

2021 ELECTION GUIDE

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR NEW JERSEY BEGINS WITH BABIES

The first three years of life represent a time of unlimited potential, when a baby's brain grows most rapidly and a child's earliest experiences set the foundation for future success.

Elected officials have the opportunity to make real and meaningful investments in supporting the healthy growth and development of our children.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

VOTERS:

Inform candidates about the key issues affecting infants and toddlers. Today's candidates could be our next early childhood champions!

We have the momentum – and the funding. Now we need our elected officials to act! New Jersey has received unprecedented funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and additional federal aid to support transformative investments in our early childhood system.

CANDIDATES:

- **Make babies a priority!** Create and support legislation that focuses on infants and toddlers.
- **Ensure funding from the American Rescue Plan** is allocated towards young children and families.
- **Support the early childhood workforce.** They are the key to our economic recovery.

It's time to raise our voices for our youngest learners!

#NJVOTES4KIDS 



for **ADVOCATES**
CHILDREN OF NEW JERSEY

ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILD CARE CHANGES LIVES

QUALITY INFANT-TODDLER CHILD CARE...



fosters healthy brain development



prepares babies for future learning and success



promotes communication, social and emotional skills



enables parents to join the workforce

BUT HERE'S THE PROBLEM:

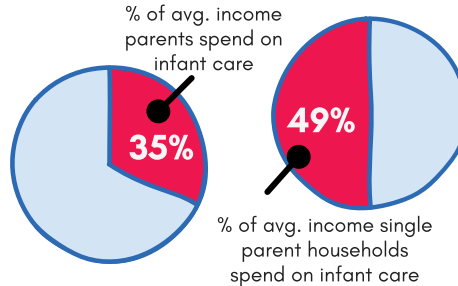
NEW JERSEY'S CHILD CARE SYSTEM IS IN CRISIS

CHILD CARE IS HARD TO FIND



40% of NJ municipalities are **child care "deserts"** - communities where few, if any, centers exist for infant-toddler care.¹

CHILD CARE IS UNAFFORDABLE FOR MANY FAMILIES²



OUR CHILD CARE WORKFORCE IS UNDERPAID



MEDIAN WAGE FOR A CHILD CARE WORKER:
Less than \$13/hour³

Child care programs are unable to pay their teachers what they're worth at a price families can afford. This has led to limited staff and high turnover.

STATE LEADERS CAN USE THE NEARLY \$1 BILLION NEW JERSEY HAS RECEIVED IN AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN CHILD CARE FUNDING AND ADDITIONAL FEDERAL AID TO:



increase teacher compensation.



improve access to child care tuition assistance for more families.



provide grants for programs to improve facilities.



develop pathways to help establish more family child care providers and eliminate child care deserts.

IT'S TIME TO **#REIMAGINEchildcare**

HOME VISITORS ARE ESSENTIAL

PROVIDING A LIFELINE FOR EXPECTANT PARENTS AND YOUNG FAMILIES

HOME VISITORS REACH FAMILIES WHERE THEY LIVE, PROVIDING:



positive parenting and emotional support



prenatal and postnatal supports, providing wellness checks and a range of services



education support, empowering parents as their baby's first and best teachers



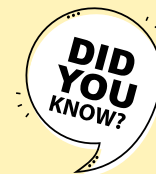
access to food and supplies, linking families to community resources like food and diaper banks

AND THERE'S GREAT NEWS:



NEW JERSEY JUST PASSED A UNIVERSAL HOME VISITING LAW!

Every parent welcoming a newborn can receive at least one free home visit from a nurse within two weeks of their child's birth, with the option of two more visits within the next three months.



The universal home visiting program builds upon the state's current intensive home visiting programs available to a limited number of families.

STATE LEADERS CAN ENSURE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION BY FUNDING:

A WELL-COMPENSATED WORKFORCE



Our current home visiting workforce is underpaid, leading to high turnover.

A COORDINATED SYSTEM OF CARE



Strong partnerships between state and local agencies ensures families are well-supported and connected to intensive programs if needed.

CONTINUED INVESTMENTS TO SUSTAIN SERVICES



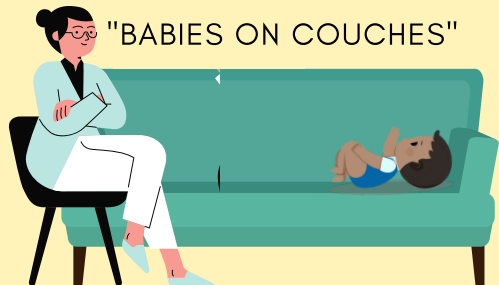
A decade of flat funding has severely impacted current staffing and program operations.

HEALTHY BABIES START WITH HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS!



INFANT MENTAL HEALTH IS **NOT**

"BABIES ON COUCHES"



INFANT MENTAL HEALTH IS PROMOTING THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF A BABY, HELPING THEM DEVELOP THE CAPACITY TO:

- form close and trusting relationships
- experience and manage emotions
- explore their environment and learn



IT CAN ALSO PREVENT AND REPAIR THE DAMAGE TOXIC STRESS CAUSES TO THE DEVELOPING BRAIN.

BUT HERE'S THE PROBLEM:

AWARENESS AND ACCESS TO INFANT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ARE LIMITED



ONLY **4** infant mental clinics exist in the Garden State.⁵

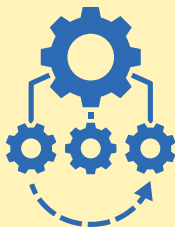


20 clinicians are endorsed to provide infant mental health services.⁶



There is inconsistent Medicaid and health insurance coverage for mental health services.

STATE LEADERS CAN USE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDING TO SUPPORT INFANT MENTAL HEALTH TO:



ensure Medicaid and NJ FamilyCare cover necessary infant mental health services.



grow and develop the infant mental health workforce by offering scholarships and trainings.



sustain and grow interdisciplinary pediatric primary care models that embed infant mental health in their practice.

SAVE MOMS. SAVE LIVES. SUPPORT MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH

NJ RANKS
47TH
IN THE NATION
FOR
MATERNAL
MORTALITY



OUR HEALTH SYSTEMS MUST DO MORE TO SUPPORT MOTHERS AND IN PARTICULAR, BLACK MOTHERS AND BABIES.

ELIMINATING RACIAL BIAS IS KEY TO IMPROVING MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH OUTCOMES



BLACK MOTHERS ARE

3x

more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications compared to the state average.⁸



BLACK BABIES ARE

2x

more likely to die before their first birthday compared to the state average.⁹

This disparity cuts across all education levels of the mother.¹⁰

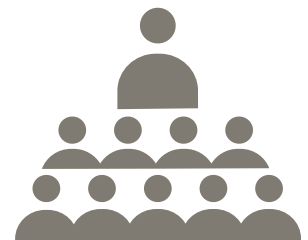
STATE LEADERS CAN HELP MAKE NEW JERSEY THE SAFEST AND MOST EQUITABLE PLACE IN THE NATION TO DELIVER AND RAISE A BABY BY:



ensuring access to culturally sensitive and supportive healthcare at every stage.



investing in community programs that offer one-stop comprehensive services.



ensuring providers receive training to address implicit and racial bias.

Be a True Champion for New Jersey's Children

Join the #NJVotes4Kids Campaign by raising awareness of children's issues and help shape the focus and priorities of the next governor and legislature.

- ✓ Use the election guide to become better informed on the state of children in New Jersey.
- ✓ Challenge the 2021 political hopefuls to bring children's issues to the forefront during forums, town halls and local events.
- ✓ Use #NJVotes4Kids on social media to join the conversation on making children's issues a priority in the state elections.
- ✓ Encourage your friends, family and colleagues to join the #NJVotes4Kids Campaign by visiting [NJVotes4Kids.org](https://www.njvotes4kids.org).

CONNECT WITH US

FOLLOW US @ACNJFORKIDS



Use #[NJVotes4Kids](https://www.njvotes4kids.org) to join the discussion on children's issues in the 2021 state elections.

Visit [NJVotes4Kids.org](https://www.njvotes4kids.org) to get the latest updates and activities.



DATA SOURCES AND TECHNICAL NOTES

1. **Forty percent of New Jersey's municipalities are child care deserts.** Advocates for Children of New Jersey. (2018). Infant-Toddler Child Care Deserts, New Jersey. Retrieved September 14, 2021 from www.acnj.org/downloads/Child_Care_Deserts_Legislative_Maps/New_Jersey.pdf

2. **Percent of average income spent on center-based infant child care.** United Way. (2020). ALICE IN NEW JERSEY: A FINANCIAL HARDSHIP STUDY 2020. Retrieved September 13, 2021 from https://docs.unitedwaynj.org/main/2020ALICEReport_NJ_12_3_2020.pdf, page 12.

3. **Median wage for a child care worker.** The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE). (2020). Early Childhood Workforce Index 2020, New Jersey State Profile. Retrieved September 13, 2021 from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/states/new-jersey/>.

4. **New Jersey's universal home visiting law.** Retrieved September 13, 2021 from https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2020/Bills/S1000/690_S2.PDF.

5. **Only four infant mental health clinics exist in New Jersey.** As reported by Advocates for Children of New Jersey's infant mental health partners as of September 14, 2019. On file with Advocates for Children of New Jersey. New Jersey's infant mental health clinics consist of Montclair State University Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health, Youth Consultation Services Center for Infant and Preschool Mental Health, The Center for Great Expectation, and Family Intervention Services.

6. **Only 20 clinicians endorsed to provide infant mental health services.** As reported by the New Jersey Association for Infant Mental Health. On file with Advocates for Children of New Jersey.

7. **NJ ranks 47th in the nation for maternal mortality.** Nurture New Jersey 2021 Strategic Plan. (2021). Retrieved September 13, 2021 from <https://nurturenj.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20210120-Nurture-NJ-Strategic-Plan.pdf>, page 6.

8. **Black mothers are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than the state average.** Nurture New Jersey 2021 Strategic Plan. (2021). Retrieved September 13, 2021 from <https://nurturenj.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20210120-Nurture-NJ-Strategic-Plan.pdf>, page 23.

9. **Black babies are more than two times more likely to die before their first birthday than the state average.** N.J. Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, New Jersey State Health Assessment Data, New Jersey Death and Birth Certificate Databases, Office of Vital Statistics and Registry (2018). Retrieved September 13, 2021 from <https://www.doh.state.nj.us/doh-shad/indicator/view/EPHInfMort.NJ.html>.

10. **Infant Mortality Rates by Mother's Race and Education Level, 2014-2018.** N.J. Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, New Jersey State Health Assessment Data, New Jersey Death and Birth Certificate Databases, Office of Vital Statistics and Registry. Retrieved September 14, 2021 from <https://www.doh.state.nj.us/doh-shad/query/builder/infantfetal/Infant/InfMortRate.html>.

Advocates for Children of New Jersey is the trusted, independent voice putting children's needs first for more than 40 years. Our work results in better laws and policies, more effective funding and stronger services for children and families. And it means that more children are given the chance to grow up safe, healthy and educated.