

# Access to High Quality Sites Needed in Early Education and Child Care

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A newly updated American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement says access to high quality early education remains limited, and state quality standards lag behind child care recommendations by health and safety experts. Children's earliest learning environments have a lifelong impact on health, according to authors of the report, "[Quality Early Education and Child Care from Birth to Kindergarten](#)." Especially for at-risk children, research on high-quality early childhood education programs shows lasting positive effects, including cost-saving from improved health outcomes. But many families have no quality child care options in their communities. Barriers include inadequate funding and staff education, as well as inconsistent regulations and enforcement. State licensing benchmarks set minimum standards that are usually considerably below the evidence-based recommendations from AAP and other child health and development organizations, according to the report. Quality rating and improvement systems are being implemented in more than 75 percent of states, the report observes, but they do not always include key health and safety standards. Among other recommendations, authors of the policy statement urge pediatricians to discuss the importance of implementing guidelines on safe sleep, immunization, safe medication administration, infection control, diet, physical activity and other health topics in child care with parents, policy makers and local programs. Child care and early childhood education are crucial to our nation's children, women, and families and to our economic growth and prosperity. The AAP urges policymakers to increase federal investments in high-quality early childhood programs.

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*The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 66,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) and follow us on Twitter @AmerAcadPeds*