

United States

Distinctive Features: No explicit national, comprehensive family or child policy; strong value placed on individualism and limited governmental interference in family matters; emphasis on services and benefits targeted to the vulnerable and poor; reliance on tax deductions and relief.

Maternity/Parental Leave

Benefit	Unpaid, job protected leave ¹
Eligibility Criteria	Universal for working parents who worked more than 1250 hours in the prior year at a business with more than 50 employees.
Duration of Leave	12 weeks
Compensation Rate	Unpaid

Early Childhood Education and Care

Age Group Served	0-5; some, limited, state pre-kindergarten initiatives, especially for the 4s
Eligibility Criteria	Private ECEC largely depends on supply; many public programs targeted to low-income or poor families, children with special needs
Fees	Vary enormously; some compensatory ECEC programs are free (e.g. Head Start)
Locus of Care	Center, preschools, primary schools, family-type day care homes
Funding Strategies	Govt. (federal, state, local); employer; parent fees (about 75% of costs)
Access/Coverage (%)	0-3 (31%), 3-5 (61%) (1996) Under 1, 44%; age 1, 53%; age 2, 57%; under 4, 61% (2000)

Family and Child Allowances

Benefit and Eligibility	No child or family allowance is provided in the U.S.
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Child Support

Benefit	No guaranteed maintenance payments; stress on enforcing the child support obligation of non-custodial parent
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Child and Family Tax Benefits

Tax Deductions/Relief	Tax allowances for dependents; Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for low-income working families; \$500 child tax credit of 2000 rises to \$600 for 2001-2004; child care tax credit
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Other Child-Conditioned Income Transfers

Benefits	Survivor's benefits under social security; means-tested cash and in-kind benefits (e.g. TANF, Food Stamps, SSI, WIC)
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Child and Adolescent Health

Access to Coverage	No national health insurance program or universal child health program; federal/state health assistance for low-income children and their families (Medicaid, SCHIP)
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¹ Some states have a paid temporary or short-term disability benefit that covers pregnancy and maternity. Some states are exploring use of unemployment insurance funds to develop paid leaves.

School-Age Children Policies

Compulsory School	Begins at ages 5-7 (varies by state) to age 17
School Hours	Varies by locality

Youth Policies

Distinctive Features	Particular concern with reducing non-marital teen pregnancy; policy emphasis on encouraging sexual abstinence; recent stress on after-school programs
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Housing Benefits

Benefit	Means-tested housing assistance (e.g. subsidies for rent and home purchase) low-income households (inadequate coverage); tax benefits for home owners, limited public housing for low-income renters.
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