

Programs & Agencies in Arkansas

- ABC – Arkansas Better Chance: State-funded preschool program for children from low-income families. Administered by OEC within ADE.
- HS / EHS – Head Start / Early Head Start: Federally funded programs supporting school readiness, often operated by local nonprofits and community action agencies.
- ADE – Arkansas Department of Education: Now houses the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), signaling stronger integration of Pre-K with K-12 systems, educator pipelines, and longitudinal data.
- OEC – Office of Early Childhood: Formerly under DHS, now part of ADE. Oversees ABC, Better Beginnings (QRIS), licensing coordination, and early learning standards. Central to Arkansas's PDG B-5 system-building efforts.
- DESE – Division of Elementary and Secondary Education: A division within ADE focused on K-12 policy, now more closely aligned with early childhood through OEC.

Funding & Policy Tools

- CCDF / CCDBG – Child Care and Development Fund / Block Grant: Arkansas uses these federal dollars to support child care subsidies for families who are working or in school and quality initiatives.
- PDG B-5 – Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five: Arkansas received 1 time PDG funding to strengthen its early childhood system, including data coordination and family engagement. (Ends Dec 2025)
- ARPA / CARES – American Rescue Plan Act / CARES Act: Provided emergency stabilization funds to Arkansas child care providers during COVID.
- CTC / CDTC – Child Tax Credit / Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit: Federal tax supports that impact Arkansas families' ability to afford care.
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Assessments & Screening Tools

- CDELS – Child Development Early Learning Standards: Arkansas’s framework for child development benchmarks from birth to age 5.
- CLASS – Classroom Assessment Scoring System: Used in Arkansas’s QRIS to assess teacher-child interactions.
- ASQ-3 / ASQ:SE – Ages and Stages Questionnaires: Widely used in Arkansas for developmental and social-emotional screening.

Workforce & Quality Systems

- T.E.A.C.H. – Teacher Education and Compensation Helps: Available in Arkansas through the Arkansas Early Childhood Association to support educator credentials.
- QRIS – Quality Rating and Improvement System: Arkansas’s QRIS is called Better Beginnings, rating providers from 1 to 6 stars based on quality indicators.
- CDA – Child Development Associate: Credential supported by Arkansas’s workforce development efforts.

Advocacy & Systems Building

- AECF – Annie E. Casey Foundation: Provides data and policy support for Arkansas advocates via the Kids Count initiative.
- AACF – Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families: Key player in early childhood policy, equity, and funding advocacy.
- NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children: Influences Arkansas standards and professional development.