

A Dozen Things to Watch in 2017

Looking ahead at 2017, Advocacy & Communication Solutions (ACS) encourages everyone to remember that much of the great work that happens in early childhood, K-12 education, workforce development, health and human services, Medicaid, and more, is the work of countless dedicated nonprofit organizations, local and state government agencies, and philanthropic organizations that have worked, and will continue to work, on key issues for decades to come.

Although no one has a crystal ball for 2017, it certainly helps to start with accurate and timely information. In this newsletter, ACS provides a quick look at the lay of the land on a range of issues. There are several initiatives and actions underway—some long in the works and all the result of tireless efforts by caring and intelligent people. Some of these initiatives are privately funded and could deliver valuable information to support continued or increased federal and state investment in programs that support children and families. Some are publicly funded and could either move forward or stall in the coming year, and others have the potential to change the landscape of critical sectors in our nation.

While there is a great deal of noise and speculation on all fronts related to the items in this newsletter and others, ACS pledges to follow all of these issues throughout the year, providing regular updates and more information as they develop. The ACS team is ready to help you keep moving in the right direction with planning, advocacy, strategy development, and communication services. Contact us [here](#).

12 Issues That 2017 Has in Store for Our Communities, Our States, and Our Country

1. Shifting Priorities for Foundations

Even if all of the resources from every foundation in the United States was liquidated and immediately distributed to those in need, it would only be a drop in the bucket compared to the amount of funding necessary—and supplied—by public sources. Nevertheless, foundations have a rich history of serving as a stop-gap measure for those in need, and of funding critical supports in communities across the country. To better understand how President-elect Donald Trump's

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incoming administration will handle investments in and policy related to workforce, education, as well as health and human services, some foundations are hitting the pause button on their strategy development for 2017 until more clarity is gained regarding federal spending and potential policy changes. This means that for some foundations, funding priorities may shift in the coming year. With [tax reform almost a certainty, potentially addressing issues from charitable deductions to nonprofit organizations to policies that may affect the amount foundations must give in a year](#), there will be even greater need for clear and frequent communication from philanthropy about their priorities and value to the communities they serve.

2. Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce

Evidence of the impact of investments in the early childhood workforce continued to grow in 2016 along with new tools, approaches, and action that could help the push for greater attention and resources in 2017. These include the following:

- [The National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (NAEYC) is in the midst of its [Power to the Profession initiative](#)¹ to develop a common vision and a shared framework for career pathways, knowledge and competencies, qualifications, standards, and compensation that unifies the entire early childhood profession. The initiative intends to develop a comprehensive policy and financing strategy for its systemic adoption and implementation across the country. This effort involves more than 40 national stakeholder organizations and is funded by the [Foundation for Child Development](#), [The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), [Alliance for Early Success](#), [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#), [Buffett Early Childhood Fund](#), and [Richard W. Goldman Family Foundation](#). As part of its process, **Power to the Profession** gives early educators an opportunity to contribute input on a comprehensive set of guidelines that is intended to advance their livelihoods and improve their profession. An initial draft of the framework is expected in the first half of 2018. [The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) has formed [an ad hoc committee](#) to study how to fund early care and education for children from birth to kindergarten entry that is accessible, affordable to families, and of high quality, including a well-qualified and adequately supported workforce. This is consistent with the vision outlined in their 2016 report [Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8](#).² The committee will briefly review and synthesize the available research and analysis on the resources needed to meet the full costs of high-quality early care and education and will investigate successful large-scale funding efforts across the country, as well as those that are smaller but show promise for expansion.
- In 2016, the [Center for the Study of Child Care Employment](#) (CSCCE) at the University of California Berkeley launched a bi-annual [State of the Early Childhood Workforce Index](#) that tracks wages in each state for child care workers, and preschool and kindergarten teachers, and compares them to the overall median wages in each state. It also examines workforce qualification data and highlights policy issues. On the website, users can view an interactive map, as well as download individual state profiles, resources, and communication tools. The 2016 edition is the first of its kind, and CSCCE considers it a baseline for future research. The 2018 edition will help identify trends that arise from policy and practice in 2017. The Index is aimed at both encouraging states to step up efforts to address persistent workforce challenges and at supporting related advocacy efforts. CSCCE hopes that expanded and consistent focus

¹More information about the Power to the Profession Taskforce can be found here: <https://www.naeyc.org/profession>

²More information about the Financing Early Care and Education With a Highly Qualified Workforce can be found here: http://sites.nationalacademies.org/DBASSE/BCYF/Finance_ECE/index.htm

on early childhood jobs will, in turn, generate refined strategies and encourage the incubation and testing of sustainable policies to attend to compensation and other issues that have gone largely unaddressed.

3. Flexibility in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

While many questions remain regarding the new federal administration's approach to [ESSA](#), states are likely to experience even greater flexibility than under the Obama administration. Although one of the primary goals of ESSA is to return control to the state level, it is likely that the new administration will further expand on this objective by leaving much decision-making authority to the states as they complete their implementation plans. Ultimately it will be up to the new secretary of education to approve state implementation plans, and states may be in a position to further customize their approaches as a result.

The incoming Trump administration has indicated it no longer supports the [Common Core State Standards](#). Despite these strong opinions, there are existing federal laws that may limit changes. For example, the U.S. education secretary is prohibited from requiring states to abandon the Common Core State Standards.

4. A Push for School Choice

As a result of the incoming President-elect Trump administration's preference for school choice, the focus of the [United States Department of Education](#) is likely to shift toward creating and expanding policies and initiatives that support broader parent choice, with a particular emphasis on vouchers. There are many, however, who question the ability of the federal government to afford the \$20 billion voucher program that has been proposed by President-elect Trump. His proposal assumes that states will supply an additional \$110 billion to fund vouchers. Additionally, current federal law may limit changes to school choice. Specifically, the U.S. education secretary may not offer states conditional waivers in exchange for adopting school choice programs. Confirmation hearings for President-elect Trump cabinet picks may provide additional insight on likely future policies and changes to federal law.

5. The Future of Two-Generational Approaches (2Gen)³

[2Gen approaches](#) address the needs of both children and their parents/caregivers to increase a family's ability to succeed. 2Gen approaches are particularly promising for breaking the cycle of poverty because they address the needs of the entire family, not just one particular family member. 2Gen approaches align supports that are particularly important for low-income families to find and maintain employment, increase their education, and improve their health and wellbeing.

Federal funding streams such as [SNAP Employment & Training](#)⁴, [Head Start](#), and [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#) can serve as a springboard for 2Gen approaches to access multiple funding sources and integrate program delivery to strengthen families. Several evaluations of Head Start as a conduit for 2Gen program delivery are currently underway. These include a rigorous study of a 2Gen intervention at CAP Tulsa, a leading Community Action Agency and Head Start provider, as well as four Head Start agencies across the country that are working to integrate a robust set of adult economic, education, and financial support services to the parents of Head Start children with support from the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#).

³More information about Two-generational approaches can be found here: <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/pages/the-two-generation-approach>

⁴The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) is part of the Nutrition Title of the Farm Bill. Under SNAP, Employment and Training (E&T) Programs were created to help food stamp recipients gain skills, training, or experience, and increase their ability to obtain regular employment. SNAP E&T funds can be used to provide enhanced individualized services to program participants and are a potential food stamp outreach tool for low-income working families. More information can be found here: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/Federal-Jobs-Programs>

2Gen approaches are both promising and popular with taxpayers. According to a 2014 survey from Lake Research, 70 percent of Americans believe that if policymakers want to make sure low-income children are successful in early learning, then they also have to invest in their parents' economic well-being. Seventy percent would favor a 2Gen approach to lift families out of poverty, even if their taxes were increased.

6. New Investments in Housing and Preventing Homelessness

Since 2010, federal policy has focused on preventing and ending homelessness. In 2010 the Obama Administration released [Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in America](#). This comprehensive plan laid out a bold agenda to prevent and end homelessness with four goals as its focal point. Since then, the [US Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD) has collaborated with federal, state, and local partners to work towards specific goals for preventing and ending homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020; for veterans by 2015; and for those experiencing chronic homelessness by 2017. The plan also includes creating a path to end all types of homelessness. There have been some successes. Veteran homelessness declined by 36 percent between 2010 and 2015. The number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness declined by 31 percent in that same period.

Since its original release, the plan was amended in 2012 to emphasize youth homelessness—specifically for unaccompanied youth ages 18-24. In August 2016, HUD also launched a new [\\$33 million Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program](#), which is designed to reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness. Ten communities were selected in January 2017 to receive funding and technical assistance for planning and implementation of new and innovative approaches to ending youth homelessness. This investment has the potential to significantly bolster local and state efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

7. Combining Early Care and Education Funding⁵

In an effort to determine how state and local early care providers are leveraging multiple funding sources and partnering with others to provide more families with higher-quality care, the [United States Government Accountability Office](#) (GAO) interviewed state officials and local providers of early care and education programs for its October 2016 report, [Child Care: Information on Integrating Early Care and Education Funding](#).

Those interviewed identified benefits associated with integrating funding from multiple sources and partnering with other providers. In particular, benefits included access to additional funding sources, opportunities to serve more children, increased access to full-day services for families, and the ability to offer higher-quality care.

Interviewees also cited factors that adversely impacted their ability to integrate funders and partners successfully. Differences in requirements, practices, and policies at the federal, state, and local levels were critical hurdles, causing problems in data sharing, reimbursement practices, child-to-staff ratios, income eligibility for families, teacher credentialing requirements, cost allocation, and monitoring. As a result, providers had to divert resources from services to attend to recordkeeping and monitoring activities, encountered funding restrictions, and/or suffer a reduction in income.

The GAO made no recommendation in its report, although it may prompt local, state, or federal agencies to address barriers and encourage the integration of early childhood funding streams.

⁵The GAO report on Information on Integrating Early Care and Education Funding can be found here: http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-775R?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

8. New Investments in Boys and Young Men of Color

Attention to and investment in programs that support boys and young men of color have increased during the past eight years. There have been investments from the White House through [My Brother's Keeper](#) and from several leading foundations (e.g., the [Forward Promise initiative](#) from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation). While the incoming Trump administration has been relatively silent on investments related to boys and young men of color, discussions and commitments among the philanthropic community likely will continue.

9. Reauthorizing Head Start and Implementing New Performance Standards

Head Start and Early Head Start programs are up for reauthorization in 2017. While future funding levels are anyone's guess under the new administration, it is worth noting that early childhood is one area that appears to appeal to lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. States and advocates will have an opportunity to provide feedback on changes to the federal program in 2017.

As of November 2016⁶, Head Start adopted new [performance standards](#)⁷ from the [Office of Head Start](#), an office of the [Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\)](#) and the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#). These standards guide best practice and day-to-day implementation of the program. The new rules respond to public comment; incorporate extensive findings from research and consultation with experts; reflect best practices, lessons from program input and innovation; integrate recommendations from the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Advisory Committee on Head Start Research and Evaluation [Final Report released in 2012](#); and reflect the [Obama Administration's priorities to improve the school readiness of young children](#). These performance standards intend to improve program quality, reduce the burden on programs, and improve regulatory clarity and transparency. They provide a roadmap for current and prospective grantees to support high-quality Head Start services and to strengthen the outcomes of the children and families Head Start serves.

The new standards are designed to support Head Start's move toward an outcomes-focused culture (as opposed to compliance-based) and have distinct sections for program governance, program operations, financial and administrative requirements, and federal administrative procedures. These standards are likely to remain in place regardless of budget changes, although the rules allow the U.S. Secretary of HHS to adjust or to determine whether to modify program duration requirements (full day, full year) if funding is not sufficient.⁸

10. Implementing New Child Care Development Block Grant Rules

The [Child Care Development Block Grant](#) (CCDBG) is a federal funding source that provides child care financial assistance for 1.4 million children each month across the U.S. In September 2016, the [United States Office of Child Care](#) published [new rules](#)⁹ to guide states on how to implement CCDBG funds and how to administer the program in a way that best meets the needs of children, child care providers, and families. Since child care regulations were last issued 18 years ago, research

⁶Note that compliance dates will be phased in over several years. Additional information can be found here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/09/06/2016-19748/head-start-performance-standards> and here: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/docs/pdf/compliance-table.pdf>

⁷Additional information can be found here: <https://www.nhsa.org/new-head-start-program-performance-standards> and here: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/presenting>

⁸Additional information can be found here: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/docs/pdf/hs-prog-pstandards-final-rule-qa.pdf>

⁹More information on the new rule may be found here: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/ccdf_final_rule_fact_sheet.pdf

has shown the impact that high-quality child care can have on young children's development and learning.

The rules apply to states, territories, and tribes administering the [Child Care Development Fund](#) (CCDF), and incorporate and clarify changes made through the bipartisan CCDBG Act. The new rules include measures to do the following:

1. protect the health and safety of children in child care;
2. help parents make informed consumer choices and access information to support child development;
3. support equal access to stable, high-quality child care for low-income children; and
4. enhance the quality of child care and better support the workforce.

Some rule changes—such as those for staff background checks, establishing a 12-month eligibility period, and requiring new data systems and tracking—may be challenging for states to implement due to resource constraints.

11. Using Medicaid to Support Child Health¹⁰

Several studies published in 2016 may be a guide to using Medicaid to support child health in 2017. These documents may be used in strategy development, advocacy, or in communication with partners to improve services and better understand how children are being served in practice under current policies. Changes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) likely will have implications for child health insurance, and therefore, on health outcomes for children. Some of the studies published in 2016 include:

- The [United States Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) released an [Informational Bulletin](#) in May 2016 highlighting the critical role Medicaid can play in supporting young children's healthy development through early maternal depression screening and treatment. This includes the stipulation that State Medicaid agencies may cover maternal depression screening during a well-child visit. Also, states must cover any medically necessary treatment for the child as part of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit.
- Research from the [Urban Institute](#) tracks participation rates in Medicaid/Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). [Research published in September 2016](#)¹¹ shows that participation rates in Medicaid/ CHIP are much higher for children than their parents. Researchers suggest the ACA appears to be having a positive impact on children's coverage, which could be, in part, related to parents being made more aware of health insurance options, and children being screened for CHIP eligibility as parents shopped for plans in the new health insurance marketplaces. According to the Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families, research also suggests that additional efforts for outreach, application assistance, and strategic enrollment and retention—especially in states that have not expanded Medicaid—should be targeted to enroll poor parents.¹²

¹⁰More information about how Medicaid can support screening and interventions can be found here:

<https://www.medicare.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/cib051116.pdf>

¹¹More information can be found here: <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/look-early-aca-implementation-state-and-national-medicare-patterns-adults-2014>

¹²Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families.

<http://ccf.georgetown.edu/2016/10/19/new-research-suggests-improved-outreach-and-enrollment-efforts-directed-at-very-poor-parents-eligible-for-medicare-are-needed-especially-in-the-south/>

- A new report by the [National Center for Children in Poverty](#) provides a helpful map of Medicaid support for children's mental health. [Using Medicaid to Help Young Children and Parents Access Mental Health Services](#), a survey of state Medicaid officials in 48 states and D.C., uncovered how Medicaid pays for mental health services for young children in a variety of settings. The report also highlights a frequent challenge encountered: difficulty tracking delivery of specific services, often due to a lack of separate billing codes for many services. The insufficient data makes it difficult to analyze gaps between policy and practice. (An [earlier piece](#) by the [Center for Health Care Strategies](#) looks at children's mental health services utilization in Medicaid using 2005 data, but not by state.) In sum¹³.
- Most states cover early childhood mental health (ECMH) services in the home (46 states), ECMH services in a primary practice setting (45 states), care coordination (44 states), child social-emotional screening (41 states), dyadic treatment, or working with the parent and child together (38 states), and ECMH in an early care and education setting (34 states). Less than one-third of states that reimburse defined services require evidence-based practices. Helpful state maps that show where each state stands on the identified services are included in the report.
- Fewer states cover maternal depression screening (9 states) or parenting programs (12 states) under the child's Medicaid coverage as a means to address children's mental health needs. The authors aimed to specify screening tools for maternal depression or social-emotional screening reimbursement.

12. Changes to the Federal Home Visiting Program

The [Federal Home Visiting Program](#), also known as Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting, (MIECHV), is a voluntary program to provide resources and skills to women and families to improve maternal and child health, prevent child abuse and neglect, encourage positive parenting, and promote child development and school readiness. The program is set to expire at the end of this fiscal year, on September 30, 2017. The Federal Home Visiting Program is administered by the [Health Resources and Services Administration's \(HRSA\) Maternal and Child Health Bureau](#), in collaboration with the [Administration for Children and Families](#) (ACF). Advocates in DC have created a Home Visiting Coalition to help build support for the federal home visiting program, with a goal of continuing and growing these programs. The coalition anticipates the launch of a [new website](#) in early 2017, that will include several key documents, such as the demonstrated impact of home visiting, bipartisan and statewide support, how home visiting contributes to the community and action advocates can take to support home visiting.

After four years of implementation, HRSA and ACF recognize the opportunity to strengthen the Federal Home Visiting Program and build on the solid foundation already established. Going forward, HRSA seeks to strengthen programs and policies, improve the performance measurement system, and further target technical assistance (TA) activities to build Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) capacity¹⁴, in which grantees evaluate their programs and identify areas of improvement, and advance grantee benchmark performance among state grantees.

¹³Information gathered from Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families: <http://ccf.georgetown.edu/2016/10/05/new-reports-shed-light-medicaid-and-child-mental-health/http://ccf.georgetown.edu/2016/10/05/new-reports-shed-light-medicaid-and-child-mental-health/>

¹⁴CQI is a data-driven, proactive process to ensure early childhood programs are systematically and intentionally improving services and increasing positive outcomes for the children and families they serve. More information about CQI can be found here: <http://qrisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/session/resources/Continuous%20Quality%20Improvement,%20An%20Overview%20Report%20for%20State%20QRIS%20Leaders.pdf>

HRSA and ACF are committed to redesigning the current performance measurement system for the Federal Home Visiting Program, so it addresses legislative requirements, enables comparisons across state grantees to present a national performance profile of the program, and encourages the program's CQI efforts. The redesign will achieve a simplified and unified performance measurement system. It also will intensify the Federal Home Visiting Program's focus on continued development of CQI capacity, and expanded Home Visiting Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network (*HV CoIIN*)¹⁵ efforts. HRSA and ACF hope that this intensive TA, along with the improved performance measurement system, will facilitate the growth of the Federal Home Visiting Program and strengthen its impact on the lives of children and families.

A Look Back...and Forward

ACS supported many clients in critical efforts in 2016, helping these organizations push forward new ideas, strategies, and approaches in their communities. ACS would like to end this Winter newsletter with a big "thank you!" to all of the organizations that provided smart thinking and great ideas to build on in 2017, many of which will be impacted by or will shape the future of the dozen issues addressed in this newsletter. These include the [J. Marion Sims Foundation in Lancaster, SC](#) engaging stakeholders in the community and strategically communicating its new direction; identifying ways to address significant gaps in the field of aging with the [Health Foundation of Western and Central New York](#); working with the [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) to assist state leadership councils gather feedback from the early childhood field regarding a unified vision for the early childhood workforce; advocating around the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and school choice issues with [The Ohio 8 Coalition](#); and working with the [Corporation for a Skilled Workforce](#) to shape two-generational approaches in Detroit, MI. Our partnership with our clients also includes developing and implementing communication efforts for [A Place 4 Me](#) to support their efforts to end youth homelessness in Cleveland/Cuyahoga County, OH; facilitating a strategic planning process for [First Things First](#) to set priorities for the Arizona's early childhood system; and the work ACS has done since 2014 with the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) to support boys and young men of color.

ACS looks forward to the coming year and will keep you updated on changes in these policies and more that affect the people our clients care about the most. If you would like more information about how ACS can help you achieve your goals in 2017, please contact ACS at info@advocacyandcommunication.org.

¹⁵*HV CoIIN* helps states, tribes, and home visiting programs identify, test, and measure the effectiveness of policies and practices. More information can be found here: <http://hv-coiin.edc.org/>

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