EXHIBIT D



Early Childhood Committee

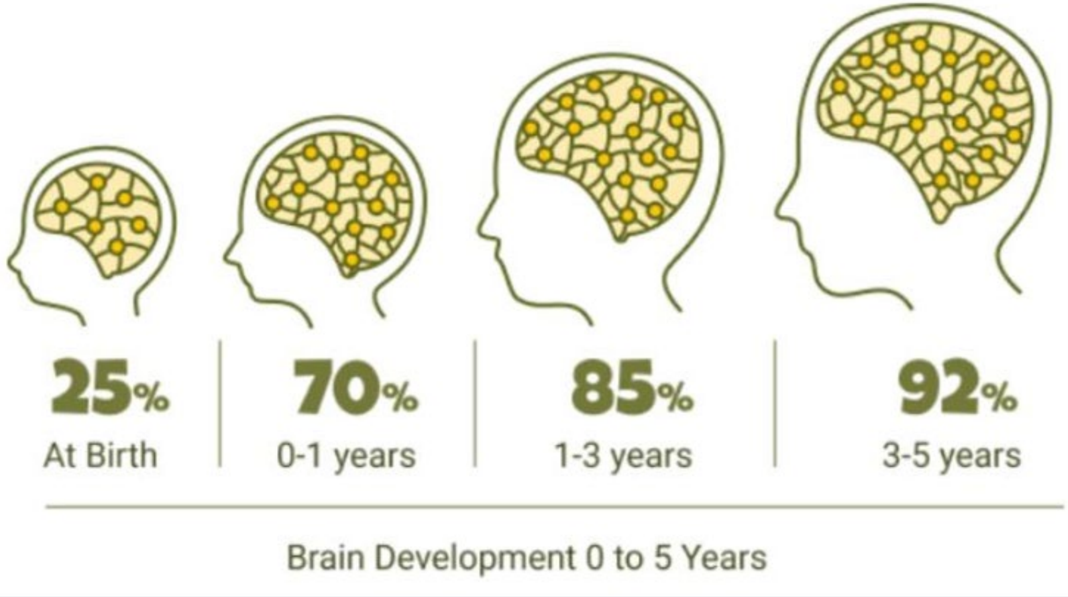
Overview of the Office of Early Childhood

Monday, November 16, 2026 · 1:30 PM

The Foundation for Learning Begins Early

High-quality early childhood experiences lay the foundation for lifelong learning, health, and success underscoring why investing in our youngest children matters.

- **The first five years are a critical period of brain development**, shaping the foundations for learning, behavior, and health.[1]
- **High-quality early childhood education supports stronger outcomes** in reading, math, social development, and school readiness.[2]
- Research has linked high-quality early education to higher rates of high school graduation and improved health outcomes in adulthood.[3]
- **Investments in early childhood benefit families and communities**, supporting parents' workforce participation and greater economic stability.[4]



The brain grows rapidly in the first five years, reaching approximately 90% of its adult volume by age five. [5]

Sources: 1. Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child, “Brain Architecture” 2. Wat, A., “The Pre-K Pinch: Early Education and the Middle Class” 3. National Institute of Health, “Impacts of Early Childhood on Medium and Long-Term Educational Outcomes” (2017) 4. Heckman, “Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy” (2025). 5. University of Washington, Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences (I-LABS), Brain Growth in the First Five Years of Life.

Early Childhood Vision

LEARNS envisions a seamless early childhood system in Arkansas that ensures:



All children enter kindergarten ready to learn and prepared for lifelong success as a result of their experiences in high -quality early care and education.



Families can access the resources their child needs on their pathway to kindergarten, regardless of the setting they choose for their child.



Providers deliver high -quality early learning experiences, through a workforce that is prepared to care for and educate young children.



There are **high quality seats** for children, made accessible for families through state, local, and community leadership.



The **local and state economies** benefit from thriving families who are supported to hold jobs, raise children, and participate in their community.

Success in AR Office of Early Childhood

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is turning the LEARNS vision into reality. Ten months into 2026, OEC is delivering on the LEARNS vision for early childhood by having:

- Applied for and won a $14.7 million Preschool Development Grant
  - Distributed $3,560,000 in CLASS transition payments
  - Distributed $899,340 in Workforce Stipends to 1,623 providers statewide
- Reviewed and released the High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) list, with 10 curriculum approved, with 9 additional comprehensive curriculum pending review
- Began tracking data on professional supports to provide insights on impact on quality of sites, with over 5,000 surveys collected with feedback from providers about the OEC funded supports they're receiving
- Invested in building a unified and coherent early childhood data system

Measuring and Improving

After the transition year into the new QRIS, Arkansas OEC has a better understanding of the quality that children are experiencing in classrooms and is leveraging professional development grantees to support quality improvement.



3,700
CLASS observations completed in 2025-2026



3,508
classrooms observed in 2025-2026



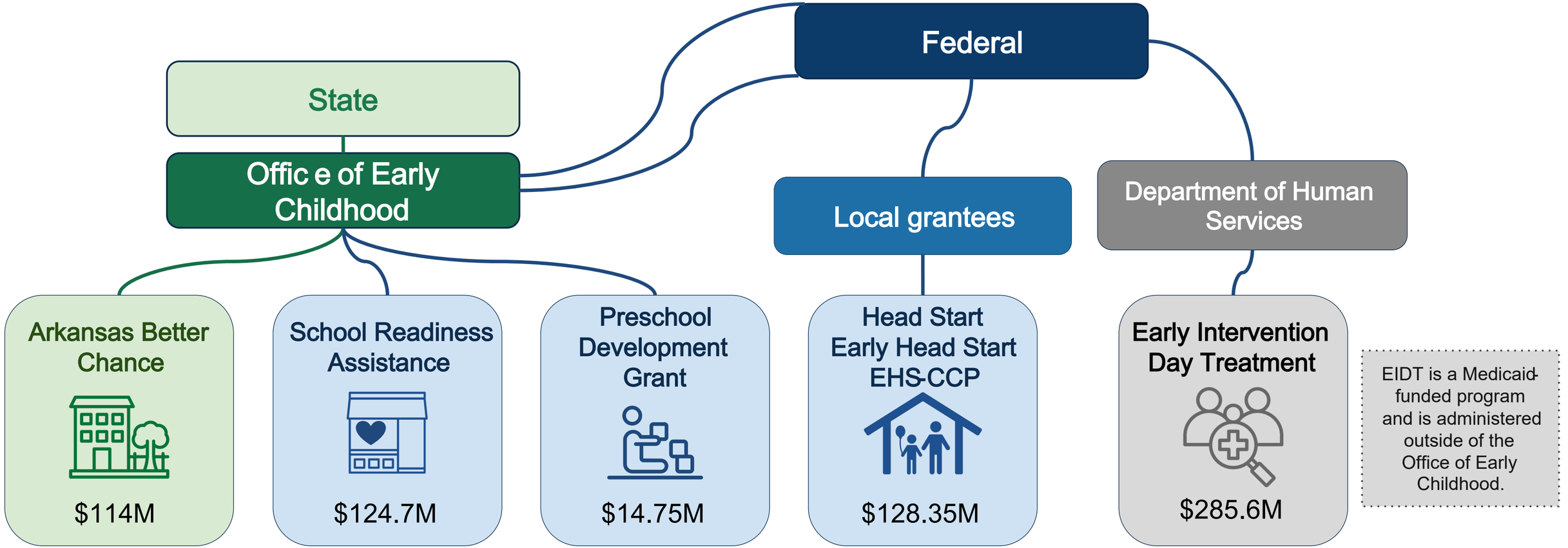
296,000+
minutes of insight into children's experiences



3,987+
hours of professional development coaching, TA, & training delivered to providers since July 2026

Investment in ECE Programs

Arkansas funds early childhood care and education through several federal and state sources. LEARNS charges OEC to align these funding streams so families and providers experience one coherent system.



ARKANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM: CURRENT LANDSCAPE

Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) and School Readiness Assistance (SRA) | Current-state data from SRA Waitlist Cost Analysis workbook effective 09/25/26.

23,004	$107.02M	19,761	3,584	2,487
ABC children served	**ABC funding for direct services**	**Children served in ABC Center Based Care**	**Children on SRA waitlist**	**B-5 Children on SRA Waitlist**
All ABC service models	Excluding contracts or admin costs	86% of ABC children	All age groups	69.4% of SRA waitlist

WHO ABC CURRENTLY SERVES

Age / Model	School	Community	Total
Infant	202	103	305
Toddler	729	289	1,018
Pre-K	16,240	2,198	18,438
Classroom total	**17,171**	**2,590**	**19,761**
HIPPY/PAT	—	—	**3,243**
ALL ABC	—	—	**23,004**

Dimension	Children	Share
School-based program	17,171	86.9% of classroom
Community-based program	2,590	13.1% of classroom
Statewide-rate region	20,703	90.0% of all ABC
Benton/Washington region	2,301	10.0% of all ABC
2026 summer slots	2,846	12.4% of all ABC

WHERE CURRENT UNMET DEMAND IS CONCENTRATED

SRA Waitlist	# Children	% Total	B-5 Share
Infant	573	16.0%	23.0%
Toddler	904	25.2%	36.3%
Pre-K	1,010	28.2%	40.6%
School age	1,097	30.6%	—
TOTAL	**3,584**	**100%**	—
Birth-to-five	**2,487**	**69.4%**	**100%**

County	B-5 Waitlist	% of B-5
Pulaski	559	22.5%
Washington	180	7.2%
Benton	146	5.9%
Faulkner	134	5.4%
Craighead	127	5.1%
Saline	112	4.5%
Sebastian	105	4.2%
Jefferson	99	4.0%
Garland	73	2.9%
Crittenden	61	2.5%

Data: SRA Waitlist Cost Analysis workbook. Legal check: Arkansas Code §§ 6-45-105, 6-45-106, 6-45-108; 2024 ABC Rules; Act 157 of 2026.

CCDF Waitlists in Surrounding States

Arkansas has the lowest number of children on the CCDF waitlist, compared to neighboring states.

State	CCDF Waitlist?	# on Waitlist	Population Child <5	Percent of Children on Waitlist
Arkansas	Yes	3,584 as of October 1, 2026	179,804	1.99%
Louisiana	Yes	7,851 as of April 30, 2026	275,863	2.85%
Texas	Yes	93,000+ children as of January, 2025	1,992,611	4.67%
Oklahoma	No, the state has placed a freeze on new applications, as of January 2026. There is no evidence (e.g., reports or press releases) that indicate a waitlist.	N/A	245,529	N/A
Missouri	Yes	7,165 as of June, 2026	346,417	2.07%
Tennessee	Yes	~10,000 children as of April, 2026	422,049	2.37%
Mississippi	Yes	6,000+ families as of May 20, 2026	172,103	3.49%