

Early Childhood Development in the United States

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Global Early Childhood Development (ECD) Initiative takes a holistic, two-generation approach that supports the well-being of caregivers and their young children prenatal to age three by strengthening the capacity of public systems and community stakeholders in the United States. By supporting the caregivers who nurture children, our work will contribute to the healthy development of infants and toddlers, leading to improved economic and health outcomes for their families and communities in the country.

The overarching goal of the Global ECD Initiative in the United States is to improve access to ECD services and the developmental outcomes of all low-income young children (prenatal to three years) in Los Angeles County and New Mexico. Work in these locations builds the capacity of local stakeholders and links to state and national advocacy. Specifically, the Foundation invests in: improving caregiving and parent/caregiver well-being (with additional supports for young parents/caregivers under 24 years); building capacity of local organizations; strengthening the ECD field through policy, advocacy and communications; and research and evaluation.

Ideal state

All low-income young children in the U.S. are developmentally on track and ready to reach their full potential with the support of robust, interconnected mental and physical health, child welfare and education and training systems. Those systems connect families to holistic support for both parents and children. In addition, all adolescent parents are fulfilling their economic and educational promise and are physically and mentally well.

History and background

Our ECD work in the U.S. began in 2021 with the goal of improving the developmental outcomes of young children across the country, beginning in Los Angeles and expanding to New Mexico in 2022, with additional targeted investments at the national and state level. Through our ECD work in East and Southern Africa, the Foundation recognized the power of investing early in young children and their families, and the value of working across geographies to share learnings with the

global movement to mobilize greater support and financial resources.

Across the early childhood portfolio, the well-being of young children and parents go hand in hand, as ECD is a two-generation issue. Parents' ability to promote healthy development and provide responsive caregiving depends on access to prenatal care, maternal education, family incomes, father involvement and social supports.

In addition, in the U.S., low-income young

parents disproportionately face adversities and their children are at higher risk of poor development. For example, one in four low-income young children in the U.S. lives with a young parent, and young parents struggle to juggle work, education and child care—meaning it can be difficult to meet basic needs and to manage stress. Additional investments for young parents aim to flip this intergenerational cycle to support the well-being of young families.

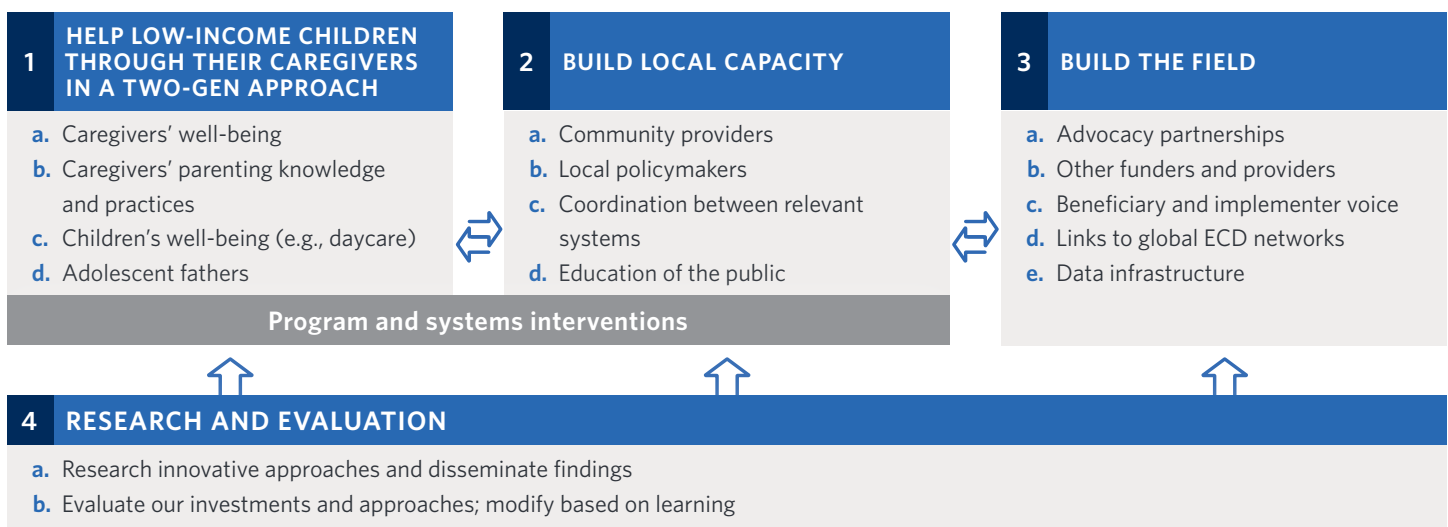
Five-year goals

50 percent of low-income young children in the Foundation's focus communities have access to affordable, high-quality early childhood development services

80 percent of low-income young children in Foundation-funded targeted programs meet age-appropriate developmental milestones / standards

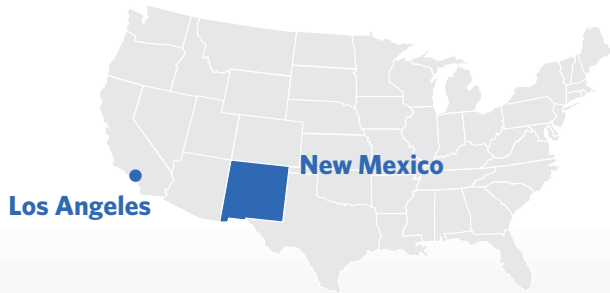
50 percent of young parents participating in Foundation-funded programs are meeting success metrics for caregiving capacity and well-being

Strategy architecture



WHERE WE WORK

- The Early Childhood Development initiative in the U.S. works in Los Angeles and the state of New Mexico.



EQUITY FOCUS

- Young parents and their young children
- People of color, especially Black, Latino and Indigenous parents and children
- Low-income parents and their young children
- Greater investment in capacity of Black, Latino and Indigenous-led groups

OTHER KEY METRICS

- \$50 billion in annual federal funding for ECD services
- \$30 million in additional annual funding in Los Angeles County for services that enable caregivers to meet the developmental needs of their children

PROGRAM COSTS



Strategy25 (2021-2026):

Est. \$100,000,000

CHALLENGES



- Prenatal to age three systems are siloed and not interconnected to serve the “whole child” and their caregivers
- As with many sectors, the ECD workforce has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, which limits the availability of many ECD services
- Ensuring that ECD remains a priority among decision-makers during the uncertain economic environment

OPPORTUNITIES



- As policy wins have increased services for four- and five-year olds and universal recognition on the brain development of young children has grown, many systems have shifted focus to the earlier years, including prenatal care.
- Since caregiver well-being is intricately connected to the well-being of young children, two-generation supports are gaining momentum in ECD.
- Increased recognition of disparities within certain populations of families with young children has led to centering parent voice and equity in decision-making in many of the systems serving families.