



## 2024 Policy Priorities for Child and Family Well-Being

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In 2024, the Schuyler Center urges leaders to champion policies that **improve health, well-being, and economic security of New York’s families, children, and communities, with a focus on New Yorkers who are working hard to make ends meet.** Policymakers should prioritize **New York’s statutory commitment to reducing child poverty by half**, with focused attention on the more than [700,000 children living in poverty](#) (18% of New York children), and Black, brown, and immigrant New York children and their families, who are among those hardest impacted by the after-effects of the pandemic, and are struggling to meet the high costs of housing and necessities, due to record-high inflation. Black children live in poverty at twice the rate of white peers and children in immigrant families are more [likely \(22%\) to live in low-income, working households than their non-immigrant peers \(16%\)](#).

**Goal 1: Child Poverty Reduction — Reduce child poverty and racial inequity, starting with tax credits, housing, and nutritional supports that reach all families, no matter where they were born.**

- ▶ **Improve New York’s refundable tax credits:**
  - Ensure the State child tax credit reaches the poorest New Yorkers, who are currently excluded from the full credit, and increase the credit amount to meaningfully impact family budgets;
  - Strengthen the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) so all working New Yorkers may access the credit, including those filing with an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN).
- ▶ **Stabilize housing and reduce costs for [thousands of families](#), by funding the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP).** HAVP would create a state-funded voucher much like the federal Section 8 program for people experiencing homelessness and low-income tenants facing eviction.
- ▶ **Remove barriers to food, including by establishing and funding a permanent, statewide Healthy School Meals for All program that provides school breakfast and lunch at no cost to students in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.** While the SFY 2023-24 budget moved in this direction by expanding the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), many students are still left out.

**Goal 2: Child Care — Make a substantial and sustained investment in New York’s child care workforce and extend the promise of care to all children in our state.**

- ▶ **Create a permanent, robustly-funded program to increase child care worker pay.** Raise median child care worker pay to parity with similar positions in the public school system for all members of the child care workforce who work in licensed, regulated programs.
- ▶ **Increase rates for legally-exempt child care providers to 70% of the family child care rate and to 80% for providers who are eligible for the enhanced rate** (for providing care during non-traditional hours, for children experiencing homelessness and special needs) to increase their compensation.
- ▶ **Transition to a new provider reimbursement methodology and pay scale by 2025.**
- ▶ **Provide state-funded assistance to immigrant children barred from accessing federally-funded subsidies**, building from the statewide pilot in the 2023-24 NYS Budget and the Promise NYC program.

- ▶ **Implement presumptive eligibility statewide, with costs covered by federal and state funds** so families do not need to wait for paperwork processing to begin receiving assistance, and child care providers are not left waiting to be paid. (A.4099 (Clark)/ S.4667 (Brouk))
- ▶ **Increase capacity for non-traditional hour care** by requiring an enhanced reimbursement rate of 15% statewide (A.1374 (Clark)/S.4079 (Brisport)) and commence a pilot program to provide a monthly per-child supplement and start-up grant program for providers.
- ▶ **Prohibit requiring parents or caretakers to earn a minimum wage or work a minimum number of hours to be eligible for child care assistance.** (A.1303 (Clark)/ S.4924 (Ramos))

### **Goal 3: Children’s Health — Expand and increase investment in child and family health.**

- ▶ **Provide authority in the 2024-25 NYS Budget and seek federal approval for New York to ensure eligible children remain enrolled from birth to age 6 in Medicaid and Child Health Plus (CHP) health coverage** — programs which provide no-cost or low-cost health coverage for eligible children.
- ▶ **Ensure robust coverage and payment for pediatric care**, with a particular focus on behavioral health and dyadic/family-oriented care.
- ▶ **Expand oral health care for children by strengthening the oral health workforce.**
- ▶ **Make maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting available to all families who would like to receive it and expand health insurance coverage for this service.**
- ▶ **Increase rates for the Early Intervention program by 11% for in-person services.**
- ▶ **Fully fund the health workforce data law (Chapter 702 of the Laws of 2021) to create a statewide data set about where and how licensed health professionals work.** This critically important law passed in 2021 but has not been implemented due to lack of funding.

### **Goal 4: Child Welfare — Transform the child welfare system by investing in policies that foster transparency and accountability, prevent system-involvement and unnecessary, harmful family separations, reduce institutional placements, and support child, family, and community well-being.**

- ▶ **Collect, publicly report, analyze, and address systemic complaints in the child welfare system.**
- ▶ **Invest in the child welfare housing subsidy** by adding automatic increases to the subsidy tied to inflation and rising housing costs and increasing the age limit to age 24 to better support more young people and families.
- ▶ **Invest in community-based programs and services that contribute to child and family well-being.**
- ▶ **Require medical care providers to seek the informed consent of pregnant people and new mothers before they or their babies are drug tested.** (A.109 (Rosenthal)/S.320 (Salazar))
- ▶ **Require caseworkers to advise parents and caregivers of their rights at first contact.** (A.1980 (Walker)/S.901 (Brisport))
- ▶ **Require reporters to the State Central Register (SCR) to provide their name and contact information, which can only be accessed by the Office of Children and Family Services and counties, to prevent reports being used as a form of harassment.** (A.2479 (Hevesi)/S.902 (Brisport))