

2019-2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

GOAL: PRIORITIZE COMPREHENSIVE INVESTMENT AND INTEGRATED POLICIES TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF ALL NEW YORKERS IN THEIR FIRST 3 YEARS OF LIFE



Why: Investments when children are very young yield benefits over a lifetime and an unparalleled return on investment. With strong early childhood development, children are more ready for school, more likely to graduate from high school, healthier over a lifespan, and more likely to contribute to New York's success.

Evidence is clear about what works, and it includes investment across sectors and communities. New York's highly regarded *First 1,000 Days on Medicaid* initiative that focused on Medicaid's role in early childhood development laid the groundwork. New York now should invest in evidence-based, cross-sector policies to support healthy development through public health, housing, child care, family economic security, preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and beyond.

Supporting Policies & Initiatives:

- **Robust and cross-sector implementation of New York's First 1,000 Days on Medicaid.**
- **Ensure health insurance coverage and access with a focus on families.** Nearly 98% of children in NYS have coverage and Medicaid covers 59% of young children. Coverage should be comprehensive and recognize the critical role of caregivers for healthy development. Coverage and access to treatment for mental health and substance use disorders, including maternal depression and infant/early childhood mental health should be prioritized. It is essential that children are screened early and often for developmental and social-emotional concerns and receive necessary referrals and treatment.
- **Make sure Early Intervention works for all babies and toddlers who need it.** A good start would be to increase rates for providers to alleviate shortages of services.
- **Strengthen local public health infrastructure.** The environment – air, water, etc. – and toxins in it (lead, for example) have a disproportionate impact on babies and young children's brains and bodies. Children of color and in low-income communities are at high risk.
- **Develop family-focused housing and supports.** Homelessness can be traumatizing for infants and toddlers. In 2015, over half of the 20,000 children in NYC homeless shelters were under age six.¹
- **Address the significant need for access to quality infant and toddler child care.** These services support development and caregivers' ability to thrive in work and school.
- **Repair New York's child tax credit to include children under age 4,** and double the credit for these young children.
- **Expand access to maternal, infant and early childhood home visiting.** Evidence-based home visiting programs improve health outcomes for children and mothers, improve school readiness, and reduce abuse/neglect.

¹ Center for NYC Affairs, In Need of Shelter: Protecting the City's Youngest Children from the Traumas of Homelessness, Winter 2015, <http://www.centernyc.org/in-need-of-shelter>