



# The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog  
[www.dcfpi.org](http://www.dcfpi.org)

April 25, 2014

## Improving Child Care in the District: How Will the FY 2015 Budget Help?

By Soumya Bhat

Mayor Gray's proposed budget for next year includes steps to improve the quality of child care in the city and particularly to strengthen child care providers that serve low-income families through the city's child care subsidy program. That's good news for children and for working parents looking for affordable care that meets their children's developmental needs.

The new funds, which will flow through the Office of the State Superintendent for children, total \$7 million and will be used for the following purposes:

**Improving the Quality of Child Care (\$4 million):** The District is working to develop a more systematic way of improving the quality of programs serving children birth to five. Some of this funding will be used to establish a common approach to assess and evaluate the quality of child care programs. Communication strategies would also be part of this approach to ensure parents are able to understand the meaning of a quality rating and use it to inform their decisions about child care.

Beyond that, some of the new funds will go to developing new quality improvement "hubs" in selected DC neighborhoods. These hubs will provide Early Head Start services, an evidence-based model, but also will be a source of technical assistance and professional development to other providers. Neighborhoods with high levels of need will be prioritized for these services.

Finally, the budget will provide added financial support to community-based providers that serve three- and four-year old children; these organizations receive far less funding per child than pre-kindergarten services funded through the school funding formula.

**Expanding Infant and Toddler Child Care Capacity (\$3 million):** The proposed budget includes additional funds to provide subsidized child care services for the expansion of infant and toddler child care slots, which are in high demand in the District. The FY 2014 capital budget funded new facilities to provide additional infant and toddler child care capacity, and this \$3 million in the FY 2015 budget will be used to fund the new services available in these spaces.

**Additional Funding on the Mayor’s ‘Wish List’ (\$8 million):** Beyond these investments, the first item on the budget wish list – the “contingent revenue priority list” – is \$8 million to be used for a range of early learning services, including additional expansion of child care slots for infants and toddlers, increased reimbursement rates, and financial incentives for high-quality providers. The list is a set of items that will be funded if revenue collections rise above current projected levels.

In case you missed the OSSE budget briefing held earlier this week, you can find the agency’s budget presentation [here](#).