



Early Child Development Policy

**City of Pasadena
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developed by

EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT & EARLY LEARNING TASK FORCE



For children to flourish in school and in life, we cannot wait until they enter kindergarten to promote their health, safety, and learning.

A wealth of research clearly demonstrates the importance of early brain development, the effectiveness of best practices in early learning and child rearing, and the significant return on investment in early child development initiatives. This is the most compelling rationale to concentrate on children's early years, from the days young children are born.

Our City and community must come together in support of our youngest children and families, particularly in the prenatal to five period. We must ensure that our City is equipped to support children and families with the critical resources they need to survive the pandemic, its effects, and to thrive in the years beyond. This is our opportunity to shape the future for our children and to treat them as our highest priority.

BACKGROUND

In March of 2015 the City Council approved the Early Child Development Policy. The 2015 Policy contained a Master Plan for the Young Child to bring together a range of services and programs with measurable population outcomes. City leaders recognized the importance of having a policy and service strategies to ensure that parents and caretakers have adequate financial resources, stable housing, access to quality health care, adequate nutrition, high-quality early childhood programs.

The City established the Office of the Young Child to carry out the implementation of the 2015 Policy's important work and approved a critical standing committee to support the work of the Office of the Young Child.

The City Council also approved a Resolution In Support of Developing An Early Learning City by the Year 2025. This Resolution affirmed the City's commitment to engage the community to work together to unite diverse programs and services in the City of Pasadena, melding them into a coordinated child and family-centered system, a system with city-wide emphasis on the young child and learning as much as possible about child well-being.

What does it mean to be an Early Learning City? In a simple sense, it is about building buy-in and the political will to commit to a shared vision and to learn how we achieve better outcomes for children and families through building alignment of diverse stakeholders who contribute to children's health and well-being – a systems approach.

REVISITING THE 2015 POLICY

Why are we revisiting the 2015 Policy? Implementation of the 2015 Policy was challenging for reasons resulting from the complexity of such a wide-scale initiative. However, the most devastating impact came as a result of the pandemic and its effects on all segments of our community, with critical impacts on our youngest children: babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergartners.

In 2015 the Policy was based on the known science at that time regarding the development of our youngest children, the needs of our children and families, best practices across the country, and extensive input and knowledge from the child care/early learning community in our City and community and throughout the county and state.

The needs of our youngest children and families have not changed. Only today they are worse and requiring more support than ever. The effects of the pandemic and the larger economic and social concerns have heightened the need for our City and community to serve as leaders in supporting children and families.

Today we are looking at a different landscape as we attempt to recover and rebuild from COVID-19. Child development and child well-being do not stop when crises occur. Thus, we are looking more deeply than ever at the root causes of developmental vulnerabilities in an effort to improve the outcomes for children and families.

OUR LOCAL CONTEXT 2022

We are currently in a tumultuous time with the overall effects of the last two years of the Pandemic and the larger economic and social concerns continuing to impact us all. The data traditionally used to understand the impact of these large-scale changes on our local economy and day-to-day lives is gathered retrospectively and therefore still being gathered. The full effects of the last few years on our youngest children and their families are not fully known.

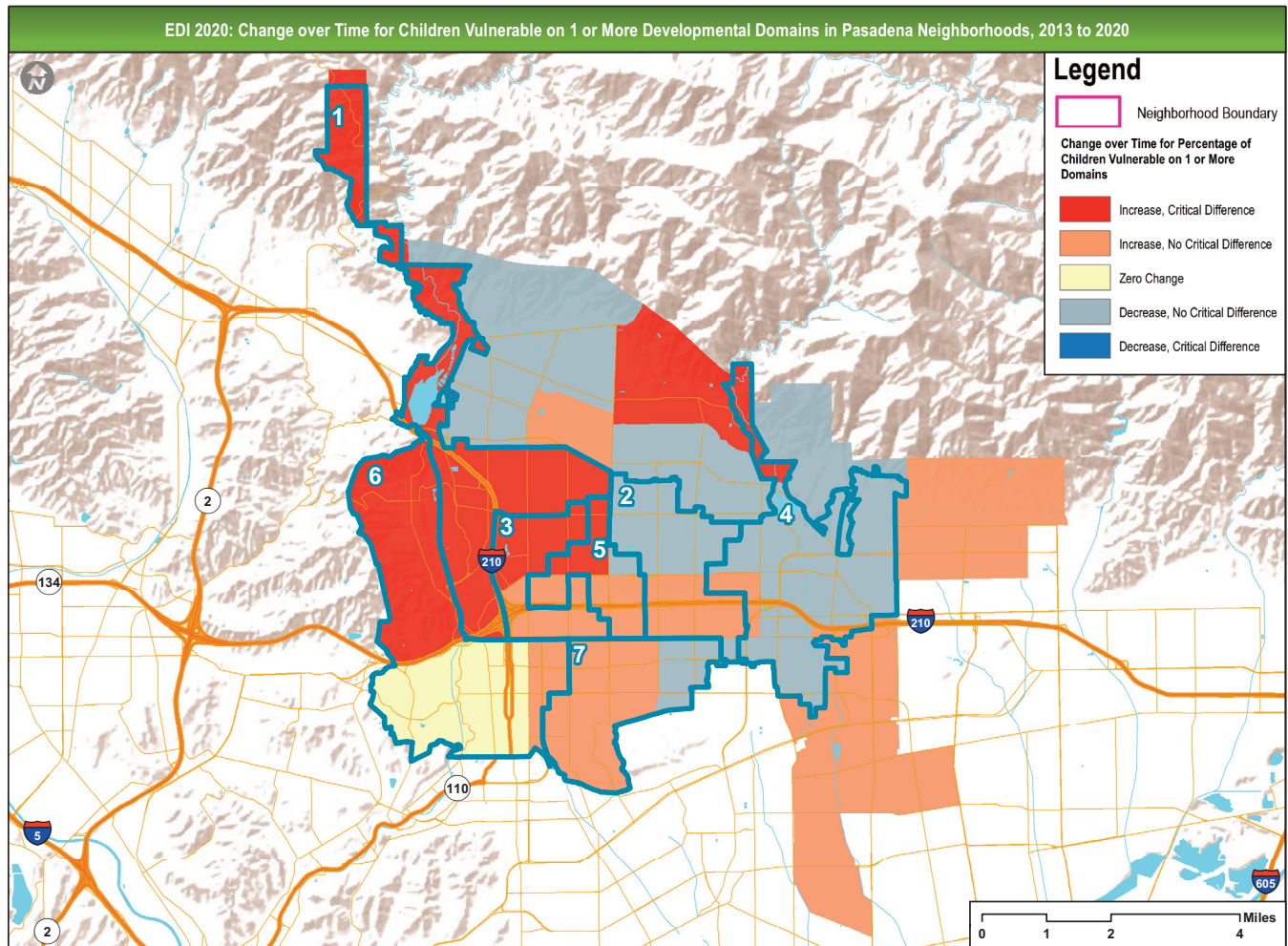
As of 2020, Pasadena had 10,265 children with ages birth - 5 years old. These young children represent 7.2% of the more than 140,000 residents living in Pasadena. This represents an increase of 11% of children younger than 6 years of age than there was 10 years ago. This increase occurred among all racial/ethnic groups, except for Black/African American. At the same time, on average, there are 59 less births to Pasadenans each year.

While the indicators used to track healthy births up to this time included positive trends, racial disparities remained. For example, Asian and White women received prenatal care in the first trimester at higher rates than Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx women. Also, infant mortality and low birth were improved overall. However they remained higher for Black/African American babies.

Rates of Pasadena children living below the poverty level had also been trending downward in a more positive direction. As of 2020, there were approximately 1,387 children aged birth -5 years old living below the poverty level. This is around 14% of the birth - 5 years old population. However, here again there remain disparities in outcomes when considering geography. There are two zip codes, 91101 and 91103, which had the lowest median household income levels in the Greater Pasadena region.



Going beyond key demographic data, Pasadena has gathered data for developmental outcomes of young children over time. Data had been collected in 2013, 2017 and in just prior to the beginning of the Pandemic in 2020. These data showed children continued to remain vulnerable. While these vulnerabilities differed across neighborhoods, and by race and ethnicity, overall nearly a quarter of children were deemed vulnerable in one or more key developmental domains.



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It is important to note that this early childhood development data was gathered from young children enrolled in kindergarten within the Pasadena Unified School District. While this data presents an important and useful picture as to the health and well-being of young children within the City, a third of Pasadena families enroll their school-age children in area private schools. While the introduction of Transitional Kindergarten and Universal Pre-School will certainly impact the local early childhood education landscape overall, currently it remains unclear which families will avail themselves of these newly created programs. Continuing to build relationships and partnerships with the entire early childhood community is necessary to developing a more robust and timely data collection system that reaches the full population of young children providing a more complete understanding of the health and well-being of all of Pasadena's young children and their families.

Gathering and disaggregating population level outcomes by race, ethnicity and geography highlights the critical importance of needing to understand both the neighborhood and family context. A more complete understanding of the distribution of resources across Pasadena, along with a family's ability to access needed services or other supports allows for a more effective planned approach to learning what is working, for whom and where, allowing us to improve early childhood outcomes for all Pasadena families with young children.

VISION FOR PASADENA

The City of Pasadena, in partnership with our community, creates, fosters, and ensures a caring, child-centered environment.

As our Vision is realized In Pasadena, all children

- are healthy, happy, safe, and thrive in learning and life,
- navigate the world with curiosity, creativity and kindness,
- thrive in neighborhoods and families that are healthy and safe,
- engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and participate freely in cultural life and the arts,
- develop a capacity for integrity, wisdom, humor, and playfulness,
- receive and enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and learning opportunities,
- flourish with a standard of living and education necessary for the child's physical, mental, moral, and social development, and;
- have families and child-care givers who are afforded the necessary early supports, services, and interventions since the well-being of children is dependent on those who nurture and care for them.



THE MASTER PLAN FOR THE YOUNG CHILD

The **MASTER PLAN for the YOUNG CHILD** is the foundation for achieving the VISION for PASADENA. This MASTER PLAN is based on the core values of a “shared vision, linked in action”, achieved through the integration and partnering of health services, neighborhood services, city services, early childhood supports, and pre-kindergarten related supports.

To achieve the VISION, data collection and data use are required as core elements in the MASTER PLAN. Such data and analyses are required to learn about and understand our children's and families' needs and experiences in community services and supports. Evidence-based approaches ensure effectiveness when accompanied by measurable objectives and accountability through specific data tracking and data compilation from existing sources.

The design and implementation of the MASTER PLAN requires that our City and community - together - ensure that all of our children and families experience the following:

- Anti-Racism
- Social Justice
- Economic Stability
- Health Equity
- Culturally Relevant Programs For All Learners



The MASTER PLAN must focus on pursuing partnerships and opportunities, including pursuit of public and private funding options that will improve the lives of our youngest children, ages birth to five.

The MASTER PLAN for the YOUNG CHILD will bring direction and a comprehensive systemic approach to early childhood policy, services, and supports in Pasadena.

CORE ELEMENTS OF THE MASTER PLAN

At the core of the Master Plan for the 2015 Policy were Eight Building Blocks to address the early childhood needs of children birth to five years old and those of their families. The 2022 Policy retains the comprehensive continuum of the Building Blocks through an update and consolidation into these three Core Elements.

1 Partnerships/Collaboration and Aligned System for Young Children

larger community to make the commitment to the shared vision visible to all but also to take on the role of catalyst for new approaches and ideas to take root and work to share what is being done and learned by the City stakeholders.

- > **“Aligned In Vision, Linked in Action”:** Building and sustaining partnerships is critical to working towards a shared vision for children and families as is the role of the City as convener of the

2 Data Collection and Measures of Success

receiving what services, how much and where, as well as understanding families’ experiences of services and other community supports.

- > To support Pasadena as an Early Learning City, it is necessary to capture data and information on children and families’ health and well-being, the types of services and numbers regarding who is

- > The city must move beyond data collection and focus on data use – which must include improving data dissemination and visualization that emphasizes improving stakeholders’ ability to use data to drive decision-making and improved impact.

- > This element is collectively viewed as the accountability element for the policy. To that end, specific responsibilities for data collection, data dissemination and support with data use must be identified and considered essential to identifying the ways in which we are achieving improved outcomes for children and families.

3 Strengthening Families:

Health and Wellness Strategies for Young Children, Access to High-Quality Early Education Experiences in Variety of Settings; Neighborhood - Based Parent Engagement and Family Supports; and Transition from Pre-School to Kindergarten

- > Under the **Strengthening Families** umbrella, the policy must foster organizing the work around the key areas of health and emotional well-being, and quality early childhood settings, and neighborhood supports.
- > By putting these together, we are emphasizing that we want to pull together health services, neighborhood services, city services, pre-school-related services, and use these as key touchpoints offering the opportunity to extend the reach of the full array of available services and supports to effectively work with children and families.
These become the key implementation strategies.



- > Included in this implementation umbrella is a focus on effective **Transition from Pre-School to Kindergarten** which is viewed as a critical transition in a young child's development. Within this umbrella and in partnership with the school district, child care centers, early childhood leaders and teachers, and parents and families, the city and the school district will foster
 - Continuous communication among the family, the school, and early childhood providers, public and private,
 - Helping families access and understand school registration processes,
 - Making children and parents comfortable and welcome in the new school environment, and
 - Sharing pre-kindergarten experience information at the right time with the family and the child's kindergarten teacher.

THE OFFICE OF THE YOUNG CHILD



The 2015 Policy advocated for the creation of an Office of the Young Child to coordinate and implement early childhood policy, services, and the Master Plan. The 2022 Policy confirms the need for an Office of the Young Child and gives specificity to its role and functions within the early child development community.

The 2022 Policy on Early Child Development and Early Learning (“2022 Policy”) reaffirms the City of Pasadena’s commitment as an Early Learning City.

Pasadena is city that:

- supports families with young children, birth to 5; and
- is visible in its commitment, offering its leadership by making connections within City departments, across all communities, bringing information and supports to families of our youngest children across all sectors and to all geographic areas of the City through active community participation.

Through the **Office of the Young Child (“OYC”)**, the City will fulfill its commitment as an Early Learning City. In partnership with the community, the OYC will convene stakeholders who are aligned in creating, fostering, and ensuring a caring child-centered environment. The OYC will provide leadership, will directly support and advocate for the Policy and its key recommendations, and will have a visible presence in the City and community. As part of its work, the OYC will:

- build and sustain ongoing relationships among key partners within the City and across sectors at the different levels, public and private, of the county, state, and nation.
- serve as the conduit for sharing information and resources, building connections within the community, and sharing models for success and measurement.
- facilitate wide-spread community participation and ensure that parents, teachers and caregivers play a role in shaping the supports provided to the City’s youngest children.
- maintain a resource-rich platform that provide parents and families information about services and supports that will enable the City’s youngest children to thrive.
- Identify and foster innovative practices and be a catalyst for new ideas to serve our youngest children and families.

AREAS OF RECOMMENDATION

Given the impacts of the pandemic and other social and economic factors that have changed since 2015, the City and its partners in the early child development community must refocus their efforts to achieve better outcomes for children and families. The following areas of recommendation are intended to provide specific activities to strengthen the City's commitment to the development and well-being of its youngest children.

1. FINANCING STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAMMING & SUPPORT

- a. Encourage cross-departmental funding opportunities within the City, and facilitate community partnerships to apply for state, federal and foundation grants.
 - Study new funding streams available through the Universal Pre-K allocations.
 - Explore opportunities for funding in support of our early childhood initiatives and key activities through coordination and collaboration with the school district, local provider groups, and higher education.
- b. Explore and consider specific programs and opportunities that are of interest to philanthropic donors.



- Take advantage of the invitation by the LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment to explore the possibility of aligning the City Policy with that of private foundations in proposing new and innovative approaches to improving early childhood systems and early childhood outcomes.
- Explore opportunities for connecting early childhood education and early learning to other systems that are operating and serving the same families or young children.
- Evaluate the pilot phase of the Growing Together PASadena HUB Network and consider proposing a strategy to expand the program, rooted in community need, that can serve as a model for other communities.

2. STRENGTHENING DATA COLLECTION RELATED TO YOUNG FAMILIES

- a. Seek funding to gather annual data on the number of children birth to 5 who live within the EDI study population.
 - Disaggregate the data to identify and engage infants and families – to include each baby born in Pasadena.

- b. Establish a mechanism to identify each child in Pasadena, birth to 5, and track their placement in an early childhood program – public, private, childcare center, in-home services.
 - Track the number of seats available in each early childhood program – public, private, childcare center, in-home.
- c. Create a central database on children and families so data is visible and accessible for all families– to include :
 - Demographic data on key child and family indicators – by age, race, and location as well as indicators impacting the well-being, health & development of children.
 - A list of partners who provide services to our youngest children and families.
 - Services offered and provided – including breakdown by age, race, service location.
 - Current up-to-date information: Easily disseminated and accessible.
 - Information on progress of Early Childhood initiatives.
- c. Develop a dashboard of appropriate EDI data and program outcomes from City departments to improve implementation outcomes and learning cycles related to the Early Child Development Policy.

3. STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT FOR THE OFFICE OF THE YOUNG CHILD AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2022 POLICY

The Office of the Young Child, with assistance from an advisory committee (format, structure and composition to be determined), will create a Work Plan that focuses on the planning and implementation of the 2022 Policy for Year 1:

- a. A catalog of existing City functions, programs and supports for our youngest children and their families;
- b. An analysis of the Growing Together PASadena Hub Network and HUB locations:
 - The current status, organization, number, and functions of the HUBS;
 - Recommendations re: goals and measurable outcomes of the HUBS;
 - The role of the OYC in supporting and marketing the HUB network.
- c. Implementation of the Key Initial Activities:
 - Create a structure for ongoing support and evaluation of the Work Plan and activities of the OYC and implementation of the Policy.
 - Assist the OYC with identifying a budget for Key Initial Activities.

KEY INITIAL ACTIVITIES

In revisiting the 2015 Policy, one of the lessons learned was to ensure that there were actionable items that would be helpful for various partners to organize in leading the way forward. In the 2022 Policy, the first three initial activities were selected to provide opportunities to create the immediate alignment of diverse stakeholders in achieving visible results.

1. Analyze funds through Measure J and explore ways in which a portion of the funds could be re-directed to the early childhood initiative.
 - Secure support and financial investment in EDI data collection for 2022-2023.
2. Create a meaningful partnership with Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD), Options for Learning, Collaborate PASadena, in convening a working group of representatives from PUSD, City staff, parents, and early childhood providers and professionals
 - to assist with the design and support of early childhood programs, including UPK (Universal Pre-Kindergarten)
 - to assist in developing a District-wide campaign to introduce the District in beginning a relationship with new families,
 - to create the design of a mixed delivery system responsive to the needs of a diverse population with families of young children.
3. Through the partnership, initiate the following:
 - A “Welcome Baby” Campaign for families of each newborn in Pasadena. Include in the Campaign, the “baby passport” (a concept currently being explored by the OYC and the Pasadena Public Health Department) and the “Big Little Mornings” program of Pasadena’s Kidspace Museum.
 - Establish a plan with set goal targets, utilizing birth to 5 population data to fill all of the unfilled seats in high-quality early childhood programs. The goal of this effort is to have a mixed use early childhood system whereby each of our youngest children is enrolled in a public, private, or in-home early development program.
4. Hold a Launch of the 2022 Policy, with commitment from significant entities, including PUSD, PCC, KPCC, local media, local fraternal/service organizations, and local foundations supporting children and families. Campaign elements might include billboards, a logo for aligned agencies, and a Pasadena “Welcome Baby” flyer and a digital companion.



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