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BETTER BEGINNINGS ENCOURAGES COMMUNITY LEADERS TO SUPPORT WORKING PARENTS



Better Beginnings encourages community and business leaders to support families and promote quality early childhood education in recognition of National Working Parents Day on September 16, 2022.

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (August 31, 2022) – [Better Beginnings](#), a program of the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education focusing on giving children the best quality care, is offering Arkansas civic and business leaders ways in which they can support working families this month by promoting quality early childhood education in their communities.

Better Beginnings Program Administrator Kelli Hilburn says National Working Parents Day on September 16, 2022 is a great opportunity to shine a spotlight on the challenges working families face finding affordable, high-quality child care.

“Quality early childhood education benefits working families as much as it benefits children,” said Hilburn. “Working parents are less likely to be absent and are more productive at work because they know their children are safe and well cared for.”

According to the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#), 76% of Arkansas parents reported missing work in 2021 due to child care issues. Absenteeism and employee turnover reportedly cost Arkansas businesses \$665 million. Using 2020 census data, the United States Department of Health and Human Services [found](#) that 36% of children ages birth to five in Arkansas live in a two-parent household where both parents work. The department also found that 31% of children of the same age range live in a one-parent household where the parent works. Hilburn suggests that access to high-quality child care helps offset the impact that occurs when working parents miss work and alleviates parents' burden when they know their children are cared for.

"We want the best for the children of Arkansas, and we want to do everything we can to help them have bright futures. Knowing that today's children are tomorrow's leaders, it is up to all of us to encourage them to reach for the stars," Hilburn said. "Their families and their child care providers need everyone's support, too."

Hilburn says there are [four ways](#) civic and business leaders can help support high-quality child care for working families in their communities:

- Champion high-quality child care and early childhood education in meetings with families, other leaders, and legislators.
- Direct working parents to the Better Beginnings website [ARBetterBeginnings.com](https://www.arbetterbeginnings.com), where they can learn more about the importance of high-quality child care.
- Inform employees of tax credits available to them if they choose a Better Beginnings provider for their child care.
- Consider offering financial incentives for working parents who choose high-quality, Better Beginnings quality-rated child care.

Since 85% to 90% of brain development happens in a child's early years, access to quality child care is important to their future and the future of the state, which has taken great strides in ensuring access to quality care. Arkansas was recently named the state with the best early childhood system in the United States in a WalletHub study. Tonya Williams, director of DCCECE, said in a [recent interview](#) that is due to the current level of investment from stakeholders in pre-K.

"I think the investment in pre-K along with Head Start and federal child care money have really created access for the three and four-year-old population," said Williams.

For more about how to support quality early childhood education in your community, follow Better Beginnings on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) or visit [arbetterbeginnings.com](https://www.arbetterbeginnings.com).

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About Arkansas Better Beginnings:

[Better Beginnings](#) is Arkansas's tiered quality rating and improvement system for child care, early education and school-age programs that have gone above and beyond the state minimum requirements. Better Beginnings is administered by the [Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education](#). Better Beginnings connects Arkansas families with the information and care that helps children experience a safe, happy and healthy childhood.