

Early Childhood Policy Committee

Family Access and Federal Policy Subcommittee Recommendations for Annual Report

September 21, 2026



TASK

- Develop the Subcommittee's share of ECPC's 2026 recommendations, as required by AB 563's mandate for the Council's Annual Report to the Legislature and Governor.

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE THE REVIEW

- **Build on Existing** work already led by families, advocates, providers, and researchers
- **Respond to Family Realities.**
- **Draw on Collective Expertise.**

GROUNDING IN EXISTING WORK

- Reviewed public comment and stakeholder input submitted through ECPC meetings to date.
- Reviewed historical ECPC Annual Reports, the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, and the Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission report.
- Reviewed materials from provider and workforce organizations, equity-focused early childhood organizations, research and policy institutes, and national early childhood policy and advocacy groups.

Process for Developing ECPC Recommendations



2026 Annual Report Recommendation Process

- **May 27:** Robust discussion with ECPC
- **June 9:** Joint PAC/WAC discussion
- **June – August:** Review of California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education, Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, past ECPC discussions and recommendations*
- August 27 ECPC discussion, questions, and public comment
- **TODAY September 21:** New draft presented for discussion at PAC/WAC
- **November 19:** Final recommendations presented to ECPC for approval

Changes from the August 27 draft are in red font.

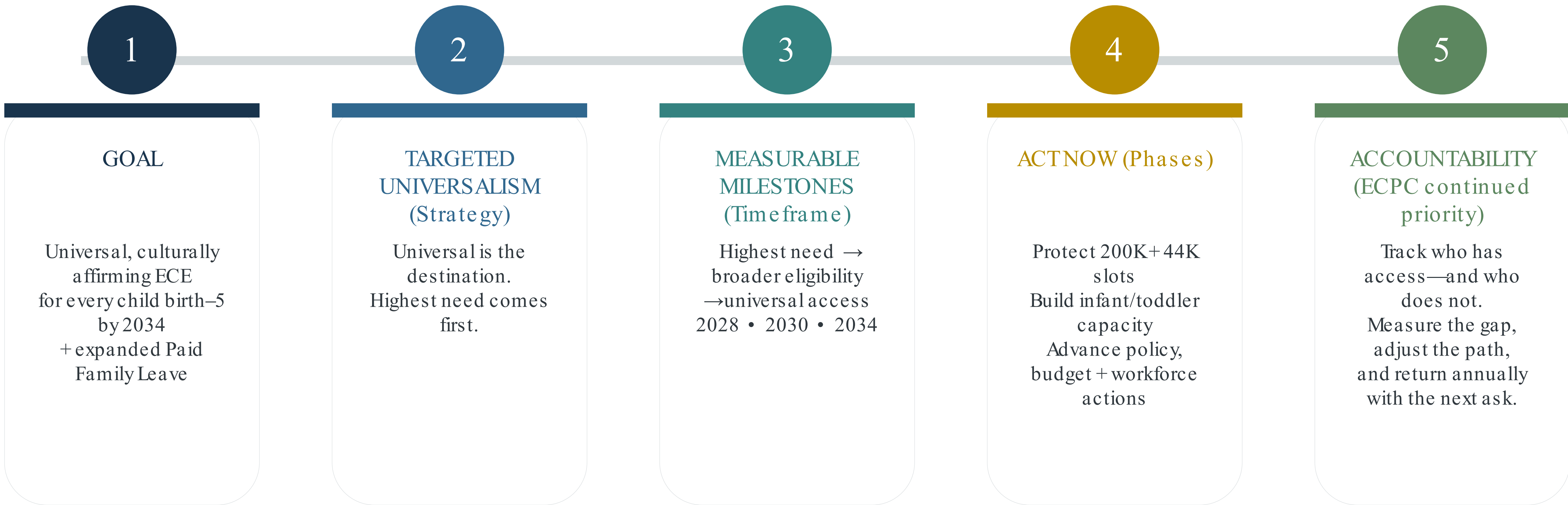
Today we seek to:

- Establish where there is unity and alignment on the recommendations
- Answer questions and clarify the proposed recommendations
- Hear additions and proposed changes
- **Changed: Review additions and changes from August 27 ECPC Meeting Discussion and Chat**
- **Changed: Identify issues to consider in 2027 ECPC Recommendations**

Comments will inform the Final Version to be presented for approval at the November 19, 2026 meeting.

PROPOSAL:

By 2034, every child in California, from birth through age five, has access to culturally affirming early care and education that meets their family’s needs and choices, with Paid Family Leave supporting families from the very beginning.



The Foundation: This proposal builds on a review of more than a decade of California early childhood policy and recommendations (including the Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission, the Master Plan, and ECPC’s own work) alongside research and perspectives from providers, workforce and equity organizations, policy institutes, and national early childhood leaders.

Key Recommendations:

Universal, Culturally Affirming Access to Early Care and Education, Prenatal and Perinatal Support, and Paid Family Leave

Universal Access:

Every child in California has access to early care and education, support during pregnancy and after birth when needed, and paid family leave.

Just as with TK-12, every child, from before birth through age five and their family gets what it takes to thrive.

Access towards the universal goal will increase for all eligible children in the family incrementally each year by income level beginning with ensuring access for all those at or below the poverty level.

Progress towards universal access and targeted investments will occur simultaneously

Targeted Universalism



- The voices of diverse communities and their particular vision, strengths and needs. are key to planning and implementation
- The path includes focused policies and investments for families facing the greatest barriers first to ensure we reach everyone.
 - Families navigating economic and systemic hardship
 - Families and children affected by racial inequity
 - Multilingual and Dual Language Learner families
 - Tribal communities.

Targeted Universalism (continued)

Families facing the greatest barriers

Families with additional care needs

- Children and families with disabilities, mental health needs, or other special health care needs
- Children connected to the child welfare or foster care system
- Survivors of domestic violence
- Children with Incarcerated and recently released parents
- Families facing housing insecurity
- Expecting and young parents, including those transitioning out of foster care

Targeted Universalism (continued)

Families facing the greatest barriers



Additional Categories Added at 8/27 ECPC Meeting

Added: Families with Additional Care Needs:

- Non-minor dependents added to expecting and parenting youth connected to the child welfare or foster care system.
- Childcare as a primary prevention and support added to Child welfare or foster care system
- Families receiving SSI
- Grandparents and other relatives and community members as caregivers

Added: New Category: Families facing Geographic and other Systemic Inequities

- Families living in rural areas
- Families living in child care deserts
- Families living in areas with high unmet need
- Military Families

Three Foundations That Make the Targeted Strategy Real

- Added: Principles to build the targeted path to Universal access
 - Strengthen the whole system as access expands
 - Build policy with families and providers, not only for them
- A poverty metric with teeth. The state should examine poverty metrics, including the California Poverty Measure (CPM) and other options
- A shared definition of "culturally affirming," that can be enforced, not just invoked built on current language
- A live tracking tool, not a one-time report

Three Phases:

Phase 1 - Immediate 2027

- Recognize Tribal Child Care as a distinct Sovereign Partner
- Finish current funding commitments
- Guarantee continuous eligibility across siblings
- Prioritize pregnant and parenting foster youth within existing Prevention Infrastructure
- Adopt shared definition culturally affirming
- Direct LAO study on needs and disparities
- Establish cost baseline
- Added: Develop a Statewide Capacity Plan including workforce, systems, regulation, facilities and licensing

Three Phases:

Phase 2 - Mid-term 2027-2030

- Sequencing capacity building by income level and age
- **Added: Paid Family Leave**
- **Added: Develop a system of accessible affirming comprehensive services**
 - Comprehensive Services
 - Accessible affirming services
 - Coordinated Services
 - Data and Technology
- Investing in Infant toddler capacity
- Study including targeted communities and families
- Refresh and advance 2024 ECPC Comprehensive mixed delivery Proposals
- **Added: Establish a projected cost estimate**
- Develop multilayered funding model
- Establish tracking mechanism for targeted universalism

Three Phases:

Phase 3: Long Term 2030-2034

- Sustain and adjust funding and accountability structures
- Complete capacity investments for 0-3
- Expand Paid Family Leave
- Reach universal access by 2034

Discussion Questions:

Discussion 1

- Do you agree with the overarching goal of Universal Access?
- Do you agree that our path must be Targeted Implementation building access first for those facing the greatest barriers?
- What is unclear?
- What proposed changes would strengthen the recommendations?

Key Recommendations:

Safety Net and Response to Federal Destabilization

- Protect Medi-Cal Coverage and Streamline State Requirements
- Preserve Food Assistance and Reduce the CalFresh Error Rate
- Counter the Federal Fraud Narrative Without Adopting Punitive Systems
- Added: Protect Federal ECE Funding and Ensure CCDF and Head Start Program Integrity.

Key Recommendations: Immigrant Family Protection

- Increase Legal Services and Continue Legal Action Against Federal Overreach
- Strengthen Rapid Response and Cross-Agency Coordination

Discussion Questions:

Discussion 2

- Do you agree with the Safety Net and Response to Federal Destabilizations goals?
- Do you agree with Immigrant Family Protection goals?
- What is unclear?
- What proposed changes would strengthen the recommendations?

Next Steps:

- Summarize Key Themes
- Final Draft Presented to ECPC in November