

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; universal public kindergarten; some, limited, state universal or targeted 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; public kindergarten, free; private with fees; 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 70% of costs)
Access/Coverage (%)	0-3 (38.4 %), 3-5 (78%) (2005); kindergarten for 5-year-olds (98%)

Family and Child Allowances

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

Child Support

Benefit No guaranteed maintenance payments; stress on enforcing the child support obligation of non-custodial parent

Child and Family Tax Benefits

Tax Deductions/Relief Tax allowances for dependents; Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) (Refundable) for low-income working families; \$ 1000 child tax credit ; child care tax credit

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)

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)

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 afterschool programs

Housing Benefits

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