The Trajectory of Early Education & Childcare and Family Homelessness in New York City: 1960s–Today

1965: Head Start launches as a summer program across the United States as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society” set of programs. Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is signed.

1966: Head Start program begins under Mayor John Lindsay.

1967: Mayor John Lindsay establishes the Agency for Child Development (ACD), responsible for planning and regulating daycare centers and Head Start.

1968: Koch administration announces Project Giant Step, an initiative to provide early education to all four-year-olds. ACD grows to provide funds to over 400 daycare centers throughout New York City, with many having the autonomy to decide whether only to serve low-income families.

1970: Statewide program begins under Mayor David Dinkins, with certain classrooms integrated into Head Start.

1971: Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, intended as a temporary initiative.


1973: McKinnon v. Koch is filed to determine whether homeless families with children have the right to shelter. A preliminary ruling is issued in 1985.

1974–1975: Updates to federal stipulations around childcare funding required that daycare centers only serve low-income families that met criteria demonstrating need. Fiscal crises in the mid-1970s led the City to shutter many daycare centers.

1975: Mayor Edward Koch establishes a Commission on Early Childhood Education to evaluate the feasibility of and make recommendations on universal pre-K services across New York City.

1976: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) is signed. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) is replaced by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

1977: New York State introduces its universal pre-K program, with classes beginning in the 1978–1979 school year and phased in over the next four school years.

1978: Project Giant Step is discontinued. Homebase, the zip-code based homelessness prevention program, opens city-wide.

1979: Mayor Edward Koch establishes a Commission on Family Homelessness in New York City, with many having the autonomy to decide whether only to serve low-income families.

1980: Homebase is discontinued. Homebase, the zip-code based homelessness prevention program, opens city-wide.


1982: Callahan v. Carey is filed to determine whether homeless families with children have the right to shelter. A preliminary ruling is issued in 1986.

1983: Johnson’s “Great Society” set of programs.

1984: New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) designates specific high-need school districts for guaranteed seats for all eligible three-year-olds. Announcement of EarlyLearn NYC’s move from NYC ACS to NYC DOE.

1985: Mayor Michael Bloomberg launches EarlyLearn NYC, operated under the Administration for Children’s Services (NYC ACS).

1986: EarlyLearn NYC programs shift to management by NYC DOE.


1988: Koch administration announces Project Giant Step, an initiative to provide early education to all four-year-olds in New York City. Service-rich, non-congregate transitional shelters for families with children known as “Tier II” begin to open.

1989: New York State cuts funding to Advantage rental subsidy with no replacement.

1990: Project Giant Step is discontinued under Mayor David Dinkins, intended as a temporary initiative.

1991: SuperStart launches Pre-K for All.

1992: NYC schools go remote through January 2022; students either learn remotely or in hybrid fashion for SY 2020-2021.

1993: For more on the history of family homelessness in NYC, see ICPH’s report: Ending Homelessness in New York City.

1994: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is signed, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

1995: Mayor Bill de Blasio announces “Equity and Excellence for All” agenda. The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) designates specific high-needs school districts for guaranteed seats for all eligible three-year-olds. Announcement of EarlyLearn NYC’s move from NYC ACS to NYC DOE.

1996: Mayor Eric Adams declares a state of emergency in October as the City struggles to find enough shelter space for asylum-seeking newcomers. The administration halts plans to expand 3-K for All.

1997: 3-K for All launches as part of de Blasio’s “Equity and Excellence for All” agenda. The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) designates specific high-needs school districts for guaranteed seats for all eligible three-year-olds. Announcement of EarlyLearn NYC’s move from NYC ACS to NYC DOE.

1998: A series of different rental subsidies launched under de Blasio are consolidated into City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CFHPS).

1999: 3-K for All launches as part of de Blasio’s “Equity and Excellence for All” agenda. The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) designates specific high-needs school districts for guaranteed seats for all eligible three-year-olds. Announcement of EarlyLearn NYC’s move from NYC ACS to NYC DOE.

2000: “Cluster site” shelter program begins under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, intended as a temporary initiative.

2001: No Child Left Behold Behind (NCLB) is signed.

2002: COVID-19 pandemic; beginning of New York State’s eviction moratorium (in effect through January 2022; NYC schools go remote through June 2020; students either learn remotely or in hybrid fashion for SY 2020-2021).

2003: The City announces that it is working with a consulting firm to reevaluate where 3-K seats are located and redistribute according to where the need is unmet.

2004: Prevention Assistance Temporary Housing Center (PATH) family intake center opens in the South Bronx, replacing borough-based Emergency Assistance Units.

2005: The City announces that it is working with a consulting firm to reevaluate where 3-K seats are located and redistribute according to where the need is unmet.


2007: City Council and Mayor Adams reach handshake agreement to convert 1,500 vacant, school-day early childhood education seats into extended day seats for working families.

2008: SuperStart is discontinued. Homebase, the zip-code based homelessness prevention program, opens city-wide.

2009: Mayor Bill de Blasio launches Pre-K for All.

2010: Mayor Eric Adams declares a state of emergency in October as the City struggles to find enough shelter space for asylum-seeking newcomers. The administration halts plans to expand 3-K for All.

2011: New York State cuts funding to Advantage rental subsidy with no replacement.

2012: Mayor Michael Bloomberg launches EarlyLearn NYC, operated under the Administration for Children’s Services (NYC ACS).

2013: EarlyLearn NYC launches as part of de Blasio’s “Equity and Excellence for All” agenda. The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) designates specific high-needs school districts for guaranteed seats for all eligible three-year-olds. Announcement of EarlyLearn NYC’s move from NYC ACS to NYC DOE.

2014: Mayor Bill de Blasio launches EarlyLearn NYC, operated under the Administration for Children’s Services (NYC ACS).

2015: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is signed, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

2016: Mayor Bill de Blasio launches Pre-K for All.

2017: 3-K for All launches as part of de Blasio’s “Equity and Excellence for All” agenda. The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) designates specific high-needs school districts for guaranteed seats for all eligible three-year-olds. Announcement of EarlyLearn NYC’s move from NYC ACS to NYC DOE.

2018: Mayor Michael Bloomberg launches EarlyLearn NYC, operated under the Administration for Children’s Services (NYC ACS).

2019: Mayor Eric Adams declares a state of emergency in October as the City struggles to find enough shelter space for asylum-seeking newcomers. The administration halts plans to expand 3-K for All.

2020: Mayor Eric Adams declares a state of emergency in October as the City struggles to find enough shelter space for asylum-seeking newcomers. The administration halts plans to expand 3-K for All.

2021: Mayor Eric Adams announces intent to provide early education to all four-year-olds in New York City.

2022: Mayor Eric Adams announces “Every Student Succeeds” agenda. The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) designates specific high-needs school districts for guaranteed seats for all eligible three-year-olds. Announcement of EarlyLearn NYC’s move from NYC ACS to NYC DOE.

2023: Mayor Eric Adams announces “Every Student Succeeds” agenda. The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) designates specific high-needs school districts for guaranteed seats for all eligible three-year-olds. Announcement of EarlyLearn NYC’s move from NYC ACS to NYC DOE.

For more on the history of family homelessness in NYC, see ICPH’s report: Ending Homelessness in New York City.