

Executive Summary

In the late 20th century, scientific research about child brain development exploded, as scientists discovered that the vast majority of brain development takes place during the first three years of a child's life. At the same time, increasingly, child care was becoming one of the most common contexts in which child development unfolds. The intersection of brain development science and increasingly common child care turned attention to child care settings as an important factor in children's brain development.

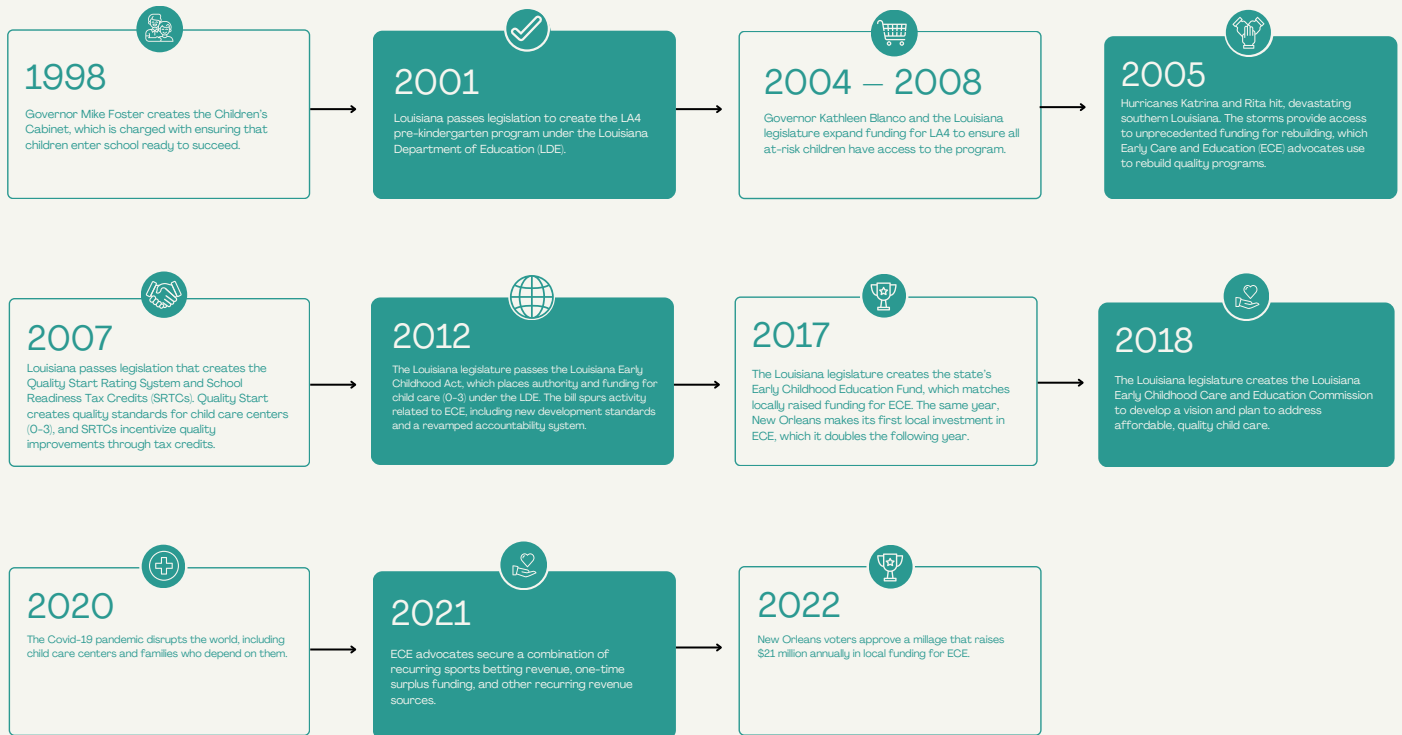
In the early 2000s, Louisiana served only 27% of 4-year-olds in pre-kindergarten (pre-K), and the state ranked last in the country for access to child care for 3-year-olds. The state's early care and education (ECE) regulatory structures met only 4 out of 10 national benchmarks with no required teacher professional development or minimum staff-child ratios. Yet, based on science and their understanding of the state's workforce, Louisiana's ECE advocates recognized that affordable, high-quality ECE opportunities could be a game-changer for both children and their families, as well as for the state as a whole, and they began to organize themselves to support families with young children.

The story of ECE in Louisiana is a story of laying the groundwork to create fertile conditions for advancing ECE and seizing upon opportunities as they arose. The story of ECE in Louisiana is a story of tireless people coming together, from inside and outside government, from both sides of the political aisle, and from business and nonprofit sectors across the state, to make progress inch by inch, never losing focus on the importance of early childhood experiences.

States across the country have a lot to learn from Louisiana's story.

- Use research to inform policy and advocacy.
- Respect each group's role and expertise.
- Progress is incremental, but that doesn't mean it needs to be slow.
- "Setbacks" are never *just* setbacks.
- Clarity on desired outcomes illuminates opportunities.

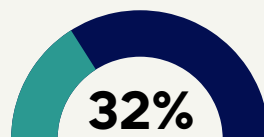
Speak to any ECE advocate in Louisiana today, and they will be clear that the work is not done, yet Louisiana's ECE systems have made remarkable progress over the past two decades.



IN 2020, LOUISIANA SERVED:



90% of at-risk **4-year-olds** served in high-quality programs



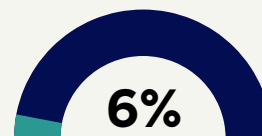
32% of at-risk **3-year-olds** served in high-quality programs



Less than 14% of at-risk **2-year-olds** served in high-quality programs



12% of at-risk **1-year-olds** served in high-quality programs



6% of at-risk **infants** served in high-quality programs

LOUISIANA'S STATE FUNDING FOR ECE HAS INCREASED BY MORE THAN \$60 MILLION OVER THE LAST DECADE.

- 2012: \$31 million
- 2022: \$97 million
- Early Childhood Education Fund for matching locally raised funds: \$50.6 million

Fiscal Year	State Funding
2012-13	\$31 million
2013-14	\$56 million
2014-15	\$54 million
2015-16	\$24 million
2016-17	\$51 million
2017-18	\$49 million
2018-19	\$49 million
2019-20	\$64 million
2020-21	\$54 million
2021-22	\$54 million
2022-23	\$97 million

Because of the tireless work of ECE advocates, including representatives from academia, nonprofits, governmental leaders, child care providers, and the business community, Louisiana now serves 90% of at-risk 4-year-olds in pre-K programs. The number of high-quality ECE providers serving younger children continues to grow each year, ensuring that more and more families have access to affordable, high-quality programs. The state's funding for ECE programs has grown by over \$60 million in the past decade, from \$31 million in 2012 to \$97 million in 2022. Additionally, funding options for children younger than age 4 continue to grow, namely through the state Early Childhood Education Fund and local funding options.

Louisiana's ECE journey is far from over, and the work continues as advocates continue to pursue increased funding at both the state and local levels. It will be exciting to see where the movement goes next.

