

Michigan AEYC Policy Agenda

Michigan AEYC is a resource for current research and practices related to early childhood education (ages prenatal through eight) and supports continued improvement in policy. Michigan AEYC drafts or revises an annual policy agenda. These points are intertwined, evolving, and used to guide work with members, the community, legislature and other stakeholders on a state and local level. From October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024, Michigan AEYC has chosen to focus on the following agenda items:

Early Childhood Workforce

The Early Childhood field is experiencing a workforce crisis which won't end without state investment and support. In a 2022 NAEYC report, two-thirds of respondents reported experiencing staffing shortages, leading to fewer children being served and longer waitlists. Children and families cannot be supported when licensed home providers, child care centers, and other early childhood programs cannot attract and retain staff. Professionals require [compensation](#) equitable across the broad range of early childhood work, however the average early childhood professional makes \$11/hour. A [livable wage](#) will allow them to remain in the field to continue to make a strong, positive impact at a critical time in a child's development. Additional significant sustainable state funding is an essential piece for solving this crisis.

Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Learning

Michigan is expanding access to state-funded Pre-K programs, however, special attention must be paid to unintended consequences for infant, toddler, 3's, home-based, and other tuition-based care. Current subsidy rates do not reflect the [true cost of care](#), while expenses continue to rise for providers, both creating a larger divide between cost and affordability; particularly when implementing quality.

Meanwhile, only a small percentage of eligible working families ($\frac{1}{4}$) apply for subsidized programs due to the difficult application process and requirements to maintain eligibility. USDHHS recommends that a family spend no more than [7%](#) of their annual income on child care, yet most families who are able to afford care are spending [significantly more](#). More work needs to be done to improve the affordability and accessibility to high quality early learning for all young children through a variety of innovative, bipartisan funding models.

Social-Emotional Competence of Young Children and Staff

Young children's mental health and social-emotional competence are key indicators of later school success. Studies on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress make evident the impact of stress and trauma on young children and the role educators play to support these children and families. To better support early childhood mental health, educators need resources to respond to the increasing need for their own mental health and well-being as well. Families need access to referral opportunities and information about how to support their child's social emotional development. It is essential that educators have professional learning opportunities to identify and address mental health and well-being. Future initiatives must continue to address the ecological, social-emotional needs of children, families, professionals, and community members.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Children and Early Childhood Professionals

Equitability ensures relevant provided resources are based on need so that all can participate fairly. All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Professionals require ongoing training and support to ensure anti-bias practices are being followed. We support initiatives that embrace diversity and full inclusion as strengths, promote anti-bias education, uphold fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities.

Sources:

