

# Kentucky should...



ensure that children with special needs have access to high quality child care

Kentucky's economy relies on a strong child care workforce and wide availability for high quality child care for every child. Families also need to trust that staff are trained and prepared to keep their children safe and healthy.

**Child care deserts and increasing waitlists are causing child care programs to operate at the highest adult-to-child ratios that the state will allow, and Kentucky children with special needs are being left behind.**

Young children are three and a half times more likely to be expelled from child care than from the K-12 education system. One of the driving reasons behind these expulsions is typically challenging behaviors associated with disability, mental health needs, or chronic health care conditions.

***A recent survey by Kentucky Youth Advocates of 439 Kentucky child care directors showed that:***

- **54%** reported having to expel a child in the past 12 months due to challenging behaviors.
- **71%** reported (n=246) they could serve children with disabilities in their programs if their staff had more training.
- **73%** reported (n=244) they could serve children with disabilities if they had enough income to lower adult-to-child ratios.

## **Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Policy Solution:**

Require training for child care providers on strategies to support children with disabilities and incentivize programs to serve children with disabilities through the Kentucky All STARS system.

Kentucky's child care regulations should prioritize and encourage programs to serve children with disabilities, in line with the state plan for the Child Care and Development Block Grant. **Programs can be encouraged, but not required, to serve children with disabilities through the Quality Rating and Improvement System (Kentucky All STARS) by:**

- Moving child care programs up on the QRIS scale if they have behavior intervention plans for children with disabilities before expulsion.
- Encouraging programs to partner with First Steps, the local public school system, and private pediatric therapists to include special education services into the school day for children who qualify.