

STARTING NOW

A Policy Vision for Supporting the Healthy Growth and Development of Every California Baby



Each year, 500,000 babies are born in California. In the first three years of these children's lives, their brains are rapidly forming neural connections – one million connections every second. This development is foundational for their long-term health and well-being, and it is fueled by good health, positive and nurturing relationships with adults, exposure to enriching learning opportunities, and safe neighborhoods.

All families need support, but systemic adversity and inequities mean that not all families begin on level ground. Research shows that disparities in achievement and opportunity open early in children's lives and, once present, are more difficult to resolve and more likely to persist throughout childhood and adulthood.

For a strong California future, policymakers must commit to a big goal: establish a child-centered, comprehensive and sustainable network of quality services and supports, starting before birth, to ensure all kids have equitable opportunities to reach their full potential. It is a complicated challenge. It will require a focus on multiple programs and policy areas that address the diverse needs of California's children across regions, race and income levels. It will also require an approach that makes services and systems of support interconnected, efficient and sensible for families. Without putting these supports into place we risk an entire generation falling behind.

In a state known for innovation, California's leaders must make sure that every California baby has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential—starting now.

Learn more at <https://www.childrennow.org/portfolio-posts/startingnow/>



**Children
Now**