



**CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE**

*A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families*



## **WASHINGTON RANKS AS A TOP STATE FOR BABIES**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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SEATTLE – Washington ranks as a top state for babies, according to a report released today by early childhood development nonprofit ZERO TO THREE and children's research organization Child Trends. The *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019* is a first-of-its-kind resource that looks holistically at the well-being of America's babies, providing a national snapshot and comparisons across states. The Yearbook compiles nearly 60 indicators—specifically for children ages 0 to 3—to measure progress across three policy areas: Good Health, Strong Families, and Positive Early Learning Experiences.

Washington was among 12 states across the United States and the District of Columbia to earn a top ranking. But despite the state's strong scores in Good Health and Strong Families, the Yearbook indicates that we still have room to grow to give the youngest Washingtonians the chance to thrive.

Data show the cost of infant care for both single parents and married couples is high, with the average single parent paying more than half their income to child care. Child care for an infant in Washington costs more than in-state tuition at one of the state's public colleges.

Public assistance for meeting the high cost of child care exists, in the form of Working Connections Child Care. But it's hard to get and, once secured, hard to use—particularly for young families raising infants and toddlers. Families face stringent eligibility requirements for Working Connections—and if they receive them, the program's payments to child care providers are so low that few participate. These hurdles prevent our youngest learners from receiving the high-quality early care they need for success in school and life.

“Each of the 274,550 babies in Washington was born with a bundle of unlimited potential and the first three years of their life will shape every year that follows,” said Myra Jones-Taylor, chief policy officer of ZERO TO THREE. “But far too many babies face persistent hardships—such as food insecurity, unstable housing, and exposure to violence—that undermine their ability to grow and thrive.”

“Washington parents are working hard to provide their infants and toddlers with the best possible starts in life,” said Allison Krutsinger, early learning policy director at Children’s Alliance. “It’s time for state policymakers to do the same, by investing in affordable, high-quality Working Connections Child Care.”

The *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019* reveals that where you are born—and factors like race, ethnicity, and household income—can make a difference in your chances for a strong start in life. But policy supports for babies and families give babies the chance to overcome adversity and reach their full potential.

“From day one, every Washington child should have the rich experiences that build healthy minds and bodies, which is why we are leading the charge here in Washington as a *Think Babies™* partner,” says Krutsinger.

The Children’s Alliance noted that state lawmakers put quality care within reach of more families when they passed the 2015 Early Start Act, then passed paid family and medical leave in 2017 to give new babies and parents time to bond.

“Here in Washington, we are raising the bar. But great ideas deserve substantial investments,” said Krutsinger. “State lawmakers need to increase access to child care with a budget that puts babies and families first.”

Parents, kids and community leaders will carry that message to the state capitol 10 a.m. Thursday, March 14, as part of *Strolling Thunder™*, where babies, toddlers and their families will demand solutions for affordable child care for more Washington families. *Strolling Thunder™* is part of a series of state and national events to highlight the policy priorities of the *Think Babies™* campaign of ZERO TO THREE and state-level partners like the Children’s Alliance.

The State of The Babies Yearbook report confirms what many Washington families experience when trying to access child care. Washington’s young children fare worse than the national average in:

- **Cost of infant care**  
The cost of infant care as a percentage of median income for single parents is 51.1 percent; infant care costs more than in-state college tuition.
- **Eligibility for child care subsidy**  
Working Connections Child Care can help families afford the high cost of care, but it’s only available to families earning 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level or below.

It is not all bad news for Washington’s infants and toddlers. Washington’s young children fare better than the national average in:

- **Employer-provided sick days**  
Washington is one of 11 states with a paid sick leave law; such laws give working parents a chance to care for a sick child without losing a day’s pay.
- **Paid family leave**  
Washington is one of six states and the District of Columbia that has a paid family leave program.
- **Infants breastfed at six months**

Nearly 73 percent of Washington babies are breastfed at six months of age, compared to just 57.6 percent nationally.

From poverty and racial inequalities to access to affordable housing and child care, the youngest in America face big challenges, according to the Yearbook:

- Almost half of U.S. babies live in poor or low-income families that struggle to make ends meet.
- Almost 1 in 4 babies live in poverty, making children under age 3 the age group most likely to experience poverty.
- More than 8 percent of infants and toddlers have already had two or more adverse experiences, such as maltreatment, parental separation, or divorce.
- Only six states, including Washington, and the District of Columbia offer paid family leave, a policy that enables families to support the well-being of infants and other family members.

The *State of Babies Yearbook* uses a transparent ranking process to group states into one of four tiers to provide a quick snapshot of how states fare on the selected indicators and domains. These tiers represent four groupings of states that are approximately equal in size and ordered from highest to lowest performing. We use the following tiering symbols to designate a given state’s placement in one of the four tiers:

- “**GROW**” for **W**orking **E**ffectively
- “**GRO**” for **I**mproving **O**utcomes
- “**GR**” for **R**eaching **F**orward
- “**G**” for **G**etting **S**tarted

State	Overall ranking	Good Health	Strong Families	Positive Early Learning Experiences
Alabama	G	G	G	GR
Alaska	GRO	GR	G	GRO
Arizona	G	GR	G	G
Arkansas	G	G	G	G
California	GR	GROW	GRO	G
Colorado	GROW	GROW	GRO	GROW
Connecticut	GROW	GROW	GROW	GRO
Delaware	GROW	GR	GROW	GROW
District of Columbia	GRO	GRO	GROW	GRO
Florida	G	G	GR	G
Georgia	GR	GR	GR	GR
Hawaii	GRO	GROW	GRO	GR
Idaho	GR	GRO	GRO	G
Illinois	G	GR	GRO	G
Indiana	GR	GR	G	GRO
Iowa	GRO	GROW	GRO	GRO
Kansas	GR	GR	GRO	GR
Kentucky	G	G	GR	GRO
Louisiana	GR	G	G	GROW
Maine	GROW	GRO	GR	GROW
Maryland	GROW	GROW	GROW	GRO
Massachusetts	GROW	GROW	GROW	GROW
Michigan	GR	GR	G	GR
Minnesota	GROW	GROW	GROW	GR
Mississippi	G	G	GR	GR
Missouri	GRO	G	GROW	GR
Montana	GROW	GRO	GR	GROW

Nebraska	GRO	GR	GRO	GROW
Nevada	G	G	G	G
New Hampshire	GROW	GROW	GROW	GROW
New Jersey	GRO	GR	GROW	GRO
New Mexico	GRO	GR	G	GROW
New York	GR	GRO	G	GR
North Carolina	GRO	GRO	GR	GRO
North Dakota	GR	GR	GR	GRO
Ohio	GRO	GRO	GRO	GRO
Oklahoma	G	G	G	GRO
Oregon	GRO	GRO	GRO	GR
Pennsylvania	GRO	GRO	GRO	GRO
Rhode Island	GROW	GROW	GROW	GROW
South Carolina	GR	GR	GR	G
South Dakota	GRO	GRO	G	GROW
Tennessee	G	G	GR	G
Texas	G	G	GR	G
Utah	GR	GRO	GR	G
Vermont	GROW	GROW	GROW	GROW
Virginia	GR	GRO	GRO	G
Washington	GROW	GROW	GROW	GR
West Virginia	G	G	GR	GR
Wisconsin	GR	GRO	GRO	G
Wyoming	G	G	G	GR

Access the national profile and state data at [stateofbabies.org](http://stateofbabies.org).

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### **About CHILDREN’S ALLIANCE**

The Children’s Alliance works to effect positive change in public policies, budgets and programs at the state and federal levels. It partners with the national-level policy organization ZERO TO THREE for *Think Babies™* to place an emphasis on policy solutions for babies, toddlers and new parents. For more information and to join, please visit [childrensalliance.org](http://childrensalliance.org), go to [facebook.com/childrensalliancewa](https://facebook.com/childrensalliancewa),s or follow [Children’s Alliance](#) on Twitter.

### **About ZERO TO THREE**

ZERO TO THREE works to ensure all infants and toddlers benefit from the family and community connections critical to their well-being and development. Since 1977, the organization has advanced the proven power of nurturing relationships by transforming the science of early childhood into helpful resources, practical tools and responsive policies for millions of parents, professionals and policymakers. For more information, and to learn how to become a ZERO TO THREE member, please visit [zerotothree.org](http://zerotothree.org), [facebook.com/zerotothree](https://facebook.com/zerotothree), or follow [@ZEROTOTHREE](#) on Twitter.

### **About Think Babies™**

ZERO TO THREE created the *Think Babies* campaign to make the potential of every baby a national priority. When we *Think Babies* and invest in infants, toddlers, and their families, we ensure a strong future for us all. Learn more at [thinkbabies.org](http://thinkbabies.org) or follow [@ZEROTOTHREE](#) on Twitter.