



THE GLOBAL CHILD THRIVE ACT

Ensuring children survive and thrive with nurturing care

BACKGROUND

The Global Child Thrive Act helps give children the best possible start by integrating early childhood development (ECD) interventions in current and new U.S. foreign assistance programs that serve vulnerable children and their families. This document is intended to serve as a guide for what is included in the act, which became law on January 1, 2021.

The law defines ECD programs as those that seek to ensure that every child has the conditions for healthy growth, nurturing family-based care, development, and learning, and protection from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect which may include:

- health, safe water, sanitation, and hygiene programs that serves pregnant women, children younger than 5 years of age, and the parents of such children;
- nutrition programs, combined with stimulating child development activity;
- age-appropriate cognitive stimulation, especially for newborns, infants, and toddlers, including an early childhood intervention program for children experiencing at-risk situations, developmental delays, disabilities, and behavioral and mental health conditions;
- early learning (36 months and younger), preschool, and basic education programs for children until they reach 8 years of age or complete primary school; or
- child protection programs, with an emphasis on the promotion of permanent, safe, and nurturing families, rather than placement in residential care or institutions, including for children with disabilities.

ABOUT THE LEGISLATION

The Global Child Thrive Act elevates and integrates early childhood development interventions into current foreign assistance programs focused on vulnerable children and their families and calls on the U.S. government to implement a comprehensive, coordinated approach to support optimal development for vulnerable children (ages 0-8) within U.S. foreign development and humanitarian assistance. This approach is multisectoral, addressing many critical aspects of healthy child development such as health, protection, nutrition, clean water, and basic education. The pillars of the law will build on the evidence and priorities outlined in the Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity (APCCA) **strategy, implementation plan, and 2020 reporting.**

If implemented well, the Global Child Thrive Act will result in ECD-integrated programs that multiply the impact of applied resources and amplify the return on that investment in the form of positive outcomes for children. The main pillars of the law include mandates to:

1. **Direct relevant U.S. government departments and agencies** to integrate ECD interventions into current foreign assistance programs and for the Special Advisor for Children in Adversity to report annually on its progress toward integration as well as specific challenges or gaps that may

require shifts in targeting or financing in the following year. Departments and agencies impacted by the law include the Department of State, USAID, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Defense, the Department of Health and Human Services, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and Peace Corps.

2. **Emphasize coordination** with partner governments and international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and other civil society partners to integrate best practices, as well as build local capacity for continued implementation and measurable results by:
 1. scaling up the most effective, evidence-based, interventions, including for the most vulnerable populations and children with disabilities and developmental delays, with a focus on adaptation to country resources, cultures, and languages;
 2. designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating programs in a manner that enhances their quality, transparency, equity, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in improving child and family outcomes in partner countries; and
 3. utilizing and expanding innovative public-private financing mechanisms.
3. **Identify evidence-based priorities**, indicators, outcomes, and targets to support inclusive early childhood development and support projects (including pilot projects where appropriate) in partner countries with the goal of scaling up to serve more children and their families.
4. **Support inclusive early childhood development** within all relevant sector strategies and public laws, including the Global Water Strategy, the whole-of-government strategy required under section 5 of the Global Food Security Act of 2016, the Basic Education Strategy, the U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan, 2016-2021; and Advancing Protecting and Care for Children in Adversity strategy; and others as appropriate.
5. **Improve coordination with foreign governments and NGOs** on official country policies and plans to improve early childhood development, maternal, newborn, and child health and nutrition care, basic education, water, sanitation and hygiene, and child protection plans which promote nurturing, appropriate, protective, and permanent family care, while reducing the percentage of children living outside of family care.
6. **Reauthorizes Public Law 109-95**, which established the Special Advisor for Children in Adversity and encourages the Special Advisor to regularly convene an Interagency Working Group on Children in Adversity which will coordinate across U.S. government agencies that implement foreign assistance programs in order to achieve the best results for integration of ECD interventions. This Interagency Working Group is responsible for interagency and intergovernmental monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of all early childhood development activities.

Now that the legislation has passed, the Thrive Coalition will play an active role in seeing these requirements actualized. Significant work is needed to ensure the U.S. government is working to address the whole child comprehensively across the segmented foreign assistance programs implemented by 30+ offices and agencies within the U.S. government. The Thrive Coalition will remain an active voice in the accountability of incorporation and promotion of early childhood development, pushing toward realizing the vision of the Global Child Thrive Act.