extent to which they share characteristics or overlap with federal or other state programs; and (2) how states fund their ECE programs, including any related benefits and challenges reported by states.

¹ In this report, we refer to early care and education programs as “ECE programs,” which include preschool programs and child care programs. To analyze data on ECE programs for this report, we defined preschool programs as programs with the words “preschool,” “pre-elementary,” “pre-kindergarten,” or “pre-k” in their names; programs serving only children who are 3, 4, or 5 years old; and programs that provide a second year of kindergarten before traditional kindergarten. We defined child care programs as programs that serve 0- to 2-year-olds and those that do not meet our definition of preschool programs.

² For examples, see Sarah Friese et al., *Defining and Measuring Access to High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Guidebook for Policymakers and Researchers*, OPRE Report #2017-08 (Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, February 2017), and Deborah A. Phillips et al, *The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2017).

To address these objectives, we first compiled a list of ECE programs and points of contact from published reports.³ Then, in March 2018 we sent an email-based questionnaire to child care and early learning officials in all 51 states for each program identified by these reports. We requested that state officials confirm the name of the program, the point of contact, and whether it met the following criteria:⁴

1. The program was created by a state entity, such as a state legislature, state agency, or state-wide council;
2. it had an explicit purpose of providing or funding early learning or child care services to children from birth to age 5 in an educational or child care setting; and
3. it used state funds, even if it also used other types of funds.⁵

We confirmed the appropriateness of our selection criteria with officials from the Department of Education (Education), HHS, and representatives from organizations such as National Institute for Early Education Research, Child Trends, and Education Commission of the States.

We also requested that state officials identify any additional programs meeting our criteria and provide points of contact for those programs. All states responded to our survey. We grouped the programs into four categories of state ECE programs: preschool, supplemental Head Start, child care, and child care/preschool, and combined categories as

³ See Allison H. Friedman-Krauss et al., *The State of Preschool 2017: State Preschool Yearbook*, (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2018). Our initial list included 51 programs that provide child care subsidies funded primarily by the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), obtained from Sarah Minton et al., *The CCDF Policies Database Book of Tables: Key Cross-State Variations in CCDF Policies as of October 1, 2016*, OPRE Report 2017-105, (Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017).

⁴ Throughout this report, we refer to the District of Columbia as a state.

⁵ Our criteria do not exclude programs that have a second primary purpose, such as helping parents to work. They also do not exclude programs that count their state expenditures toward a federal matching/maintenance of effort requirement, or that are funding streams rather than traditional “programs.” These criteria do exclude home visit programs which do not occur in an educational or child care setting. Professional development and licensing programs also are excluded because they do not provide direct services to children.

appropriate for certain analyses.⁶ Because some programs we identified were child care subsidy programs primarily funded by the federal CCDF, we did not consider them to be state ECE programs.⁷

To address both objectives, in July 2018 we sent a web-based survey to contacts for the ECE programs identified by our email questionnaire. We received a 100 percent response rate to this survey. We analyzed survey data for information on program characteristics, including goals and eligibility requirements.⁸ To examine characteristics that state ECE programs share with federal programs, we compared survey responses about state programs' services and the groups of children they prioritize for enrollment with responses to the same questions from a 2016 GAO survey of Head Start and CCDF officials.⁹ We also used GAO guidance on fragmentation, overlap, and duplication across programs to examine potential overlap among state ECE programs.¹⁰ Specifically, we compared ECE programs within each state to examine whether two or more programs prioritized the same groups or offered the same services. For information on how states fund their programs, including programs administering CCDF subsidies, we also reviewed survey responses on program funding sources, state fiscal year 2018 funding amounts, and the benefits and challenges of using multiple funding sources. We also reviewed relevant literature and interviewed officials at HHS and

⁶ See appendix I for more information on our methodology. Appendix II lists the state ECE programs we identified.

⁷ The CCDF is a federal funding source provided to states through a block grant and used to fund programs that provide child care subsidies to low-income parents. A portion of the CCDF funds are allocated to states without them needing to contribute any state funding; but, if a state chooses to receive its full federal CCDF allocation, it must first spend a designated amount of its own state funds.

⁸ We did not conduct a separate legal review to identify and analyze relevant state programs or verify the accuracy of the information program officials provided to us.

⁹ See GAO, *Early Learning and Child Care: Agencies Have Helped Address Fragmentation and Overlap through Improved Coordination*, [GAO-17-463](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 13, 2017) for information on the previous survey and analysis of federal ECE programs.

¹⁰ GAO, *Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication: An Evaluation and Management Guide*, [GAO-15-49SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: April 14, 2015).

Education, as well as selected state program officials.¹¹ For more information on our methodology, see appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2017 to May 2019 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

ECE Programs

The CCDF is a key federal funding source provided to states through a block grant and used to fund programs that provide child care subsidies to low-income parents.¹² CCDF has the dual purposes of promoting children's healthy development and school success and supporting parents who are working or participating in training or education activities.¹³ In fiscal year 2018, total federal appropriations for CCDF were \$8.1 billion (see table 1). A portion of the CCDF funds are allocated to states without them needing to contribute any state funding; but, if a state chooses to receive its full federal CCDF allocation, it must first spend a designated amount of its own state funds. Within the parameters of federal statute and regulations, states generally determine their own policies for CCDF funds, including eligibility requirements and subsidy

¹¹ We contacted selected state program officials to clarify their survey responses or obtain illustrative examples.

¹² CCDF serves eligible children under age 13. 42 U.S.C. § 9858n(4)(A). However, in fiscal year 2017, the majority of children served were younger than 5 years old. CCDF is comprised of discretionary funding authorized by the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, as amended, and mandatory and matching funding authorized under section 418 of the Social Security Act. CCDF discretionary funding does not require a state contribution. Moreover, a portion of the mandatory funding is guaranteed to states, without states having to match the funds with state child care spending. To be eligible for its share of the remaining mandatory funds (matching funds), a state must first spend a designated amount of its own state funds. 42 U.S.C. § 618(a)(2).

¹³ States generally provide subgrants to counties or other local entities for distribution to parents.

amounts.¹⁴ Further, states are not required to serve all eligible families who apply for CCDF-funded subsidies. Given this flexibility, families with similar circumstances may be able to receive CCDF-funded subsidies in some states but not others. All 51 states have a child care subsidy program primarily funded by CCDF, which we call “CCDF” for the purposes of this report. States may also offer additional child care programs that use other funding sources, which we call “child care” programs.

Table 1: Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and Head Start Federal Appropriations for Fiscal Years 2017-2019

Dollars in billions

Fiscal year	CCDF appropriations	Head Start appropriations
2017	\$5.8	\$9.2
2018	\$8.1	\$9.8
2019	\$8.2	\$10.1

Source: Health and Human Services 2020 budget information | GAO-19-375.

The federal government’s largest investment in ECE programs is Head Start. Head Start is comprised of two programs: Head Start, which provides early care and education to 3- and 4-year-olds, and Early Head Start, which serves pregnant women and children from birth up to age 3. In fiscal year 2018, total federal funding for Head Start was \$9.8 billion. Unlike CCDF, Head Start provides federal grants directly to community-based (local) public and private nonprofit and for-profit service providers who promote school readiness by delivering education, nutrition, health, and other social services primarily to children in poverty. Within the parameters of federal guidance and regulations, flexibility in local program design and operation is encouraged, and there is wide variation across the country in local program costs and how Head Start services are delivered. Like CCDF, Head Start does not serve all eligible children. Some state programs provide supplemental Head Start funding to expand

¹⁴ See, for example, 45 C.F.R. § 98.20(b). CCDF regulations generally require eligible children to be under 13 years of age and prescribe income limitations that children’s families must meet. 45 C.F.R. § 98.20(a). In addition, states are required to give priority for child care services funded by CCDF to children of families with very low incomes, children with special needs, and children experiencing homelessness. 45 C.F.R. § 98.46(a).

services and/or the number of children enrolled.¹⁵ We call these programs “supplemental Head Start” programs for purposes of this report.

Program Fragmentation and Overlap

Fragmentation refers to those circumstances in which more than one federal agency (or more than one organization within an agency) is involved in the same broad area of national need and opportunities exist to improve service delivery. Overlap occurs when multiple agencies or programs have similar goals, engage in similar activities or strategies to achieve their goals, or target similar beneficiaries.¹⁶ As we have previously reported, fragmentation and overlap can exist across many areas of government activity.¹⁷ Reducing, eliminating, or better managing fragmentation and overlap can help agencies provide more efficient and effective services.¹⁸ In some cases, however, it may be appropriate or beneficial for multiple agencies or entities to be involved in the same programmatic or policy area, due to the complex nature or the magnitude of federal and state efforts or level of unmet need.

We previously reported that the federal ECE investment is fragmented in that it is administered through multiple federal agencies.¹⁹ We also reported on the potential for overlap among the array of federal ECE

¹⁵ W. Steven Barnett and Allison H. Friedman-Krauss, *State(s) of Head Start*, (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2016). CCDF regulations generally require eligible children to be under 13 years of age and prescribe income limitations that children’s families must meet. 45 C.F.R. § 98.20(a). In addition, states are required to give priority for child care services funded by CCDF to children of families with very low incomes, children with special needs, and children experiencing homelessness. 45 C.F.R. § 98.46(a).

¹⁶ [GAO-15-49SP](#).

¹⁷ GAO has conducted a review of opportunities to reduce fragmentation, overlap, and duplication every year since 2011. For example see GAO, *2018 Annual Report: Additional Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits*, [GAO-18-371SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 26, 2018) and *Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue*, [GAO-11-318SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1, 2011).

¹⁸ GAO, *Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Potential Duplication in Federal Teacher Quality and Employment and Training Programs*, [GAO-11-509T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 6, 2011).

¹⁹ See [GAO-17-463](#) and GAO, *2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue* [GAO-12-342SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012), 194.

programs, as some programs target similar beneficiaries and others engage in similar activities. HHS and Education stated that the overlap is purposeful and necessary to meet the needs of children and parents. However, we also found that there still may be eligible children who do not receive services.

Program Officials Identified 86 State ECE Programs, Mostly Preschool, That May Share Characteristics or Overlap with Other ECE Programs to Expand Access

Most State ECE Programs are Preschool Programs

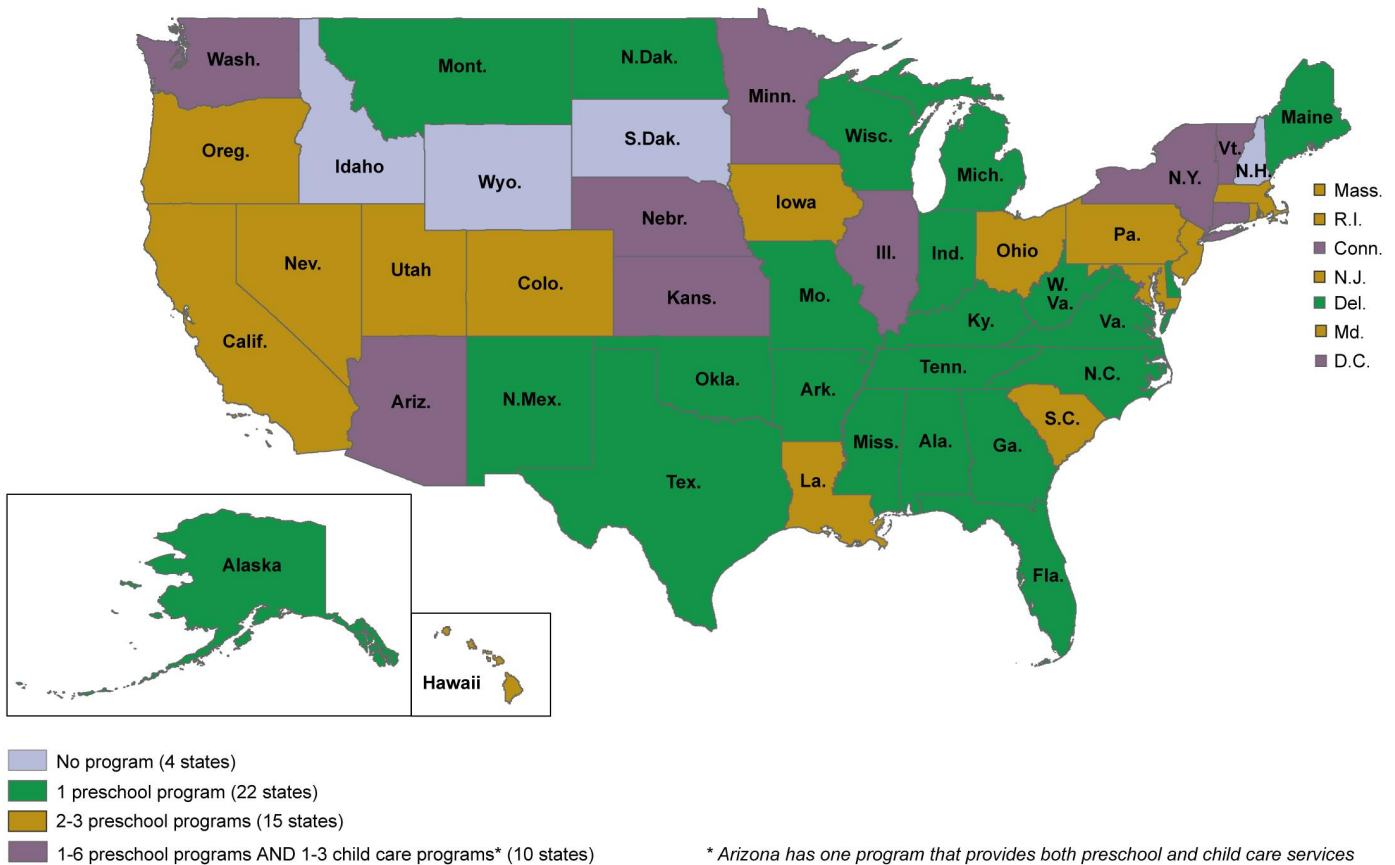
Program officials identified 86 state ECE programs in their responses to our survey.

- The majority of the programs officials identified (73) were preschool programs serving 3- to 5-year-olds, including five supplemental Head Start programs. Forty-seven states had at least one preschool program and officials from four states—Idaho, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming—reported that they had no state preschool program (fig. 1).
- Ten states also administered 13 child care programs, including two that provided both child care and preschool services, according to our survey results.

Additionally, all 51 states reported that they administered a program that used federal CCDF funds to provide child care subsidies.²⁰ See appendix III for details on the characteristics of these programs.

²⁰ In this report, we do not consider these subsidy programs to be state ECE programs. Therefore, we exclude them from the analysis of state ECE program characteristics.

Figure 1: Number and Type of State Early Care and Education Programs, 2018



Sources: GAO survey of state program officials. MapInfo (map). | GAO-19-375

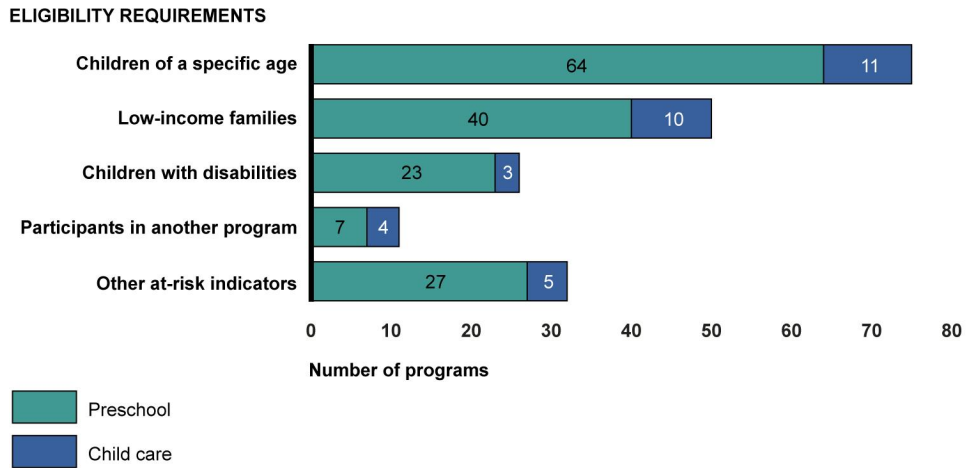
Note: Preschool programs served 3- to 5-year-olds and included state programs that supplemented Head Start. Child care programs served 0- to 2-year-olds and included two programs that also provided preschool services. Each state also had a child care subsidy program funded primarily by the federal Child Care and Development Fund.

Most State ECE Programs Serve At-Risk Children, Generally Aiming to Increase School Readiness

The majority of state ECE programs, as reported by program officials, sought to serve vulnerable children, either through eligibility requirements or by prioritizing specific at-risk groups of children for enrollment. Indicators of risk could include having a low family income, participating in another program for disadvantaged children (such as foster care or the school lunch program), or being from a family that is migrant or experiencing homelessness, among others. For example, 50 state ECE

programs required children to be from low-income families in order to be eligible, according to our survey results (fig. 2).

Figure 2: State Early Care and Education Programs' Eligibility Requirements, 2018

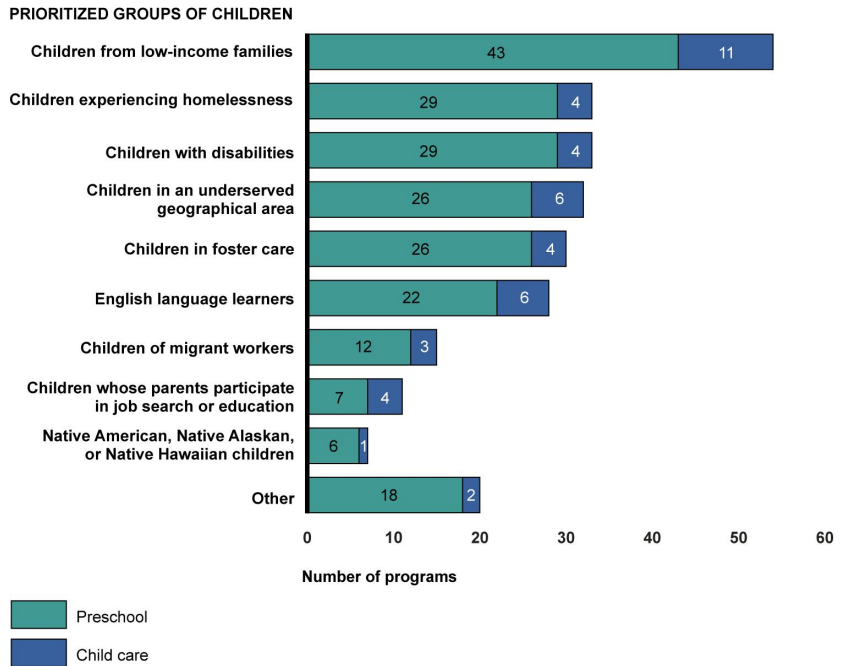


Source: GAO survey of state program officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: Officials from eight state programs did not answer this question in our survey, including five that indicated that local programs or providers had sole responsibility for determining program eligibility and another two that reported that the program did not have any eligibility requirements. Preschool programs served 3- to 5-year-olds and included state programs that supplemented Head Start. Child care programs served 0- to 2-year-olds and included two programs that also provided preschool services. This figure excludes child care subsidy programs funded primarily by the federal Child Care and Development Fund. Other at-risk indicators listed by program officials included homelessness, being in the foster system, and being the child of a teen parent, among others.

Additionally, officials reported that most programs prioritized specific groups of at-risk children for enrollment, such as children in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or learning English (fig. 3). For example, one program assigned points to eligible children based on risk factors associated with school performance, such as having an incarcerated parent or living in a home affected by substance abuse. Children with more points, who experienced more risk factors, were prioritized for enrollment over other eligible children, according to survey responses from a program official.

Figure 3: Groups of Children Prioritized for Enrollment by State Early Care and Education Programs, 2018

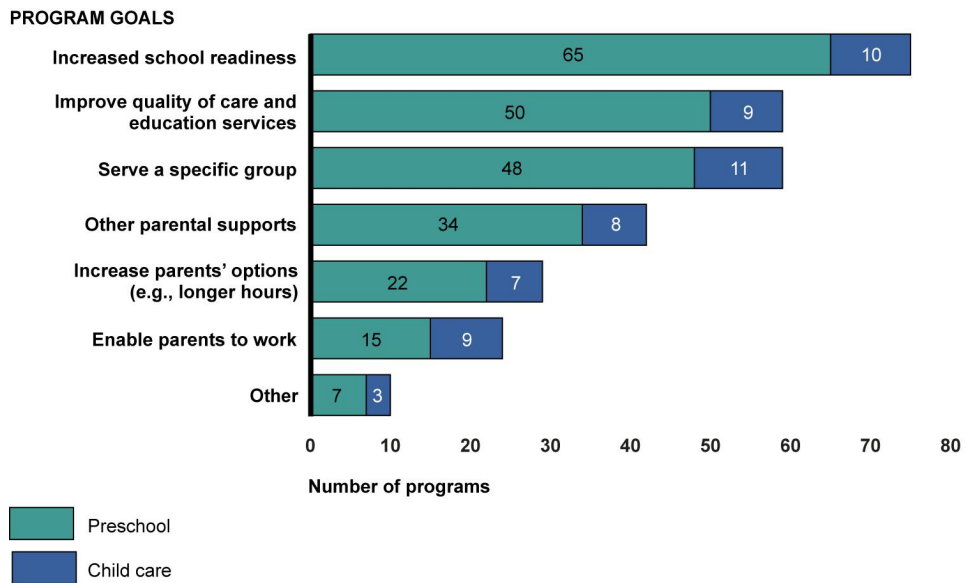


Source: GAO survey of state program officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: Officials from 20 state programs did not answer this question in our survey, including 10 that indicated that local programs or providers had sole responsibility for determining which populations to prioritize and another six that reported that the program did not prioritize any particular groups of children. Preschool programs served 3- to 5-year-olds and included state programs that supplemented Head Start. Child care programs served 0- to 2-year-olds and included two programs that also provided preschool services. This figure excludes child care subsidy programs funded primarily by the federal Child Care and Development Fund. Other risk factors identified in our survey included having a teen, deployed, incarcerated, or illiterate parent, domestic violence or involvement of Child Protective Services, and substance abuse, among others.

In addition to serving specific groups of children, program officials reported that more than half of the state ECE programs aimed to increase children’s readiness for school and improve the quality of early childhood care, among other goals (fig. 4).

Figure 4: State Early Care and Education Programs' Goals, 2018



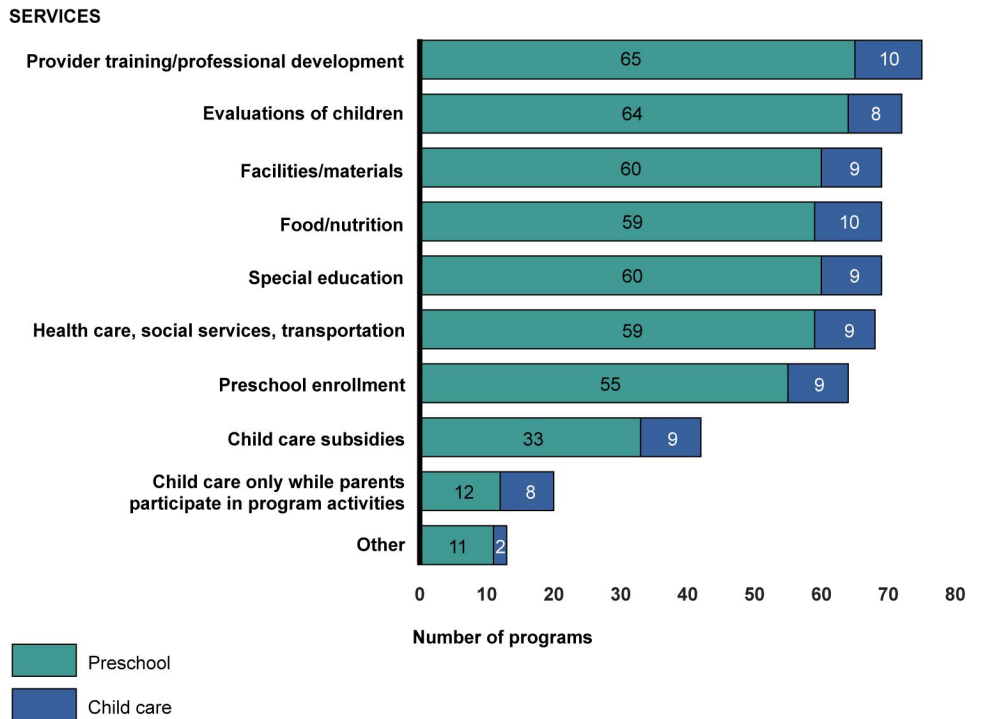
Source: GAO survey of state program officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: Officials from five state programs did not answer this question in our survey, including three that indicated that local programs or providers had sole responsibility for determining program goals and one that reported that the program did not have any documented goals. Preschool programs served 3- to 5-year-olds and included state programs that supplemented Head Start. Child care programs served 0- to 2-year-olds and included two programs that also provided preschool services. This figure excludes child care subsidy programs funded primarily by the federal Child Care and Development Fund.

Program officials reported that most state ECE programs offered a range of services to children and care providers (fig. 5).²¹ For example, training or professional development for care providers, medical or educational evaluations of children, and food and nutrition such as lunch or milk were among the most commonly reported services.

²¹ Some programs specified allowable services and allowed grantees to choose which services to offer. This list of services offered includes both allowed and required services.

Figure 5: State Early Care and Education Programs' Services, 2018



Source: GAO survey of state program officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: Officials from six state programs did not answer this question in our survey, including three that indicated that local programs or providers had sole responsibility for determining program services and another two that reported that the program did not have any requirements for program services. Preschool programs served 3- to 5-year-olds and included state programs that supplemented Head Start. Child care programs served 0- to 2-year-olds and included two programs that also provided preschool services. This figure excludes child care subsidy programs funded primarily by the federal Child Care and Development Fund. Some programs allowed but did not require grantees or care providers to offer certain services; thus, some services included in this figure may not have been available to all program participants.

Some State ECE Programs Share Characteristics with Federal ECE Programs or Overlap with Other State ECE Programs to Expand Access or Address Specific Needs

Shared Characteristics between State ECE Programs and Head Start or CCDF

When we compared the state ECE programs identified in our survey with the federal ECE programs we analyzed in prior work, we found that some state ECE programs shared characteristics with Head Start or CCDF.²² Specifically, 69 state preschool programs offered at least one of the same services as Head Start or prioritized at least one of the same groups of children for enrollment. Four programs matched all of Head Start's prioritized groups of children and program services that we measured (see table 2). We also compared the 13 state child care programs with CCDF.²³ All 13 child care programs reported sharing at least one characteristic with CCDF, but none shared all of them.

²² To examine characteristics that state ECE programs share with federal programs, we compared survey responses about state programs' services and groups of children they prioritize for enrollment with responses to the same questions from a 2016 GAO survey of Head Start and CCDF officials. See [GAO-17-463](#).

²³ As stated previously, all states administer a child care subsidy program funded by the federal CCDF.

Table 2: Number of State Early Care and Education Programs That Prioritized the Same Groups of Children or Offered the Same Services as Head Start or the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), 2018

Characteristic of CCDF and/or Head Start	Number of state preschool programs sharing characteristic with Head Start	Number of state child care programs sharing characteristic with CCDF
Groups of children prioritized: Number of state ECE programs responding to questions about prioritized groups of children	52	13
Groups of children prioritized: Children from low-income families	43	11
Groups of children prioritized: Children with disabilities	29	4 ^a
Groups of children prioritized: Children experiencing homelessness	29	4
Groups of children prioritized: Native American children	6	1
Groups of children prioritized: Children in foster care	26	^b
Groups of children prioritized: Children in migrant families	12	^b
Groups of children prioritized: All groups of children	5	0
Program services offered: Number of state ECE programs responding to questions about services	66	13
Program services offered: Slots in preschool classrooms	55	9
Program services offered: Child care subsidies	^b	9
Program services offered: Facilities or materials	60	9
Program services offered: Provider training	65	10
Program services offered: Evaluations of children for medical or educational purposes	64	8
Program services offered: Health care, social services, or transportation	59	^b
Program services offered: All services	50	6
All prioritized groups and program services	4	0

Source: GAO survey of state program officials and [GAO-17-463](#). | GAO-19-375

Note: Preschool programs served 3- to 5-year-olds and included state programs that supplemented Head Start. Child care programs served 0- to 2-year-olds and included two programs that also provided preschool services. Some program officials who did not respond to these survey questions indicated that these decisions were made by local providers. Some programs allowed but did not

require grantees or care providers to offer certain services; thus, some services included in this table may not have been available to all program participants. To examine characteristics that state ECE programs shared with federal ECE programs, we compared our survey responses about state programs' services and groups of children they prioritized for enrollment with federal ECE program officials' responses to the same questions from a 2016 GAO survey. See [GAO-17-463](#).

^aAccording to HHS, CCDF programs are required to prioritize children with special needs, which may include children with disabilities, and each state defines children with special needs in its CCDF plan.

^bFederal program did not have this characteristic.

Sharing characteristics with Head Start or CCDF may have had benefits for low-income families and children in states with such programs. Benefits may have included covering additional eligible beneficiaries, filling gaps in services provided, or complementing federal programs. For example, some program officials reported that their state ECE programs mirrored Head Start's eligibility rules so that they could extend access to children who were eligible for Head Start but not enrolled. Research shows that neither Head Start nor CCDF serve all eligible children nationwide: the Congressional Research Service estimated that around 16 percent of eligible children received CCDF subsidies in 2015,²⁴ and another report estimated that fewer than 40 percent of children eligible for Head Start were enrolled during the 2014-2015 program year.²⁵ Some state ECE programs may also have complemented federal programs, such as Head Start, by addressing specific needs. For example, program officials reported that preschool programs in 19 states shared some characteristics with Head Start, but offered services to children whose families earned too much to qualify for Head Start. Additionally, survey responses from preschool and supplemental Head Start programs in several states indicated that they served the same children as Head Start but funded additional hours of care per day or days per year.

Potential Overlap among ECE Programs within States

Within states, some ECE programs potentially overlapped because they served children of the same age range and offered similar services or prioritized similar groups of children. According to our survey results, 11 states had at least two state ECE programs that prioritized the same group of children for inclusion, and 16 states had at least two state ECE

²⁴ The Congressional Research Service found that 1.4 million children received child care subsidies out of the 8.5 million children estimated to be eligible in 2015 under state CCDF rules. See Congressional Research Service, *U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means 2018 Green Book*, (Washington, D.C.: November 2018).

²⁵ The National Institute for Early Education Research found that less than 40 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in poverty (a proxy for Head Start eligibility) were enrolled in Head Start. See Barnett and Friedman-Krauss, *State(s) of Head Start*.

programs that provided a similar service (see table 3). Three states had at least two ECE programs that prioritized all the same groups of children and offered all the same services, according to survey responses from program officials.

Table 3: States with At Least Two Early Care and Education Programs that Prioritized the Same Groups of Children or Offered the Same Services, 2018

n/a	State																			
Characteristic	CA	CO	CT	HI	IA	KS	LA	MD	MA	MN	NV	NJ	OH	OR	PA	RI	SC	UT	VT	WA
Two or more programs prioritizing the same group of children	no programs	one program	at least two programs	at least two programs	one program	one program	at least two programs	one program	one program	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	one program	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	no programs
Two or more programs offering the same service	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	at least two programs	one program	one program	at least two programs	one program	at least two programs	one program
Two or more programs with ALL the same groups of children AND services	no programs	no programs	at least two programs	no programs	no programs	one program	at least two programs	no programs	no programs	one program	no programs	at least two programs	no programs	one program	one program	no programs	one program	no programs	no programs	no programs

Legend:

- = At least two programs in the state that served the same age of children shared this characteristic.
- = There are no programs in the state serving the same age of children that share this characteristic.
- ☐ = One program in the state had this characteristic, and data were not available for another program(s).

Source: GAO survey of state program officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: In each state, we compared preschool programs (serving 3- to 5-year-olds) to other preschool programs and compared child care programs (serving 0- to 2-year-olds) to other child care programs, excluding programs funded primarily by the federal Child Care and Development Fund. Some program officials that did not respond to these survey questions indicated that these decisions were made by local providers rather than at the state level or that the program did not have a policy of prioritizing certain groups of children or specifying allowed services.

^aIn South Carolina, two programs prioritized all the same groups of children, but data on services offered were not available for one of the programs. A different set of programs shared all the same services.

However, there were a few factors that may limit the extent to which these programs overlapped:

- Some state ECE programs' policies allowed the same services but did not require them, according to program officials' survey responses. If the optional services were not offered, these programs would not have overlapped programs that were required to offer the services. For example, 48 preschool programs were required to provide training for care providers and another 17 were allowed to provide training. These programs would not have overlapped on this characteristic if the 17 programs did not actually provide training.
- According to survey responses, some state ECE programs allowed local program officials or caregivers to make some policy decisions, leading to variation within these states and reducing the potential for overlap. For example, one state program allocated funding to school districts, allowing them to decide who was eligible for the program and which services were permitted. Different school districts may have made choices that reduced or increased their overlap with other programs.
- Within the broad categories of state ECE programs, there may have been additional variation in program characteristics that our survey did not capture. For example, one state reported that it had a preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds and a transitional kindergarten program for 5-year-olds. Although for the purposes of this report we categorized both programs as preschool programs because they served 3- to 5-year-olds, this would not constitute overlap because the programs served children of different ages.

Like state ECE programs that shared characteristics with Head Start and CCDF, overlapping state programs may have extended access to additional children, complemented other programs, or filled gaps in services. Further, overlap may have been purposeful and necessary to help meet the needs of children and parents.

Program Officials Reported Using Multiple Funding Sources to Support ECE Programs, Which Presented Benefits and Challenges

Most State Funds Were Spent on Preschool and CCDF and Most State ECE Programs Used Multiple Funding Sources

Most state funds spent on ECE programs were spent on preschool and matching contributions to CCDF, according to our survey results.²⁶ In 2018, program officials reported spending \$9.44 billion on 111 ECE programs, including CCDF.²⁷ Of this amount, almost two-thirds (62 percent) was spent on preschool programs and about one-third (35 percent) was spent on matching contributions to CCDF.²⁸ Table 4 shows the amount of state spending ECE program officials reported by program type.

²⁶ All states administer a child care subsidy program funded primarily by CCDF. To receive its full federal allocation of CCDF funds, a state must spend a designated amount of its own state funds. Four states—Idaho, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming—did not have a preschool program.

²⁷ The number of programs reporting funding information is less than 137 because not all surveyed program officials provided funding information, and some did not report information for 2018. We did not independently verify the reported funding numbers.

²⁸ Because CCDF allows states to count state preschool funds as part of states' mandatory CCDF matching funds contribution, state CCDF spending may include a double count of state spending on preschool. Additionally, because officials from 26 programs did not report funding amounts, the percent of total spending allocated to preschool programs and CCDF would likely be different if all 137 programs were included.

Table 4: State Funding Reported by Officials from State Early Care and Education Programs and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), 2018

Dollar amounts in billions

Program type	Programs reporting	2018 state funds
Preschool	54	\$5.89
Supplemental Head Start	5	0.10
Child Care	9	0.09
Other ^a	2	0.06
CCDF matching contribution	41	3.31
Total	111	\$9.44

Source: GAO survey of state program and Child Care and Development Fund officials | GAO-19-375

Note: We asked program officials to provide data for their state’s fiscal year 2018. The number of programs reporting funding information is less than 137 because some state program and CCDF officials did not report funding information for 2018. According to HHS, all states provided a CCDF matching contribution. CCDF allows states to count state preschool funds as part of states’ mandatory matching funds; thus states’ CCDF spending may include a double count of state spending on preschool. We did not independently verify the reported funding numbers.

^a“Other” refers to state programs that fund both child care and preschool providers and/or local programs.

We previously reported that the federal investment in ECE programs is fragmented because it is administered through multiple agencies.²⁹ One result of fragmented funding streams is that no one funding stream covers the full cost of the features that are present in high-quality, full-workday, full-year programs.³⁰ As a result, HHS and Education encourage states and local providers to develop financial strategies that maximize resources and take advantage of available funding streams to broaden the reach and impact of quality ECE programs.

Our survey found that the majority of state ECE programs used multiple funding sources. Although officials from 31 of 86 state ECE programs in our survey reported being funded solely by state funds, 55 reported using

²⁹ See [GAO-17-463](#) and [GAO-12-342SP](#).

³⁰ Margie Wallen and Angela Hubbard, *Blending and Braiding Early Childhood Program Funding Streams Toolkit: Enhancing Financing for High-Quality Early Learning Programs*, version 2, (Chicago, IL: Ounce of Prevention Fund, November 2013).

at least one funding source in addition to state funds.³¹ Additionally, more than half of these 55 state ECE program officials (31) reported using at least two additional funding sources in 2018 (see table 5). For example, a preschool program official reported the program used state aid dollars from the state school funding formula, federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act funds, federal Head Start and CCDF funds, and local funds when applicable. Another child care/preschool program official noted their program was primarily funded through a public/private partnership but also required a 100 percent match from local grantees.

Table 5: Funding Sources Reported by State Early Care and Education (ECE) Programs in 2018

Reported state ECE program funding sources in 2018	Number of programs
State funds only	31
More than one funding source	55
More than one funding source: State and one additional funding source	24
More than one funding source: State and two or more funding sources	31
Total number of reporting programs	86

Source: GAO survey of state program officials | GAO-19-375

Using Multiple Funding Sources Presented Benefits and Challenges for ECE Programs and Local Providers

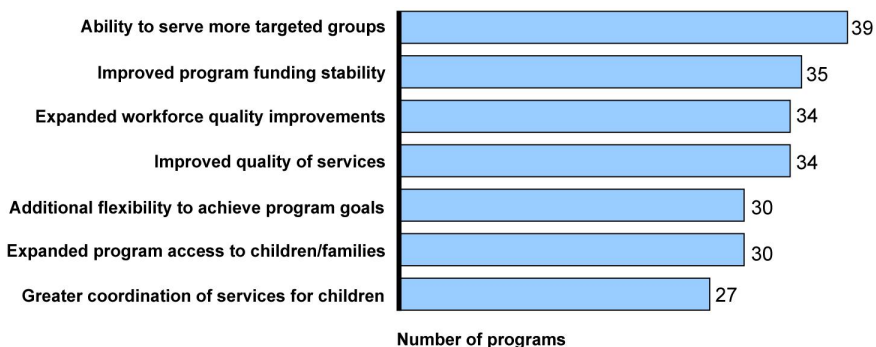
In response to our survey, state ECE program officials and CCDF officials reported a number of benefits from using multiple funding sources beyond increased funding, including an increased ability to serve more families from targeted populations (see fig. 6).³² For example, a preschool program official reported that using multiple funding sources allowed the

³¹ In the small number of cases in which the information program officials initially reported was not clear, we reviewed program documentation to clarify survey responses and ensure the accuracy of funding source information. For example, in their survey responses, program officials in Kansas and Kentucky reported using funds from the Master Tobacco Settlement, and a Louisiana program official reported using funds collected from coastal oil drilling royalties. For the purposes of our report, we reported the tobacco and coastal drillings funds as state funds.

³² We included the responses of CCDF officials in our discussion of the benefits and challenges of using multiple funding sources because CCDF is comprised of federal funds and the state's matching contribution.

state to serve all of the 4-year-olds in the state’s highest need communities. Another preschool program official reported that the program planned to use multiple funding sources to maintain enrollments once the program’s Preschool Development Grant ended.³³ Thus, integrating state funds with federal and local funds may have broadened the effect and reach of quality services provided to children and families.³⁴

Figure 6: Benefits of Using Multiple Funding Sources Reported by Officials from State Early Care and Education Programs and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)



Source: GAO survey of state program and Child Care and Development Fund officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: In our survey, 54 of the 106 programs that reported using multiple funding sources answered questions about the benefits and challenges of using multiple funding sources. Of those, 46 programs reported at least one benefit.

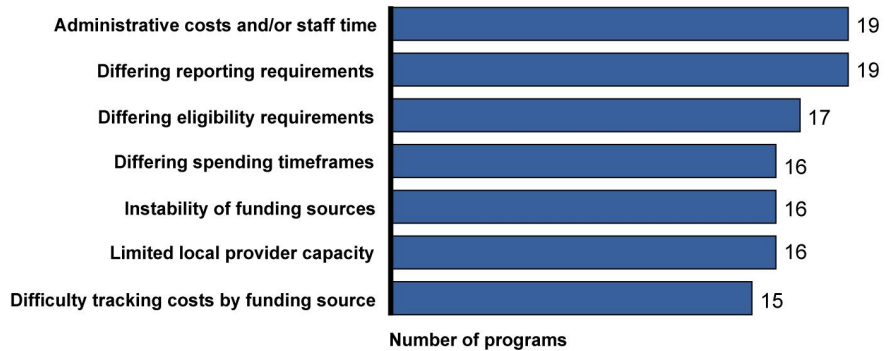
Along with providing benefits, the use of multiple funding sources can also produce challenges for state ECE programs and CCDF (see fig. 7). In responding to our survey, program officials who reported using multiple funding sources indicated that variation in the rules governing ECE funding sources, including different eligibility and reporting requirements, can create administrative burdens for officials integrating the funds to support their programs. Funding sources tend to operate independently of one another, and each funding source comes with its own set of

³³ The federal Preschool Development Grants program, jointly administered by HHS and Education, has supported expanding access to high-quality preschool for low- and moderate-income 4-year-olds since 2014. In September 2018 HHS announced a new initiative under this grant authority: Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five.

³⁴ See GAO, *Child Care: Information on Integrating Early Care and Education Funding*, [GAO-16-775R](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sep. 14, 2016). We previously reported that state officials and selected local providers of ECE programs identified a number of benefits and challenges associated with integrating funding from CCDF, Head Start, and state preschool programs. Those providers noted benefits and challenges similar to those reported in our survey.

regulations, requirements, and allowed activities and uses of funds. Thus, managing differing and possibly conflicting funding sources can challenge program officials. A CCDF official reported that the state’s eligibility standards had to satisfy the requirements of all the funding sources used, and that the state did this in part by conducting an annual audit to ensure the state had met all the requirements for the various funding sources.

Figure 7: Challenges of Using Multiple Funding Sources Reported by Officials from State Early Care and Education Programs and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

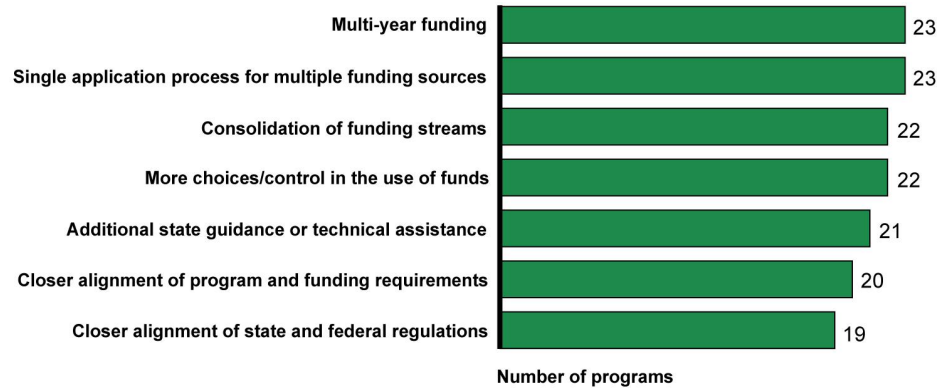


Source: GAO survey of state program and Child Care and Development Fund officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: In our survey, 54 of the 106 programs that reported using multiple funding sources answered questions about the benefits and challenges of using multiple funding sources. Of those, 32 programs reported at least one challenge.

Program officials we surveyed reported a number of solutions that might help mitigate the challenges they cited, including additional training and more funding source flexibility (see fig. 8). For example, a supplemental Head Start program official reported that additional and ongoing training/technical assistance on cost allocation and funding streams could be beneficial to implementing a mixed delivery system needed to align Head Start, school based programming, and state child care licensing requirements. A CCDF official reported that increased flexibility around state policy choices in the CCDF grant would reduce states’ administrative burden.

Figure 8: Solutions to Mitigate the Challenges of Using Multiple Funding Sources Reported by Officials from State Early Care and Education Programs and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)



Source: GAO survey of state program and Child Care and Development Fund officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: In our survey, 54 of the 106 programs that reported using multiple funding sources answered questions about the benefits and challenges of using multiple funding sources. Of those, 36 programs reported at least one solution to mitigate the challenges.

To cover the costs of providing high quality ECE programs, many local providers also relied on multiple funding sources. Officials from 97 of the 137 surveyed ECE programs (including CCDF) reported that local providers in their programs used multiple funding sources, and officials from 48 programs noted that those local providers may be challenged by the use of multiple funding sources. For example, a preschool program official reported that local providers faced some of the same challenges as state program providers. However, those challenges were compounded by some local providers' limited capacity. For example:

- A child care program official noted that local providers may be challenged by the time constraints and personnel needed to manage multiple funding streams.
- A preschool program official reported that differing eligibility and program requirements among funding sources may be confusing for local providers.
- A supplemental Head Start program official noted that the amount of paperwork and reporting that need to be completed at different times of the year to meet local, state or federal timelines may challenge local providers.
- A child care/preschool program official added that local providers may also face budgeting challenges because different funding streams fund at different amounts and for different services.

Our results are consistent with earlier findings in which selected local ECE providers detailed similar challenges they encountered when trying to combine federal funding sources in order to better leverage those funds.³⁵

Recognizing the challenges local providers face, officials in our survey reported that their states had taken steps to make provision of state ECE and CCDF services easier. For example, one state that provided supplemental Head Start/Early Head Start state funding allowed local providers to use those funds for approved innovative initiatives that enabled providers to request exemptions from some state enrollment regulations that, if not met, could have reduced the provider's state funding. The state also helped to reduce the administrative burden on local providers by cutting back required paperwork. For example, the state allowed providers to use the Head Start program plan as the application for both the state's ECE scholarship program and the state's provider quality rating system. Similarly, another state created a single provider application for all the state's ECE programs to reduce required paperwork. Another state assisted local providers and increased efficiency by aligning the state's preschool program's payment calendar with the CCDF program payment calendar.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to HHS and Education for review and comment. Education informed us that it had no comments on the report. HHS provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the report date. At that time, we will send copies to the Secretary of the Department of Education, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, and other interested parties. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>. If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7215 or larink@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page

³⁵ [GAO-16-775R](#).

of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kathryn A. Larin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "K" and a distinct "A" in the middle.

Sincerely yours,
Kathryn A. Larin
Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This report examines (1) the number and characteristics of state early care and education (ECE) programs and the extent to which they share characteristics or overlap with federal or other state programs; and (2) how states fund their ECE programs, including any related benefits and challenges reported by states. To address these objectives, we created a preliminary list of state ECE programs, surveyed program officials to confirm the accuracy of our list and to collect information about the characteristics and funding sources of each program, reviewed relevant literature, interviewed federal and state program officials and early childhood experts, and reviewed relevant federal laws and regulations.

Program Definition

For purposes of this report, we used the following criteria to identify state early childhood programs: (1) the program was created by a state entity, such as a state legislature, state agency, or state-wide council; (2) it has an explicit purpose of providing or funding early learning or child care services to children from birth to age 5 in an educational or child care setting; and (3) it expends state funds, even if it also expends other types of funds. Our criteria did not exclude programs that had a second primary purpose, such as helping parents to work. They also did not exclude programs that count their state expenditures toward a federal matching/maintenance of effort requirement, or that are funding streams rather than programs. These criteria do exclude home visit programs which do not occur in an educational or child care setting. Professional development and licensing programs also are excluded because they do not provide direct services to children. We confirmed the appropriateness of our selection criteria with officials from the Departments of Education (Education) and Health and Human Services (HHS) and representatives from organizations such as the National Institute for Early Education Research, Child Trends, and the Education Commission of the States.

Identifying Programs

To create a list of ECE programs meeting our criteria, we first compiled a preliminary list of 117 program names and contacts from published reports.¹ In March 2018 we sent an email questionnaire to child care and early learning officials for each program identified by these reports, as well as other early learning officials in each state. The questionnaire asked officials to:

- confirm the program names and contacts for the programs we identified in their state,
- confirm whether the programs in their state met all of our criteria, and
- provide names and contacts for any additional programs in their state meeting our criteria.

We received responses from program officials in all 51 states, which confirmed information for 107 programs on our list (56 state ECE programs and 51 programs administering CCDF subsidies) and identified an additional 30 state ECE programs that met our criteria.² We did not conduct a separate verification that the survey responses we received included all programs meeting our criteria in each state, but rather relied on the survey responses provided. In addition, we did not conduct a separate legal review to identify and analyze relevant programs or verify the accuracy of the information officials provided to us.

¹ See Allison H. Friedman-Krauss et al., *The State of Preschool 2017: State Preschool Yearbook*, (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2018). Our initial list included 51 programs that provide child care subsidies funded primarily by the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), obtained from Sarah Minton et al., *The CCDF Policies Database Book of Tables: Key Cross-State Variations in CCDF Policies as of October 1, 2016*, OPRE Report 2017-105, (Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017).

² Throughout this report, we refer to the District of Columbia as a state. We received information on 145 programs but determined that eight of them did not meet our criteria. As such, the total number of programs included is 137—86 state ECE programs and 51 CCDF.

Surveying for Program Characteristics and Funding Sources

To obtain information on the characteristics and funding sources of each ECE program, we surveyed officials from 86 state ECE programs and 51 programs administering CCDF subsidies in July 2018, receiving a 100 percent response rate. The survey was deployed using a self-administered, web-based questionnaire with unique usernames and passwords for each respondent.

To develop the survey, we performed a number of steps to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information collected, including an internal peer review by an independent GAO survey expert, and pre-testing of the survey instrument. Pre-tests were conducted over the phone with ECE program officials in five states to check the clarity of the question and answer options, as well as the flow and layout of the survey. The states that participated in pre-testing were selected based on variation in geography and program type (i.e., child care versus preschool). We revised the survey based on the reviews and pre-tests. We did not independently verify the legal accuracy of states' responses to the survey.

Our survey contained a range of fixed-choice and open-ended questions related to the characteristics and funding of early childhood programs. These questions were grouped into three subsections that covered (1) confirmation that the surveyed program met our criteria for an ECE program; (2) information on program characteristics; (3) program funding; and (4) programs' use of multiple funding sources, including any applicable benefits and challenges.

To achieve our 100 percent response rate, we made multiple follow-up contacts by email and telephone in August 2018 with early childhood program officials who had not yet completed the survey. While all surveyed officials affirmatively checked "completed" at the end of the Web-based survey, not all officials responded to every question or the sub-parts of every question. In a small number of cases, we reviewed program documentation to clarify survey responses but did not independently verify the legal accuracy of the information provided by the program officials.

Because this was not a sample survey, it has no sampling errors. However, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors, commonly referred to as non-sampling errors. For example, unwanted variability can result from differences in how a particular question is interpreted, the sources of information available to respondents, or how data from respondents are processed and analyzed. We took steps to minimize these factors by employing recognized survey design practices in the development of the questionnaire and in the collection, processing, and analysis of the survey data, including our reviews, pre-tests, and follow-up efforts. In addition, the web-based survey allowed early childhood program officials to enter their responses directly into an electronic instrument, which created an automatic record for each program in a data file. By using the electronic instrument, we eliminated the errors associated with a manual data entry process. Additionally, response data were analyzed using statistical software. Lastly, data processing and programming for the analysis of survey results was independently verified to avoid any processing errors and to ensure the accuracy of this work. On the basis of our application of recognized survey design practices and follow-up procedures, we determined that the data were of sufficient quality for our purposes.

Data Analysis

We categorized state ECE programs into four types:

- **preschool**, which have the words “preschool,” “pre-elementary,” “pre-kindergarten,” or “pre-k” in their names; serve only children who are 3, 4, or 5 years old; or provide a second year of kindergarten before traditional kindergarten;
- **child care**, which serve 0- to 2-year-olds and do not meet our definition of preschool programs;
- **supplemental Head Start**, which specifically supplement the federal Head Start program;
- **child care/preschool**, which offer grants to both child care and preschool providers.

Based on these definitions, we determined that 20 of the additional 30 programs we identified using our first questionnaire were preschool programs, and 10 were child care programs. We analyzed survey responses for information on program characteristics, including goals and eligibility requirements. When describing program characteristics, we

collapsed the four program types into two by combining supplemental Head Start into the preschool category and including the child care/preschool programs in the child care category. We also analyzed survey responses on program funding, including funding amounts and the benefits and challenges of using multiple funding sources.³ For this analysis, we used five program categories—the four state program categories and CCDF.

To examine characteristics that state ECE programs shared with federal ECE programs, we compared the survey responses about state programs' services and groups of children they prioritized for enrollment with Head Start and CCDF officials' responses to the same questions from a 2016 GAO survey.⁴ We also used GAO guidance on fragmentation, overlap, and duplication across programs to examine potential overlap among state ECE programs.⁵ Specifically, we compared prioritized groups and services offered among state ECE programs of the same type within each state to examine potential overlap among state ECE programs.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2017 to May 2019 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

³ The information in this report was obtained from survey responses by program officials. We did not conduct a separate legal review to identify and analyze relevant programs or verify the accuracy of the information officials provided to us.

⁴ See GAO, *Early Learning and Child Care: Agencies Have Helped Address Fragmentation and Overlap through Improved Coordination*, [GAO-17-463](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 13, 2017) for information on the previous survey and analysis of federal ECE programs.

⁵ For more information on evaluating fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, see GAO, *Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication: An Evaluation and Management Guide*, [GAO-15-49SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: April 14, 2015).

Appendix II: List of State Early Care and Education Programs

Our survey of program officials in each state identified 86 state early care and education programs, as listed in table 6.

Table 6: State Early Care and Education Programs, 2018

State	State early care and education program name	Program type
AL	First Class Pre-K Program	Preschool
AK	Alaska Pre Elementary Grants Program	Preschool
AZ	Quality First Scholarships Program	Child Care/ Preschool
AR	Arkansas Better Chance for School Success Program	Preschool
CA	California State Preschool Program	Preschool
CA	California Transitional Kindergarten Program	Preschool
CO	Colorado Preschool Program	Preschool
CO	Preschool Special Education Program	Preschool
CT	School Readiness Program	Preschool
CT	Connecticut Child Day Care Contracts Program	Child Care
CT	Smart Start Program	Preschool
DE	Early Childhood Assistance Program	Preschool
DC	Pre-Kindergarten (PK3 and PK4)	Preschool
DC	Quality Improvement Network Program	Child Care
FL	Voluntary Prekindergarten Program	Preschool
GA	Georgia's Pre-K Program	Preschool
HI	Preschool Open Doors Program	Preschool
HI	EOEL Public Pre-Kindergarten Program	Preschool
HI	Preschool Special Education Program	Preschool
IL	Preschool for All Program	Preschool
IL	Prevention Initiative Program	Child Care
IN	On My Way Pre-K Program	Preschool
IA	Shared Visions Preschool Program	Preschool
IA	Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children Program	Preschool
KS	Kansas Preschool Program	Preschool

Appendix II: List of State Early Care and Education Programs

State	State early care and education program name	Program type
KS	State Pre-Kindergarten Program	Preschool
KS	Kansas Early Childhood Block Grant Program	Child Care/ Preschool
KY	Kentucky Preschool Program	Preschool
LA	8(g) Student Enhancement Block Grant Program	Preschool
LA	Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood Program	Preschool
LA	Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development Program	Preschool
ME	Public Preschool Program	Preschool
MD	Prekindergarten Program	Preschool
MD	Head Start Program	Head Start
MA	Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments Grant Program	Preschool
MA	Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program	Preschool
MA	Head Start State Supplemental Grant Program	Head Start
MI	Great Start Readiness Program	Preschool
MN	Migrant Child Care Services Program	Child Care
MN	Voluntary Prekindergarten Program	Preschool
MN	School Readiness Program	Preschool
MN	Early Learning Scholarships Program	Preschool
MN	School Readiness Plus Program	Preschool
MN	Preschool Special Education Program	Preschool
MN	Head Start Program	Head Start
MS	Mississippi Early Learning Collaborative Program	Preschool
MO	Missouri Preschool Program	Preschool
MT	STARS Preschool Pilot Program	Preschool
NE	Early Childhood Education Grant Program	Preschool
NE	Sixpence Program	Child Care
NV	Nevada State Pre-Kindergarten Program	Preschool
NV	Nevada Ready! Pre-K Program	Preschool
NJ	New Jersey Former Abbott Preschool Program	Preschool
NJ	Former Early Childhood Program Aid Program	Preschool
NJ	Early Launch to Learning Initiative Program	Preschool
NM	New Mexico PreK Program	Preschool
NY	New York State Prekindergarten Program	Preschool
NY	Child Care Facilitated Enrollment Project Program	Child Care
NC	North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten Program	Preschool
ND	Pre-Kindergarten Program	Preschool
OH	Early Childhood Education Grant Program	Preschool
OH	Preschool Special Education Program	Preschool

Appendix II: List of State Early Care and Education Programs

State	State early care and education program name	Program type
OK	Four-Year-Old Program	Preschool
OR	Oregon Pre-Kindergarten Program	Preschool
OR	Preschool Promise Program	Preschool
PA	Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program	Head Start
PA	Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program	Preschool
RI	State Prekindergarten Program	Preschool
RI	State Supplement for Head Start Program	Head Start
SC	Education Improvement Act Child Development Program	Preschool
SC	South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program	Preschool
SC	First Steps to School Readiness Program	Preschool
TN	Voluntary Pre-K Program	Preschool
TX	Texas Prekindergarten Program	Preschool
UT	Utah School Readiness Initiative Program	Preschool
UT	Utah Preparing Students Today for a Rewarding Tomorrow Program	Preschool
VT	Strengthening Families Grant Program	Child Care
VT	Universal Prekindergarten Program	Preschool
VT	Early Care and Development Program Grants Program	Child Care
VA	Virginia Preschool Initiative Program	Preschool
WA	Seasonal Child Care Program	Child Care
WA	Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program	Preschool
WA	Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program	Child Care
WA	Children’s Administration Child Care Program	Child Care
WV	West Virginia Universal Pre-K Program	Preschool
WI	Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Program	Preschool

Source: GAO survey of state program officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: We defined preschool programs as programs with the words “preschool,” “pre-elementary,” “pre-kindergarten,” or “pre-k” in their names; programs serving only children who are 3, 4, or 5 years old; and programs that provide a second year of kindergarten before traditional kindergarten. We defined child care programs as programs that serve 0- to 2-year-olds and those that do not meet our definition of preschool programs. State Head Start programs specifically supplement the federal Head Start program. Child care/preschool programs offer grants to both child care and preschool providers. This table excludes child care subsidy programs funded primarily by the federal Child Care and Development Fund.

Appendix III: Characteristics of Child Care and Development Fund Programs in States

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have a child care subsidy program primarily funded by the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). We surveyed CCDF officials from each of the 51 states' subsidy programs listed in table 7 and obtained information about their characteristics. We did not include this information in our analysis of state early care and education programs because CCDF is primarily federally funded. Figures 9 through 12 show the number of CCDF subsidy programs with each characteristic, according to officials' responses to our survey.

Table 7: State-Administered Child Care and Development Fund Subsidy Programs, 2018

State	Program name
AL	Child Care Subsidy Program
AK	Child Care Assistance Program
AZ	Child Care Assistance Program
AR	Child Care Assistance Program
CA	California Alternative Payment Program
CO	Colorado Child Care Assistance Program
CT	Care 4 Kids Program
DE	Child Care Subsidy Program
DC	Subsidized Child Care Program
FL	School Readiness Program
GA	Childcare and Parent Services Program
HI	Child Care Connection Hawaii Program
ID	Idaho Child Care Program
IL	Child Care Assistance Program
IN	CCDF Program
IA	Child Care Assistance Program

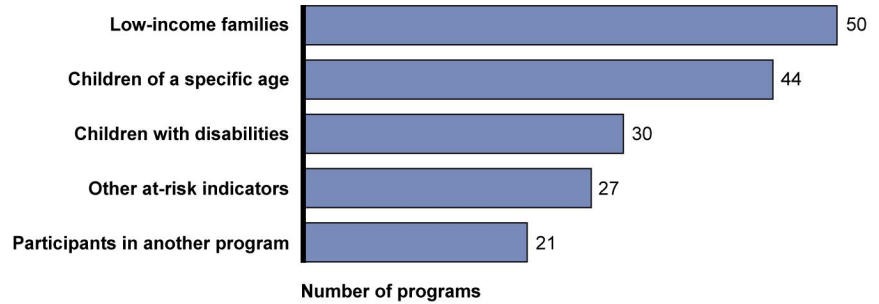
Appendix III: Characteristics of Child Care and Development Fund Programs in States

State	Program name
KS	Child Care Subsidy Program
KY	Child Care Assistance Program
LA	Child Care Assistance Program
ME	Child Care Subsidy Program
MD	Child Care Subsidy Program
MA	Early Education and Care Financial Assistance Program
MI	Child Development and Care Program
MN	Child Care Assistance Program
MS	Child Care Payment Program
MO	Child Care Subsidy Program
MT	Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program
NE	Child Care Subsidy Program
NV	Child Care and Development Program
NH	New Hampshire Child Care Scholarship Program
NJ	Child Care Subsidy Program
NM	Child Care Assistance Program
NY	Child Care Subsidy Program
NC	Subsidized Child Care Assistance Program
ND	Child Care Assistance Program
OH	Publicly Funded Child Care Program
OK	Child Care Subsidy Program
OR	Employment Related Day Care Program
PA	Child Care Works Subsidized Child Care Program
RI	Child Care Assistance Program
SC	SC Voucher Program
SD	Child Care Assistance Program
TN	Child Care Certificate Program
TX	Child Care Services Program
UT	Child Care Assistance Program
VT	Child Care Financial Assistance Program
VA	Child Care Subsidy Program
WA	Working Connections Child Care Program
WV	Child Care Program
WI	Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program
WY	Child Care Subsidy Program

Source: GAO survey of Child Care and Development Fund state subsidy program officials. | GAO-19-375

Figure 9: Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Subsidy Programs' Reported Eligibility Requirements, 2018

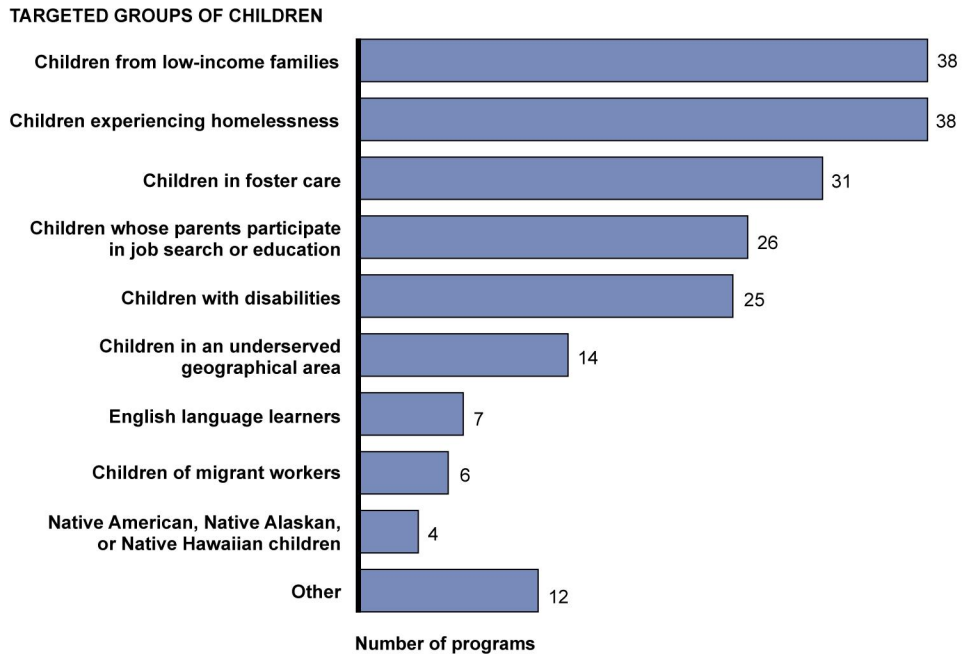
ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS



Source: GAO survey of Child Care and Development Fund state subsidy program officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: Other at-risk indicators listed by program officials included homelessness, being in the foster care system, and being the child of a teen parent, among others. According to HHS, all CCDF programs are required to have eligibility requirements related to income and age, although some CCDF officials did not report them in our survey. We did not assess states' compliance with CCDF requirements.

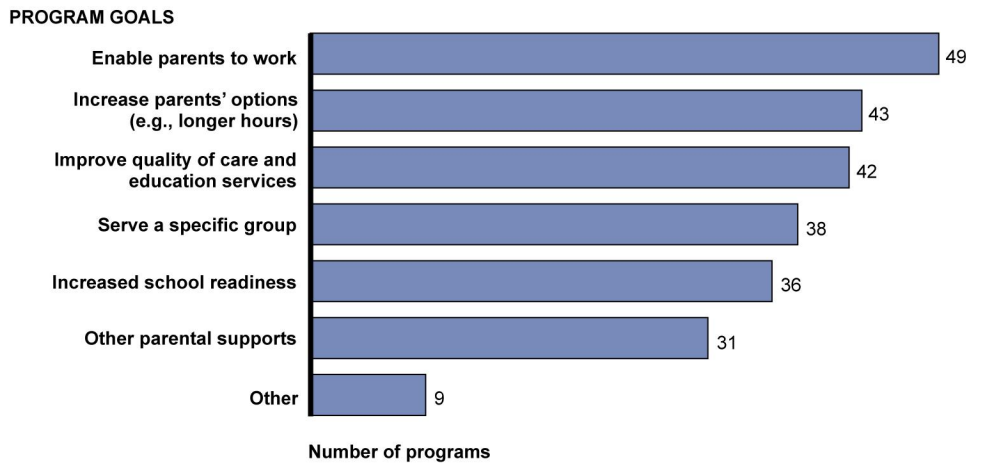
Figure 10: Groups of Children Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Subsidy Programs Reported Prioritizing for Enrollment, 2018



Source: GAO survey of Child Care and Development Fund state subsidy program officials. | GAO-19-375

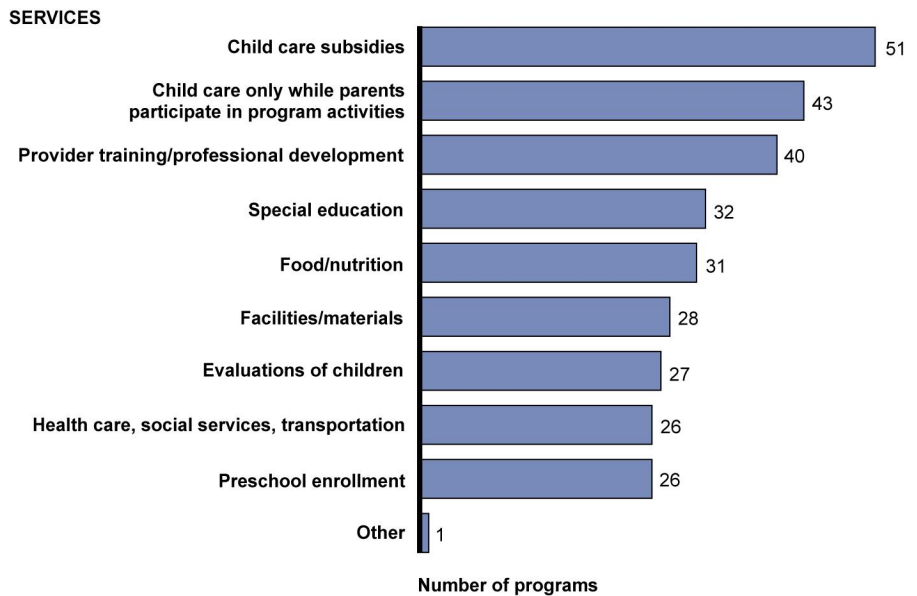
Note: According to HHS, all CCDF programs are required to prioritize children from very low-income families and children experiencing homelessness, although not all CCDF officials reported doing so. Officials from 10 of 51 subsidy programs did not answer this question in our survey, reporting that their programs did not prioritize any particular groups of children. We did not assess states' compliance with CCDF requirements. Other risk factors identified in our survey included participation in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, having a teen parent, domestic violence or involvement of Child Protective Services, and substance abuse, among others.

Figure 11: Child Care and Development Fund Subsidy Programs' Reported Goals, 2018



Source: GAO survey of Child Care and Development Fund state subsidy program officials. | GAO-19-375

Figure 12: Child Care and Development Fund Subsidy Programs' Reported Services, 2018



Source: GAO survey of Child Care and Development Fund state subsidy program officials. | GAO-19-375

Note: Some programs allow but do not require grantees or care providers to offer certain services; thus, some services included in this graph may not be available to all program participants.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Kathryn Larin, (202) 512-7215 or larink@gao.gov.

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Jamila Jones Kennedy (Assistant Director), Brittni Milam (Analyst-in-Charge), Caitlin Cusati, Cheryl Jones, and Kirsten Lauber made key contributions to this report. Also contributing were Luqman Abdullah, Holly Dye, Dennis Fauber, Hedieh Fusfield, Janet Mascia, Sheila R. McCoy, Mimi Nguyen, Steven Putansu, James Rebbe, Katya Rodriguez, Ronni Schwartz, Almeta Spencer, and Sarah Veale.

Appendix V: Accessible Data

Data Tables

Accessible Data for Figure 2: State Early Care and Education Programs' Eligibility Requirements, 2018

Eligibility requirements	Preschool	Child care
Children of a specific age	64	11
Low-income families	40	10
Children with disabilities	23	3
Participants in another program	7	4
Other at-risk indicators	27	5

Source: GAO survey of state program officials. | GAO-19-375

Accessible Data for Figure 3: Groups of Children Prioritized for Enrollment by State Early Care and Education Programs, 2018

Prioritized groups of children	Preschool	Child care
Children from low-income families	43	11
Children experiencing homelessness	29	4
Children with disabilities	29	4
Children in an underserved area	26	6
Children in foster care	26	4
English language learners	22	6
Children of migrant workers	12	3
Children whose parents participate in job search or education	7	4
Native American, Native Alaskan, or Native Hawaiian children	6	1
Other	18	2

Source: GAO survey of state program officials. | GAO-19-375

Accessible Data for Figure 4: State Early Care and Education Programs' Goals, 2018

Program goals	Preschool	Child care
Increased school readiness	65	10

Program goals	Preschool	Child care
Improve quality of care and education services	50	9
Serve a specific group	48	11
Other parental supports	34	8
Increase parents' options (e.g., longer hours)	22	7
Enable parents to work	15	9
Other	7	3

Source: GAO survey of state program officials. | GAO-19-375

Accessible Data for Figure 5: State Early Care and Education Programs' Services, 2018

Services	Preschool	Child care
Provider training/professional development	65	10
Evaluations of children	64	8
Facilities/materials	60	9
Food/nutrition	59	10
Special education	60	9
Health care, social services, transportation	59	9
Preschool enrollment	55	9
Child care subsidies	33	9
Child care only while parents participate in program activities	12	8
Other	11	2

Source: GAO survey of state program officials. | GAO-19-375

Accessible Data for Figure 6: Benefits of Using Multiple Funding Sources Reported by Officials from State Early Care and Education Programs and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

Category	Number of State Early Care and Education Programs
Ability to serve more targeted groups	39
Improved program funding stability	35
Expanded workforce quality improvements	34
Improved quality of services	34
Additional flexibility to achieve program goals	30

Category	Number of State Early Care and Education Programs
Expanded program access to children/families	30
Greater coordination of services for children	27

Source: GAO survey of state program and Child Care and Development Fund officials. | GAO-19-375

Accessible Data for Figure 7: Challenges of Using Multiple Funding Sources Reported by Officials from State Early Care and Education Programs and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

Category	Number of programs
Administrative costs and/or staff time	19
Differing reporting requirements	19
Differing eligibility requirements	17
Differing spending timeframes	16
Instability of funding sources	16
Limited local provider capacity	16
Difficulty tracking costs by funding source	15

Source: GAO survey of state program and Child Care and Development Fund officials. | GAO-19-375

Accessible Data for Figure 8: Solutions to Mitigate the Challenges of Using Multiple Funding Sources Reported by Officials from State Early Care and Education Programs and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

Category	Number of programs
Multi-year funding	23
Single application process for multiple funding sources	23
Consolidation of funding streams	22
More choices/control in the use of funds	22
Additional state guidance or technical assistance	21
Closer alignment of program and funding requirements	20
Closer alignment of state and federal regulations	19

Source: GAO survey of state program and Child Care and Development Fund officials. | GAO-19-375

Accessible Data for Figure 9: Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Subsidy Programs' Reported Eligibility Requirements, 2018

Eligibility requirements	CCDF
Low-income families	50
Children of a specific age	44
Children with disabilities	30
Other at-risk indicators	27
Participants in another program	21

Source: GAO survey of Child Care and Development Fund officials. | GAO-19-375

Accessible Data for Figure 10: Groups of Children Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Subsidy Programs Reported Prioritizing for Enrollment, 2018

Targeted groups of children	CCDF
Children from low-income families	38
Children experiencing homelessness	38
Children in foster care	31
Children whose parents participate in job search or education	26
Children with disabilities	25
Children in an underserved area	14
English language learners	7
Children of migrant workers	6
Native American, Native Alaskan, or Native Hawaiian children	4
Other	12

Source: GAO survey of Child Care and Development Fund officials. | GAO-19-375

Accessible Data for Figure 11: Child Care and Development Fund Subsidy Programs' Reported Goals, 2018

Program goals	CCDF
Enable parents to work	49
Increase parents' options (e.g., longer hours)	43
Improve quality of care and education services	42

Program goals	CCDF
Serve a specific group	48
Increased school readiness	36
Other parental supports	31
Other	9

Source: GAO survey of Child Care and Development Fund officials. | GAO-19-375

Accessible Data for Figure 12: Child Care and Development Fund Subsidy Programs' Reported Services, 2018

Services	CCDF
Child care subsidies	51
Child care only while parents participate in program activities	43
Provider training/professional development	40
Special education	32
Food/nutrition	31
Facilities/materials	28
Evaluations of children	27
Health care, social services, transportation	26
Preschool enrollment	26
Other	1

Source: GAO survey of Child Care and Development Fund officials. | GAO-19-375

Related GAO Products

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[GAO-18-371SP](#). Washington, D.C.: Apr. 26, 2018.

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[GAO-17-463](#). Washington, D.C.: July 13, 2017.

Child Care: Information on Integrating Early Care and Education Funding.
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