



# Advocates for Children of New York

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## Press Release

### For Immediate Release

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## New Report Shows Racial Disparities in NYC Children's Access to Early Intervention Programs

**December 5, 2019 (NEW YORK CITY)** — State disinvestment in New York's Early Intervention program has caused major racial and socio-economic disparities in access to services, according to a [new report](#) released today by Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC) and Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). The analysis finds that children under the age of three with developmental delays or disabilities are less likely to receive critical services that could help them reach their full potential if they live in low-income neighborhoods of color.

"For years, the state has failed to adequately invest in Early Intervention, and young children in low-income communities of color are paying the price," said Kim Sweet, executive director of AFC. "This analysis confirms what we've seen on the ground: that the educational disparities we see later in life start before children even set foot in the classroom. The state and the city must address these inequities and ensure that babies and toddlers can get the evaluations and services they need regardless of their race, socioeconomic status or zip code."

"Statewide cuts to Early Intervention programs are causing greater harm to children of color in low-income communities," said Jennifer March, executive director of CCC. "Young children at critical points of development do not have the luxury of time. City and state leaders must take action immediately to address and end the disparities in providing these services to babies and toddlers."

Part of the federal special education law, the Early Intervention program provides evaluations and services to infants and toddlers under the age of three with developmental delays or disabilities and their families so children can get help as early in life as possible. When New York's Early Intervention program was first launched in 1992, the program was lauded as being a model for the rest of the country. However, over the past two decades, inadequate state investment has put children's access to the program at risk. After years of stagnant payment rates and multiple cuts imposed by the state, agencies in New York City and around the state have closed their Early Intervention programs.

The report by CCC and AFC, [Early Inequities: How Underfunding Early Intervention Leaves Low-Income Children of Color Behind](#), is based on data from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene obtained through a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request. The data track children's progress through the Early Intervention program—from referral, to evaluation, to eligibility determination, to service receipt—disaggregated by race and neighborhood from 2016-2018.

According to data in the report, in 2018, one out of every four children found eligible for Early Intervention services in New York State had to wait longer than the 30-day legal deadline for services, losing valuable opportunities to address developmental delays at a time when their brains are rapidly developing. Access to Early Intervention evaluations and services also varies widely across communities in New York City. In the Bronx, for instance, only 61% of children found eligible for services received them by the 30-day legal deadline—less than in any other borough. Overall, children in low-income communities of color are the least likely to receive the Early Intervention evaluations for which they are referred and the Early Intervention services for which they are found eligible. For example, the neighborhoods where children referred for Early Intervention evaluations due to concerns with their development were least likely to receive evaluations were Hunts Point-Mott Haven, Crotona-Tremont, Central Harlem-Morningside Heights, High Bridge-Morisania, and East Harlem.

“As a parent and a special education teacher, it was disheartening to know my child wasn’t getting the services that she was supposed to be getting,” said New York City parent Ramatu Kallon. “She would have made more progress by now if she had a teacher throughout without such a big break in her services.”

The report makes a number of recommendations to New York City and New York State in order to increase access to Early Intervention services.

In order to increase children’s access to services, the report recommends that **New York State** should:

1. Increase rates for Early Intervention evaluators, service providers and service coordinators by 10% to help address provider shortages.
2. Fund a cost-study to assess and recommend changes to the methodology used to determine payment for evaluations, service provision, and service coordination.
3. Adopt policies to ensure that commercial health insurance companies pay their fair share to help cover the cost of services.
4. Conduct a statewide analysis of disparities in access to evaluations and services and develop a plan to address such disparities.

The report recommends that **New York City** should:

1. Enact Intro. 1406-2019, requiring the city to issue annual public reports on the provision of evaluations and services so the public can hold the city and state accountable.
2. Analyze the disparities and develop a plan to address them, including plans to recruit evaluators and providers for underserved neighborhoods, train service coordinators and providers in culturally responsive practices, and follow up with families whose children have not received evaluations or services.

### **About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)**

*Since its founding in 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has been protecting the education-related needs of children most at risk of academic failure or school-based discrimination due to such factors as poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, language barriers, immigration status, homelessness, or involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice system. AFC’s mission is to promote access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. AFC uses integrated strategies to advance systemic reform, empower families and communities, and advocate for the educational rights of individual students.*

### **About Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York (CCC)**

*Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York educates and mobilizes New Yorkers to make the city a better place for children. Since 1944, our advocacy has combined public policy research and data analysis with citizen action. We cast light on the issues, educate the public, engage allies, and identify and promote practical solutions to ensure that every New York City child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. For more information on CCC, visit our web site at [www.cccnewyork.org](http://www.cccnewyork.org). Stay up to date on the latest news and information regarding the well-being of New York City’s children by following us on Facebook and Twitter.*