

JACK N JILL KINDERGARTEN- POLICY

Early childhood is a time of great opportunity. For young children, it is a time when they will learn to walk and talk and build the foundations for future development. For policymakers, it is a time to improve the odds that young children receive the health care, positive early learning experiences and nurturing parenting that will support their healthy development and school readiness. Improving the Odds for Young Children tracks policies to:

- Promote healthy development—access to health care for young children, their parents, and pregnant women; to nutrition programs; and to mental health services and supports.
- Promote high-quality early care and education—access to high-quality child care, responsive to the special needs of infants and toddlers; and access to prekindergarten for 4- and 5-year-olds.
- Promote effective parenting—to ensure that parents/mothers have time and skills to build a relationship with their young children, especially infants, while maximizing family resources.

This three-part framework reflects the multiple supports young children need to thrive. Within each area, the policy choices identify key policy steps that states can take to improve the odds for early success.

- Governments are increasingly acknowledging the need for social policy that supports the development of young children. Increased research is leading to new findings and more stakeholders advocating for effective support are behind this emerging pattern.

UNICEF, in collaboration with other international agencies, governments, civil society and NGOs, advocate for National Early Childhood Development policies that lay out concrete commitments and guidelines for young children's survival, development and protection. Its ability to support linkages between broad social policies and specific results-based interventions gives UNICEF a comparative advantage.

- Policy development or change does not have to be a top-down process, resting solely in the hands of lawmakers and ministry officials. Most importantly, policy is not created in a vacuum. Every local solution, successful research project, or advocacy effort has the potential to influence the thinking of decision-makers about what best supports young children and their families. As parents, teachers, community leaders or concerned citizens, we can all impact on robust and effective policy formation.