



## **Kids Can't Wait 2021-22 New York State Budget Recommendations**

In early 2020, Kids Can't Wait campaign members spoke with State leaders about the fragility of the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education systems due to a provider shortage and years of inadequate funding. New York State's Early Intervention payment rates are currently lower than they were in the mid-1990s. The percentage of children receiving timely EI services fell from 74% in 2015 to 66% in 2019.

Since then, the pandemic has disrupted service delivery and the programs have struggled even more. Existing disparities have widened. More children are waiting for services. Provider capacity has shrunk. In June 2020 the number of EI providers was down 15% compared to 2019 and it is very likely to have fallen more since then. The number of children enrolled in EI is at its lowest point since 2013, and the number of EI claims has dropped 29%.

As we enter 2021, we are hopeful that the new year will be one of rebuilding capacity and reducing inequities. The demands on the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education systems will be high as families seek to restore developmental skills lost during the pandemic. New York State must have sufficient revenue to respond fully, with enhanced services for children who received little or no services during the pandemic due to agency and school closures, lack of appropriate devices or internet access, and other barriers.

We urge New York State to secure additional revenue that will be needed to build back Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education systems in order to provide timely services to all eligible children and to eliminate long-standing disparities due to race, poverty or geography.

To move toward ensuring all young children with developmental delays or disabilities in New York can access the support and therapies guaranteed to them under federal law, the Kids Can't Wait campaign calls on the State to explore all possible sources of revenue to **increase the rates for Early Intervention providers and preschool special education programs by at least 10%**. We also recommend:

1. Passage of a Covered Lives assessment to bring badly needed additional revenue into Early Intervention program and to ensure that commercial insurers pay their fair share of Early Intervention services. The assessment should be at least \$40 million in SFY22.
2. As a step towards an increase of 10% in both Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education reimbursement rates, the state should conduct a comprehensive assessment of the methodology used to determine payment for all early intervention evaluations, services and service coordination, and should develop a new tuition rate-setting methodology for Preschool Special Education so that rates better reflect the costs of delivering services.
3. The state should guarantee parity in annual funding increases between public schools and preschool special education programs. We support the Board of Regents' proposal to change state law to require the State to provide at least the same percentage increase in funding to preschool special education programs as it gives to public schools each year.
4. Passage of the health care workforce data bill (A7213, S8925) to establish regular collection and release of health workforce data, including EI providers, to inform and approve health planning and access and emergency preparedness.



**New York State should act to respond to pandemic-related gaps in services.** A [recent report](#) documents the impact of COVID-19 on New York's young children with developmental delays and disabilities. The number of children enrolled in EI fell by 12% statewide during the pandemic. For kids still enrolled, services delivered fell by 29%. NYS must act now to reverse these trends by taking the following steps:

- Launch an outreach campaign and develop a comprehensive plan for developmental screenings to identify young children with developmental delays and disabilities and connect them to services.
- Provide adequate technology and training to families and providers;
- Engage in targeted outreach to families to identify and address barriers to participation, including issues related to telehealth access and equity; and
- Provide make-up services to compensate for services missed during the pandemic and prepare for a potential surge in children needing EI and preschool special education evaluations and services.