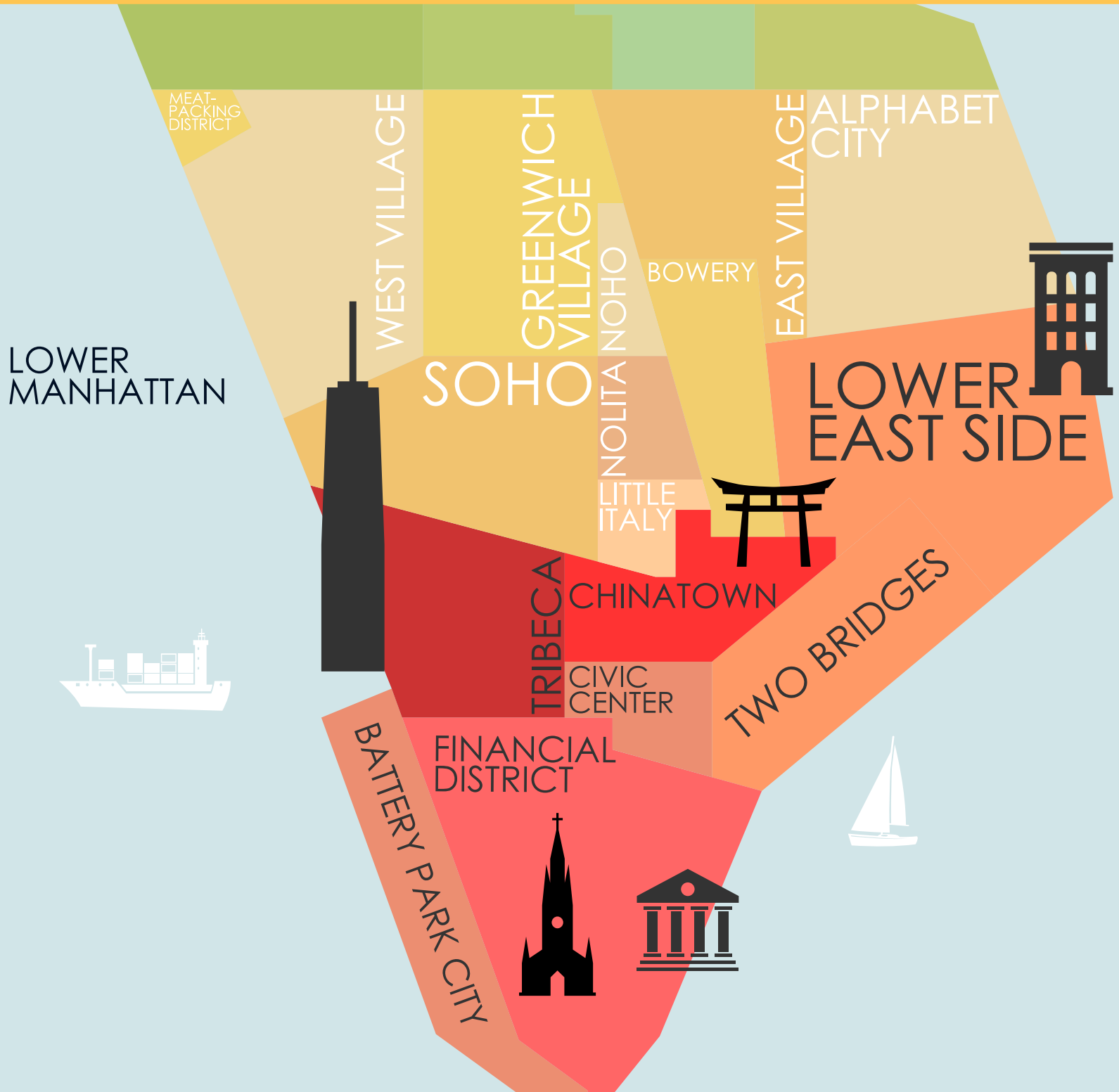


Policy Brief

Accessing Early Care and Education and Afterschool Services in Lower Manhattan



Introduction

In 2021, Trinity Church Wall Street launched its Neighborhood Support initiative, which uses a place-based approach to address child, family, and community wellbeing. Neighborhood Support combines on-the-ground assistance with targeted investments to support solutions developed in partnership with those who live, work, learn, and govern in the community. Our geographic focus is Lower Manhattan—defined by the neighborhoods south of 14th Street—with particular attention to Community District 3, which includes the Lower East Side and Chinatown.

In the fall of 2021, Neighborhood Support conducted and released a [Needs Assessment](#) informed by residents, community leaders, business owners, and other key stakeholders to better understand the pressing challenges facing Lower Manhattan. The assessment highlights the importance of the relationship between three factors: family income and resources, education, and employment. These three factors can comprise a “virtuous” cycle, in which the more resources a family has, the more they will have in the future. Alternatively, families with limited resources can become mired in a “vicious” cycle, where families lacking resources will have fewer and fewer over time. As a result, disparities between high-resourced versus low-resourced families are exacerbated over time.

Following the release of the Needs Assessment, we convened our Neighborhood Council, a working group comprised of community members and nonprofit leaders in the target communities. With the Council, we identified early care and education (ECE) and afterschool programming as critical supports to help families access education and employment, disrupting the “vicious” cycle.

The purpose of this policy brief is to describe the landscape for ECE and afterschool programs in New York City and Lower Manhattan, identify barriers to accessing and operating these critical services, and provide recommendations for improvements. These recommendations are intended for use by residents, activists, service providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to press for the changes needed to increase access to ECE and afterschool programs in Lower Manhattan, as well as across the City.

Background

About Lower Manhattan

Lower Manhattan is geographically delineated as south of 14th Street, bounded by the East and Hudson Rivers. It comprises several neighborhoods, including Chinatown, Lower East Side, Two Bridges, Hudson Square, Greenwich, East and West Village, SoHo, TriBeCa, Battery Park City, and the Financial District. The area is culturally diverse, with a population of close to 340,000 (see Table 1). As the home of the New York Stock Exchange, the Freedom Tower, and City Hall, it is both a center of the global economy and local governance, as well as a tourist destination. Chinatown and the Lower East Side, historically hubs for immigrant populations, are home to Black, Jewish, Latino, and Asian families from predominantly working-class backgrounds.¹ Combined data from Chinatown and the Lower East Side show that nearly a quarter of residents live in public housing.²

Table 1: Demographic Data³

Neighborhood	Total	Age < 18	Asian	Black	Latino	Other / 2+ Races	White
Financial District +	53,000 (+33.5%)	7,589 (+72.8%)	10,815 (+34.9%)	1,780 (+37.7%)	4,711 (+54.1%)	3,156 (+77.2%)	32,538 (+25.3%)
West Village, SoHo, TriBeCa	117,835 (+5.9%)	13,773 (+19.6%)	15,370 (+1.9%)	3,455 (+17.0%)	9,506 (+28.8%)	6,767 (+92.9%)	82,737 (+0.2%)
Chinatown	44,526 (-3.4%)	5,898 (-19.4%)	27,177 (-14.5%)	2,858 (+37.6%)	6,697 (+7.2%)	1,004 (+137.4%)	4,820 (+42.1%)
Lower East Side	120,585 (+1.2%)	13,057 (-12.0%)	23,011 (-1.5%)	9,918 (+7.6%)	31,971 (-5.8%)	5,457 (+138.8%)	50,228 (+1.5%)
Lower Manhattan – Total	333,476 (+6.3%)	40,317 (+5.9%)	76,373 (-2.4%)	18,011 (+15.9%)	52,885 (+4.4%)	16,384 (+95.3%)	170,323 (+5.5%)

Financial District + refers to the combined neighborhoods of FiDi and Battery Park City.

The area encompasses Community Districts (CDs) 1, 2, and 3. While these districts have much in common, there are stark differences in community wellness based on measures such as poverty, rent burden, and educational attainment, with residents of CD3 facing significantly more socio-economic challenges than their peers in CDs 1 and 2 (see Table 2). These disparities are the result of long-standing inequities and systems that have blocked access to opportunity for communities of color, directly impacting if residents experience the causal loop for income, education, and employment as “virtuous” or “vicious.” In addition, parts of the district are undergoing gentrification, further increasing inequity. Nonetheless, the neighborhoods of CD3 are vibrant and rich in resources, with a number of nonprofit organizations, including settlement houses, that have deep ties to the community and provide a wide range of services to meet the diverse needs of residents.

Table 2: Socio-economic Data⁴

Area	Total population	Child population	Percent of residents living in poverty	Percent of children living in poverty	Percent of adults without high school degree	Median income	Percent of severely rent burdened households
New York City	8,282,476	1,716,171	16.4%	21.4%	16.7%	\$76,568	28.3%
Manhattan	1,616,532	285,310	16.9%	20.8%	13.5%	\$87,434	26.3%
CD1	55,861	5,528	5.6%	3.3%	2.3%	\$211,593	17.5%
CD2	82,463	8,160	5.6%	3.3%	2.3%	\$211,593	17.5%
CD3	184,138	32,896	31.5%	52.6%	27.6%	\$39,944	26.9%

The Importance of Early Care and Education and Afterschool Services

Decades of research document that high-quality, affordable early care and education (ECE)⁵ is critical for the self-sufficiency of families and well-being of children, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. For parents, reliable, affordable ECE offers the support needed to work, pursue career advancement and educational opportunities, and improve labor productivity.⁶ For children, participation in quality ECE programs provides opportunities to nurture early socialization and cognitive skills, preparing young children for later success in school and life.⁷

Numerous studies show substantial long-term benefits when young children engage in developmentally appropriate programs in their early years. Documented outcomes include improved academic performance, increased high school graduation rates and college attendance, decreased special education placements and need for remedial services, higher earnings, less reliance on government assistance, and better health.⁸ High-quality ECE is also a sound investment: for every dollar invested in quality ECE, society gains more than seven dollars in economic returns over time.⁹

Similarly, afterschool programs—particularly those that operate year-round, are high quality and well-resourced—are an important part of the continuum of services, ensuring that students get the academic support they need and have access to social and recreational programming, and that parents can fully meet their work and/or education requirements. Research demonstrates that youth who participate in these programs are absent from school less often, fail fewer classes, and have higher high school graduation rates than their non-participating peers.¹⁰ Significant gains in test scores have also been linked to attending quality afterschool programs, as have fewer behavioral problems.¹¹

There are also significant non-academic benefits tied to healthy social-emotional development, such as youth developing positive bonds with staff, peers, and their schools, and enhanced self-awareness, self-esteem, and confidence,¹² putting young people on a pathway to success and well-being in adulthood. Furthermore, as the profound effects of the pandemic on youth mental health become increasingly apparent, afterschool programs can provide a crucial sense of belonging and connection, helping to mitigate the circumstances that might exacerbate mental health issues.

The Early Care and Education Landscape

New York City is home to more than 500,000 children under the age of five, more than 315,000 of whom are income-eligible for subsidized child care services,¹³ and 178,000 of whom are infants and toddlers.¹⁴ In response, New York City has a large, but complex, early care and education system which has grown substantially over the past decade as significant investments were made in publicly funded Pre-Kindergarten for three- and four-year olds.

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) administers the EarlyLearn program which combines federal, state, and city funds for PreK, Head Start, and subsidized child care to serve children starting at six weeks old up to age five through contracts with community-based organizations (CBOs). CBOs provide services in both centers and licensed home-based settings and DOE provides PreK¹⁵ in schools and stand-alone centers. The majority of EarlyLearn slots only operate during the school day and school year.¹⁶ Lastly, a number of CBOs offer Early Head Start through federal contracts that serve low-income infants and toddlers and their families, and pregnant women.

Only about 24% of New York City children under five are enrolled in publicly funded ECE, the majority of whom are three- and four-year olds. PreK for four-year-olds was expanded dramatically starting in 2014 and now serves approximately 74,000 children. Then in 2016, PreK for three-year-olds was launched in select high-need communities and currently serves about 30,000 children. This significant investment in programs for three- and four-year olds unintentionally exacerbated a long-standing shortage of infant and toddler care. More than 90% of infants and 70% of toddlers in families across the City are eligible for subsidized child care but not enrolled.¹⁷

The DOE also administers the preschool special education program for children ages three to five with developmental delays or disabilities. Services such as speech and language pathology, occupational therapy, and special instruction are provided in both school and community settings. In addition, the City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and Human Resources Administration (HRA) provide child care vouchers that low-income eligible parents can use to select the type of program that best meets their needs. Approximately 52,000 vouchers are currently in use,¹⁸ about half of which is used for afterschool services. Lastly, private programs provide services for children under five at full cost to parents.

Community District 3 (CD3) is home to a plethora of publicly-funded programs, provided in schools, centers, and homes. Regulated home-based care, referred to as family child care, is offered by a provider registered by DOHMH for up to 5 children and group family child care for up to 12. These providers are independent contractors, but several CD3 CBOs have contracts with DOE to manage provider networks that offer quality improvement and other supports such as coaching, professional development opportunities, and ensuring regulatory compliance.

Table 3. Enrollment of Children Under 5 Years Old in Subsidized Care by Setting, 2020*

Vouchers				EarlyLearn	
District	Center	Family Child Care	Informal Child Care	Center	Family Child Care
CD₁	8	0	0	98	0
CD₂	2	0	1	0	15
CD₃	77	91	40	641	95
TOTAL	87	91	41	739	110

Table 3.1. Enrollment of Children Under 5 Years Old in Subsidized Care by Length of Care, 2020*

District	Full Day, Full Year	School Day, School Year	Total <5 Enrolled in Subsidized Care	Percent Enrollees in Full Day, Full Year Programs	Percent <5-Year-Old Enrolled in Subsidized Care	Percent <5-Year-Old Enrolled in Subsidized Full Day, Full Year Care
CD₁	98	8	106	92.5%	3.4%	3.1%
CD₂	15	3	18	83.3%	0.4%	0.3%
CD₃	736	208	944	78.0%	20.9%	16.3%
TOTAL	849	219	1,068	79.5%	8.7%	6.9%

* These data include children under five served by EarlyLearn contracted agencies that operate centers and family child care networks, as well as families using vouchers, and PreK enrollment via EarlyLearn-contracted providers.¹⁹

Table 4. PreK Enrollment (3- and 4-Year-Olds) by Setting and Length of Care, 2020²⁰

District	Center	Family Child Care	School	DOE Center
CD ₁	188	0	125	329
CD ₂	29	2	156	0
CD ₃	816	12	644	0
TOTAL	1,031	14	925	329

Table 4.1. PreK Enrollment (3- and 4-Year-Olds) by Length of Care, 2020²⁰

District	Full Day, Full Year	School Day, School Year	Total PreK Enrollment	Percent PreK Enrollees in Full Day, Full Year Programs	Percent 3- & 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in PreK	Percent 3- & 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Full Day, Full Year PreK
CD ₁	87	553	640	13.6%	53.6%	7.3%
CD ₂	2	185	187	1.1%	10.6%	0.1%
CD ₃	583	889	1,472	39.6%	96.0%	38.0%
TOTAL	672	1,627	2,299	29.2%	69.7%	20.4%

The Afterschool Landscape

New York City is home to almost 1.2 million school-aged children,²¹ many of whom are served by a range of publicly funded programs administered by the City’s Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), with some in partnership with the DOE through contracts with CBOs using federal, state, and city funds. These include Schools Out NYC (SONYC), Comprehensive Afterschool System (COMPASS), and the Cornerstone and Beacon programs. These programs offer a range of services such as academic support and cultural and recreational activities.²² COMPASS serves students in grades K-5th grade, SONYC is for middle schoolers, and COMPASS-High serves 9th graders. They do not operate on the weekends and only some are available during the summer. The Cornerstone and Beacon programs operate in select New York City Housing Authority community centers and schools, respectively. They both serve children over the age of 6, as well as adults in some locations, and generally operate in the evenings, weekends, and over the summer. DOE-run community schools²³ also provide afterschool services, and some also offer weekend programming, as do some CBOs. In addition to these multi-service programs, the City is home to smaller, more narrowly focused programs such as chess clubs, gymnastics, technology, and the like. The Lower East Side and Chinatown are home to 48 DYCD-contracted programs (see Table 5) and five Community Schools.

In the summers of 2021 and 2022, DOE and DYCD collaborated on the Summer Rising initiative for approximately 100,000 elementary and middle school students. The program operated for about six weeks from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. with optional extended hours. It provided academic support with licensed teachers in the mornings and afternoon activities such as sports and field trips provided by CBOs. Lastly, DYCD also operates the Summer Youth Employment Program that provides jobs and internships for about 100,000 young people ages 14-24.²⁴

All afterschool programs that do not operate in DOE schools are required to be licensed by DOHMH. Regarding eligibility, there are no income requirements. For school-based programs, children must be students at the school to participate in afterschool. Operating hours, number of slots, and specific program offerings vary by site and funding source. Lastly, as with ECE programs, private, fee-for-service programs are also available, but are often prohibitively expensive for many families.

Table 5. DYCD-funded Afterschool Programs in Lower Manhattan by Setting and Program Type (2022-23 school year)

DYCD Program	Public School	Community-based Organization	NYCHA Community Center	Total Programs	As Percent of All DYCD Programs
SONYC	17	4		21	43.8%
Beacon	4			4	8.3%
Cornerstone			6	6	12.5%
COMPASS	12	5		17	35.4%
COMPASS High	1				
COMPASS Explore	1	2			
TOTAL	33	9	6	48	

Challenges

Through research and interviews with CBOs and families, a number of challenges to accessing and operating ECE and afterschool programs surfaced, with the ECE system being particularly complex. It should be noted that these issues are not unique to CD3. They have existed for decades across the City and have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

As is detailed below, both ECE and afterschool providers grapple with systemic issues and operate in an environment of stress and uncertainty that can result in programs having to modify hours of operation, reduce staff, and/or scale back program enhancements. This has a direct impact on the ability of families to access high-quality services that meet their needs both in terms of parents’ work and children and youth’s development.

In addition, we heard from community members that more must be done to ensure that providers have the capacity to meet the significant social-emotional and behavioral health needs of children and youth as a result of the traumatic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to support parents as the City moves toward recovery.

Barriers to Accessing Early Care and Education

Complex enrollment processes: Multiple entry points, programs, and requirements, combined with the number of City agencies and processes involved, has created a complicated system that is difficult for families to navigate. The DOE uses a centralized enrollment process for ECE that can be confusing for families and limits programs’ ability to help families expedite access to services. In addition, parents report that they lack knowledge about available options, such as the differences between home- and center-based care, and often get shuffled between government agencies and programs looking for information and assistance.

Differing eligibility: While PreK is free for all families regardless of income, subsidized childcare is not. Applicants must fall below a certain income threshold and be engaged in approved work or education to qualify. Parents are also required to make co-payments determined by a sliding scale based on household income and size. Eligibility for Head Start and Early Head Start is also based on income but does not require co-payments or work/education participation. Language barriers are a hindrance for many immigrant families and because undocumented families are only eligible for PreK, it is hard for them to access the full-day, full-year services necessary to sustain employment. See page 14 for eligibility criteria for Head Start and child care subsidies.

Limited hours: Over time, the increase of PreK slots—most of which are only available during school hours and the school year—has inadvertently caused a decrease in the number of full-day, full-year options for three- and four-year olds, straining parents' ability to work. This is exacerbated by the fact that access to full-day, full-year slots is limited to families eligible for subsidized child care or Head Start. It is estimated that Citywide only 13% of four-year-olds and 36% of three-year-olds receive full-day, full-year programs.²⁵ In addition, there are few options for parents who work evenings and weekends, often forcing them to rely on informal care²⁶ that is generally poorer quality and not as reliable as regulated options.

Shortage of services: Only 24% of New York City children under five are enrolled in public ECE programs, with significant disparities among age groups, stemming from the expansion of PreK. As such and as detailed above, the dearth of options is particularly acute for infants and toddlers.²⁷ In 2020, only 248 infants and toddlers in CD3 were enrolled in subsidized care out of a total of 2,291.²⁸ There is also a scarcity of seats for three-year-olds, given that the expansion of PreK in recent years has focused primarily on four-year-olds, as well as for children with special needs.²⁹ These shortages, combined with limited hours, impact parents' ability to work. In 2021, it is estimated that more than half a million New Yorkers did not seek employment because of child care needs in 2021.³⁰

Affordability: For many subsidy-eligible families, co-pays are prohibitive. As a consequence, these families enroll their children only in school-day PreK because it is free, often limiting their ability to work. Citywide, it is estimated that 95% of families with young children cannot afford center-based care using federal guidance that child care expenses do not exceed 7% of household income.³¹ New York State established standard rates for child care services, effective May 1, 2019. The standard rate for the five boroughs of New York is \$21,112 a year for infants 0 to 18 months and \$19,240 a year for children 18 to 24 months. These rates are particularly prohibitive for many New York City families.³²⁻³³

As shown in Table 3 and 3.1, many more families in CD3 rely on publicly-subsidized care than in CDs 1 and 2. Families in these neighborhoods are more likely to rely on private options for which they pay the full cost, including in-home care.

Challenges Facing Early Care and Education Providers

Delayed payments: The biggest immediate challenge currently facing ECE providers is delayed payment by the DOE. A study released in September of this year found that EarlyLearn-contracted agencies were owed more than \$460 million for services provided in Fiscal Year 2022.³⁴ In November, the DOE stated that it still owed providers \$140 million.³⁵ These delayed payments are forcing programs to close and others to lay off staff, secure costly loans and take other drastic measures to stay open.³⁶ Compounding the payment crisis is the fact that ECE contracts typically do not cover the full costs of operating the high-quality, comprehensive programs families need.³⁷

Workforce issues: The sector in New York City—and nationally—is plagued by severe workforce issues, which have worsened because of fallout from the pandemic.³⁸ These include low wages and salary disparities. A 2019 agreement addressed the disparity between PreK teachers employed by the DOE and those employed by CBOs who historically made significantly less than their DOE counterparts. However, this agreement only covered entry-level salaries and CBOs are still waiting for their contracts to be amended to reflect these higher salaries. While approximately 60 percent of PreK seats are provided by CBOs, prior to the 2019 agreement, teachers in these programs were paid a starting salary of more than \$17,000 less than their DOE counterparts with the same credentials.³⁹ In addition, the agreement did not cover other staff of both DOE and CBO PreK programs such as directors, special education teachers, teaching assistants, janitors, and cooks.⁴⁰

In New York City, the ECE workforce is overwhelmingly made up of women of color and many are low-income. A recent report found that 93 percent of the City’s employed child care workers are women, and one in four live in poverty and have to use public benefits to make ends meet.⁴¹ CBOs with whom we spoke shared that they have multiple vacancies that can take months to fill. Furthermore, they struggle to offer the competitive wages and salary increases needed to hire and retain qualified staff, especially staff qualified to work with children with special needs and behavioral health challenges.⁴²

Lack of flexibility, burdensome bureaucracy, and lack of coordination: While the integration of subsidized child care and Head Start with PreK under the DOE has resulted in some improvements, it has also led to a lack of flexibility that diminishes the ability of providers to meet the needs of families and best manage their programs. For example, the DOE’s centralized enrollment process for all EarlyLearn programs delays access to services, is difficult for families to navigate, and makes it hard for CBOs to work directly with community members.

In addition, we heard from providers that DOE EarlyLearn budget requirements are overly prescriptive and rigid. For example, programs are not allowed to allocate unspent Other Than Personnel Costs (OTPS) for personnel costs such as salary increases to address hiring and retention challenges. In addition, many agencies are required to have multiple contracts with the DOE, resulting in onerous paperwork.

This is further complicated by the number of City agencies involved in oversight and monitoring and a lack of coordination among them.⁴³ These barriers make it hard for new programs to open and for existing programs to expand or modify their offerings to better meet community needs. For example, we heard from providers who have extra capacity for three- and four-year-olds that they would like to convert to serve infants and toddlers but have not been able to do so because of a lack of flexibility and guidance from the City.

Lastly, we heard about specific challenges related to family child care. Many CD3 providers live in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) apartments and struggle to recruit families who do not live in public housing. In addition, DOE requires that providers who are part of DOE-contracted family child care networks obtain the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential through the CUNY Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (PDI), partly because it is credit-bearing. However, PDI’s ability to provide the CDA courses in multiple languages is limited. While some CBOs in CD3 offer the CDA course in the languages of the providers in their networks, DOE will not accept CDA credentials obtained through them.

Barriers to Accessing Afterschool Programs

While somewhat less complicated than the ECE landscape, the afterschool sector is also difficult for families to navigate. There is no single source of information on how to find quality programs that best meet a family's needs, forcing many parents to rely on word-of-mouth. In addition, language barriers on the Lower East Side are significant, and programs can change dramatically from year to year or become unavailable altogether due to funding and policy changes.

We also heard that hours of operation and lack of summer options often do not meet the schedules of working parents; the dearth of services prompts some parents to enroll their children in private programs that do not offer the academic support and enrichment their children need. Families of children with special needs, in particular, struggle to find appropriate programs. Further, DYCD-funded afterschool programs do not serve PreK children, leaving these families with no publicly-funded options if they are not enrolled in full-day, full-year ECE services.

Challenges Facing Afterschool Providers

Space and workforce issues: Many afterschool programs in both school and community settings are constrained by space and funding and, as with ECE programs, they struggle to hire and retain staff due to pandemic-related labor shortages, low wages, and salary disparities. Several providers noted that DYCD contracts pay different salaries for the same positions, leaving CBOs in the position of having to use private funds, if available, to ensure equity and retain staff. These issues limit the ability of programs to expand and maintain program quality and consistency.

CBOs also struggle to find staff qualified to work with children with special needs. One shared that half of the children enrolled in the school where it operates an afterschool program are identified as having special needs, with many residing in local homeless shelters. This is also applicable for children and youth with behavioral health needs that in many cases have been exacerbated by the pandemic.⁴⁴

Difficulties related to summer programming: Over the past several years, funding for summer programs has been subjected to threatened cuts, only to be saved weeks before the end of the school year.⁴⁵ This has resulted in instability for providers who need several months to hire and train staff, conduct required background checks, and develop activities to ensure quality programming. It also led to families not knowing until days before the end of school whether or not there will be a program available to them and if so, where it may be located.

We also heard from providers and advocates about issues related to the Summer Rising program, including insufficient funding for CBOs,⁴⁶ and enrollment managed by the DOE, leading to similar problems for parents and providers as those stemming from DOE-centralized enrollment for ECE.

Operating fees and quality concerns: Another challenge is the fee the DOE charges CBOs to operate afterschool programs in DOE facilities. In July 2021, the DOE increased the fee nearly threefold, forcing many programs to scale back and some to eliminate services entirely.⁴⁷ We also heard from providers that the changing character of the neighborhoods in CD3, as described above, has led to dwindling enrollment at some sites, further straining budgets and making it difficult to provide quality programming.

Potentially Promising Changes

Several current and proposed changes by the State and City could expand and enhance access to services. At the State level, eligibility for subsidized child care has been expanded to families earning up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level (\$82,250 for a family of four), up from 200 percent. The State estimates that close to 400,000 additional children across New York—including 74,000 in New York City—are now able to access care.⁴⁸ In addition, the State is offering Child Care Stabilization Grants (using federal COVID stimulus funds) for all licensed ECE and afterschool programs. These grants can be used for staff bonuses, wage increases, contributions toward health care and retirements costs, mental health supports for staff, tuition reimbursement, and facility improvements.⁴⁹ Lastly, the State’s FY23 budget included an additional \$324 million to increase child care provider reimbursement rates.⁵⁰

In New York City, the Mayor released a comprehensive and ambitious plan to enhance and expand the ECE system in June 2022. This plan recognizes the importance of ECE for children and families, as well as the City’s economic recovery.⁵¹ It seeks to expand services for 41,000 children in high-need neighborhoods through a variety of strategies, such as clearing the waiting list for child care vouchers, converting existing seats to serve more infants and toddlers, providing tax incentives to property owners to accommodate ECE facilities and employers that provide free or affordable child care, and creating a single child care application portal, among others. It also proposes to address the needs of the ECE workforce and programs by expanding career advancement opportunities, automating the background check process, and reducing administrative burdens. In addition, the New York City Council recently passed a package of bills aimed at making child care more accessible and affordable for all families.⁵²

Recommendations

We applaud the Governor, the Mayor, and the City Council for their leadership and vision in launching these important efforts. However, for them to be successful, additional operational changes are necessary, particularly at the City level. First and foremost, prompt payment by DOE to its EarlyLearn providers is critical. As detailed above, the substantial amount of funding owed to programs is pushing an already strained system to its breaking point. The Mayor’s recent announcement that the DOE is implementing a plan to pay ECE providers is welcome news.⁵³

Other needed policy changes for both ECE and afterschool are articulated in the Campaign for Children’s platform.⁵⁴ The Campaign was launched in 2011 to advance policies that support ECE and youth services in New York City. It is led by a steering committee⁵⁵ and has over 150 members, including Trinity Church Wall Street. As such, we encourage the City to adopt the Campaign’s recommendations. Some of its most relevant priorities and additional recommendations based on feedback we heard from community members include:

Access

- Significantly increase full-day, full-year ECE and infants and toddler slots for all families who need them.
- Allow DOE- and DYCD-contracted programs to enroll families directly rather than require centralized enrollment done by DOE. This would expedite access and enable programs to build relationships with families that come through their front doors and leverage their community connections.
- Expand access to free afterschool programs, particularly for children under five, elementary school students, and children with special needs and move towards universality.
- Make afterschool programming available year-round to mitigate summer learning loss and better meet the needs of working parents.

Quality

- Achieve salary and benefit parity for both the ECE and afterschool workforce. Specifically, the next phase of ECE labor negotiations should ensure that CBO center-based staff who were not part of the 2019 parity agreement are included and that longevity is factored into compensation. In addition, a floor of \$25 an hour should be established for both afterschool and support staff.
- Build the pipeline of qualified staff, including those built via partnerships with academic institutions.
- Increase the capacity of programs to meet the behavioral health needs of children and youth, including by expanding the Children Under Five Initiative,⁵⁶ among other efforts.
- Ensure family child care providers access the increased state market rate reimbursement.

System

- Improve communication and coordination amongst City agencies with oversight responsibilities for ECE and afterschool.
- Increase DOE contract flexibility for ECE providers, especially regarding budgets, and fully fund the cost of operating quality ECE.
- Increase funding for afterschool and summer programs, ensuring equity between CBO- and school-based sites and to cover the full costs of providing quality, year-round services.
- Enable family child care providers to obtain CDA certification from the organizations most appropriate and convenient for them.

Eligibility criteria for Head Start and child care subsidies

FamilyA
Income < 100% federal
poverty limits

Income-eligible for Head Start 6 Early Head Start

If the family's household income exceeds 100% FPL, they may also be eligible for Head Start programs under one of the following criteria:

1. Live in temporary housing
2. Receive HRA Cash Assistance
3. Receive SSI
4. Enrolling a child who is in foster care

Income-eligible for child care subsidy

The family must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Work 10+ hrs/wk
2. Enrolled in edjvo-tech training or 4-yr college
3. Unemployed and looking for work < 6 mo
4. Live in temporary housing
5. Attending services for domestic violence

FamilyB
Income > 100% and <
300% federal poverty limits

Income-eligible for child care subsidy

The family must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Work 10+ hrs/wk
2. Enrolled in edjvo-tech training or 4-yr college
3. Unemployed and looking for work < 6 mo
4. Live in temporary housing
5. Attending services for domestic violence

NOT income-eligible for Head Start 6 Early Head Start

The family may be eligible for Head Start programs under one of the following criteria:

1. Live in temporary housing
2. Receive HRA Cash Assistance
3. Receive SSI
4. Enrolling a child who is in foster care

FamilyC
Income > 300% federal
poverty limits

NOT income-eligible for Head Start OR child care subsidy

The family *may* be eligible for Head Start programs under **one** of the following criteria:

1. Live in temporary housing
2. Receive HRA Cash Assistance
3. Receive SSI
4. Enrolling a child who is in foster care

Endnotes

- ¹ “Lower Manhattan Needs Assessment Office of the Chief Community Impact Officer Report Produced in Collaboration with Center for Community Resilience.” 2022. https://trinitywallstreet.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Needs%20assessment_vs10_digital_links_rev.pdf.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ New York City Decennial Census Data. New York City Department of City Planning. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/office/planning-level/nyc-population/census2020/nyc_decennialcensus-data_2010_2020_change.xlsx?r=1
- ⁴ Op. Cit., Citizens’ Committee for Children, pp. 110-112.
- ⁵ The term early care and education describes a range of programs including PreK, 3K, child care, Head Start and Early Head Start. Also, PreK is used to refer to prekindergarten for both three- and four-year-olds.
- ⁶ “Quality Early Childhood Education - Economic Impact.” n.d. First Five Years Fund. <https://www.ffyf.org/why-it-matters/economic-impact/>.
- ⁷ “NYC Under Three: A Plan to Make Child Care Affordable for New York City Families.” 2019. Office of the Comptroller for the City of New York. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nyc-under-three-a-plan-to-make-child-care-affordable-for-new-york-city-families/#affordability-availability-and-quality-of-child-care>.
- ⁸ See generally “From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development.” 2002. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. National Academies Press, and The Carolina Abecedarian Project, <https://abc.fpg.unc.edu>
- ⁹ “Quality Early Childhood Education - Economic Impact.” n.d. First Five Years Fund. <https://www.ffyf.org/why-it-matters/economic-impact/>.
- ¹⁰ <https://impacts.afterschoolalliance.org/details.cfm?ID=a0E3900000NaMvpEAF&start=1>
- ¹¹ Durlak, Joseph, Weissberg, Roger. 2007. “The Impact of After-School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills,” p.6. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED505368.pdf>
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Defined as annual income less than 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level or \$69,090 for a family of three.
- ¹⁴ “Accessible, Equitable, High Quality, Affordable, A Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education in New York City.” <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/office-of-the-mayor/2022/Childcare-Plan.pdf>
- ¹⁵ This document uses “PreK” to refer to both PreK for three-year-olds and four-year-olds.
- ¹⁶ School-day, school-year services are available for 6 hours a day during the school year only, whereas full-day, full-year programs operate for 8-10 hours a day, year-round.
- ¹⁷ Citizens’ Committee for Children. 2022. “Keeping Track of New York City’s Children: 2022”, p. 39.
- ¹⁸ “ACS - Data/Policy.” n.d. www1.Nyc.gov. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/data-policy.page>.
- ¹⁹ “Keeping Track Online. The Status of New York City Children.” <https://data.cccnewyork.org/data>. Tables: Child Care Voucher Utilization for Children Under 5 by Community District and Setting; Enrollment in EarlyLearn Contracted Care for All Children by Community District and Setting; Length of Care by Age Group by Community District; Population of Children Under 5 by Community District and Age Group. Data year: 2020
- ²⁰ Ibid., Tables: Enrollment in 3-K for All by Community District, Setting, and Length of Care; Enrollment in PreK for All by Community District, Setting, and Length of Care; Population of Children Under 5 by Community District and Age Group.
- ²¹ “Child Population.” n.d. Data.cccnewyork.org. <https://data.cccnewyork.org/data/table/98/child-population#10/16/62/a/a>.
- ²² “Afterschool.” n.d. Infohub.nyced.org. <https://infohub.nyced.org/working-with-the-doe/afterschool> and <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/after-school/comprehensive-after-school-system-of-new-york-city-compass.page>.
- ²³ Community schools take a holistic approach to child and family wellness, serving as academic institutions as well as critical connectors to healthcare and other supportive community services. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/communitieschools/about/about.page>
- ²⁴ “NYC Brings Back Summer Rising.” 2022. Chalkbeat, March 11, 2002. <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/3/11/22972759/nyc-schools-summer-rising-2022>
- ²⁵ Op. Cit., Citizens’ Committee for Children, p. 43.
- ²⁶ Informal care is provided in a private residence for up to two non-relative children. These providers are often friends, family, or neighbors. They are not required to be licensed but must meet minimum health and safety standards to be paid for providing subsidized care.
- ²⁷ Op. Cit., Citizens’ Committee for Children, p. 40.
- ²⁸ “Enrollment in Publicly Funded Care for Children under 5.” n.d. Data.cccnewyork.org. <https://data.cccnewyork.org/data/table/1316/enrollment-in-publicly-funded-care-for-children-under-5#1317/1537/99/a/a>.
- ²⁹ As of June 2022, 800 preschool-age children with special needs had no placements for their legally mandated preschool special education. See <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cccnewyork.org/2022/10/CCCs-Testimony-for-the-Child-Care-Oversight-Hearing.pdf>

- ³⁰ New York City Decennial Census Data. New York City Department of City Planning. Accessed March 10, 2022. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/office/planning-level/nyc-population/census2020/nyc_decennialcensus-data_2010_2020_change.xlsx?r=1
- ³¹ Op. Cit., Citizens' Committee for Children, p. 43.
- ³² Op. Cit., Office of the Comptroller for the City of New York.
- ³³ Child Care Assistance Program Market Rates 2022. New York State Office of Children and Family Services, <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/2022/lcm/22-OCFS-LCM-14-Att-A-Market-Rates.pdf>
- ³⁴ Kim, Minji, and MacIntosh, John. 2022. "Review of Early Childhood Education: How Much More Can Nonprofits Endure?" September 23, 2022. <http://gd7xi2tioeh408c7034706rc-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/SeaChange-Research-Note-Early-Childhood-Education.pdf>.
- ³⁵ Fitzsimmons, Emma and Closson, Troy. The New York Times. Nov. 3, 2022. "With Child Care Centers in Crisis, New York Pledges to Speed Payments." <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/03/nyregion/child-care-funding-nyc.html>
- ³⁶ Bellafante, Ginia. 2022. "Why New York's Day Care Centers Are Going Broke." The New York Times, October 14, 2022, sec. New York. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/14/nyregion/child-care-nyc-adams.html>.
- ³⁷ Workman, Simon, and Steven Jessen-Howard. 2019. Review of New York State Cost of Quality Childcare Study. November 2019. <https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/12/NY-Cost-of-Quality-Report-Raising-NY.pdf>.
- ³⁸ Goldstein, Dana. 2022. "Why You Can't Find Child Care: 100,000 Workers Are Missing." The New York Times, October 13, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/13/us/child-care-worker-shortage.html>.
- ³⁹ <https://www.dccnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Salary-parity-infographic-Final.4.8.19.pdf>
- ⁴⁰ "Campaign for Children NYC a Call to Action: The Campaign for Children's Plan for Incoming City Leaders." n.d. <http://www.campaignforchildrennyc.com/a-call-to-action>.
- ⁴¹ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nyc-under-three-a-plan-to-make-child-care-affordable-for-new-york-city-families/> See also <http://www.campaignforchildrennyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/call-to-action-c4c-2021-platform.pdf>, p. 6.
- ⁴² Qualified, well compensated staff is critical to support the social, emotional and behavioral development of young children, which can mitigate the need for long-term supports. See <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/quality-101-identifying-the-core-components-of-a-high-quality-early-childhood-program/> and <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/students/supporting-child-student-social-emotional-behavioral-mental-health.pdf>
- ⁴³ In addition to the DOE, ACS, HRA, DYCD and DOHMH, programs must also interface with the Department of Buildings, Fire Department, New York City Housing Authority, and Mayor's Office of Contract Services.
- ⁴⁴ U.S. Department of Education. 2021. "Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Needs." <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/students/supporting-child-student-social-emotional-behavioral-mental-health.pdf>.
- ⁴⁵ Op. Cit., "Campaign for Children NYC a Call to Action: The Campaign for Children's Plan for Incoming City Leaders" p. 4.
- ⁴⁶ <https://www.campaignforchildrennyc.com/news/letter-support-needed-for-summer-rising-program>
- ⁴⁷ Hawkins, Lee. n.d. "Fees Threaten New York After-School Programs." Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/fees-threaten-new-york-after-school-programs-11625749201>.
- ⁴⁸ "Governor Hochul Launches Statewide Campaign to Highlight Funding for Child Care Providers and Families | Governor Kathy Hochul." n.d. www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-launches-statewide-campaign-highlight-funding-child-care-providers-and.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses, NYC Council Committee on Education Oversight Hearing, Oct. 19, 2022. <https://uploads.prodo1.oregon.platform-os.com/instances/542/assets/UNH%20Testimony%20-%20Oversight%20Hearing%20on%20Early%20Childhood%20Programs%2010.19.22.pdf?updated=1666214902>
- ⁵¹ "Accessible, Equitable, High-Quality, Affordable." n.d. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/office-of-the-mayor/2022/Childcare-Plan.pdf>.
- ⁵² October 12, and 2022. n.d. "Council Passes Legislation to Increase Accessibility for Child Care Services in New York City." Press. <https://council.nyc.gov/press/2022/10/12/2283/>.
- ⁵³ Op. Cit., Fitzsimmons, Emma and Closson, Troy. The New York Times.
- ⁵⁴ Op. Cit., "Campaign for Children NYC a Call to Action: The Campaign for Children's Plan for Incoming City Leaders."
- ⁵⁵ Steering Committee members are: Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, United Neighborhood Houses, UJA-Federation of New York, the YMCA of Greater New York, Good Shepherd Services, Children's Aid, the Day Care Council of New York, and Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies.
- ⁵⁶ This initiative, funded by the NYC Council and managed by DOHMH, provides trauma-informed early childhood mental health services to children under five to develop psychosocial and educational skills and support dealing with trauma. Op. Cit., United Neighborhood Houses Testimony, Oct. 19, 2022, p. 7.