# Impact of High-Quality Early Care and Education on Child Health and Well-Being

## Public Health and Policy Context

Positive early childhood experiences, particularly those occurring in the first five years of life, help children grow into healthy adults by impacting long-term social, cognitive, emotional and physical development. In the United States, most young children are cared for outside of the home in early care and education (ECE) programs, including preschool, Head Start, and family child care homes. ECE programs and staff can play influential roles in fostering the healthy development of young children. In the U.S. in 2019, nearly 12.6 million children not yet in kindergarten received care in ECE programs each week.

ECE programs vary greatly by type, curriculum and quality, and for many families, high-quality ECE programs can be cost prohibitive. The impact of ECE programs on child outcomes depends on their curriculum focus and the services they provide (e.g., health care services, nutritious meals). ECE programs can affect a child's physical health, developmental and social-emotional health, and other social outcomes.

Federal and state policies aim to provide families with access to high-quality ECE programs. Key federal programs and policies that promote access to ECE include:

Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG): CCDBG provides funding to support grants to state, territorial and tribal agencies to subsidize child care expenses and improve the quality and supply of