California was among the first states to offer state-funded prekindergarten, beginning with the California State Preschool Program in 1965. The program serves 3- to 5-year-old children, and provides funding to school districts, Head Start agencies, and private child care providers through a competitive grant process. Children are eligible to participate if their family income is below 230 percent of the federal poverty level or if they have experienced or are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. The State Preschool Program mainly provides part-day services but also coordinates funding with federally and state-funded child care assistance programs to help parents working full time receive extended hours of child care.

California operates other state-funded programs that provide funding for child care and development services but are not distinct state prekindergarten programs. The state funds full-time slots for 3- and 4-year-olds with working parents in the General Child Care Programs, which must follow the same curriculum standards and program requirements as the State Preschool Program. Also, the First 5 initiative, established in 1998, uses a tobacco tax to fund programs promoting early childhood development from prenatal care to age 5. First 5 funds are allocated by county commissions and may be used for services such as early care and education, parent education, family support, or child health care. In addition, California reserved $200 million over four years for a School Readiness Initiative. In June 2006, California voters rejected a ballot initiative to make part-day preschool available on a voluntary basis to all 4-year-olds in the state. Data in this report focus on the State Preschool Program.

All State Preschool programs record children’s development using the Desired Results for Children and Families system and use the findings to plan curriculum and developmentally appropriate activities. California has not yet adopted early learning standards, although state administrators anticipate holding hearings and requesting public input in 2007 on draft documents covering language, literacy, and mathematics.
The Child Development Assistant Teacher Permit requires 6 credits in ECE or Pre-K.

Contractors must provide meals and snacks that meet nutritional requirements.

The income cutoff applies to all children except those who receive protective services.

These figures reflect state spending for preschool programs only and do not reflect spending for General Child Care programs.

**K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures.**

Some agencies operate up to 250 days per year.

While class size is not statutorily controlled, it is typically limited to 24 children.

While contractors must provide meals and snacks that meet nutritional requirements, some agencies may provide additional meals and snacks.

These figures reflect state spending for preschool programs only and do not reflect spending for General Child Care programs.

1 The income cutoff applies to all children except those who receive protective services or who are at risk for abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

2 Some agencies operate up to 250 days per year.

3 Although the state has not yet adopted early learning standards, hearings and public opinion surveys are anticipated in Fall 2007 to obtain feedback on draft standards in language, literacy, and mathematics.

4 The Child Development Associate Teacher permit is the minimum requirement for an individual who may function as a lead teacher in the classroom. The permit requires 12 units in ECE or child development and 50 days of work experience in an instructional capacity. A CDA credential issued in California meets temporary alternative qualifications for the Associate Teacher permit. The full Child Development Teacher permit requires a minimum of 40 semester units of education including a minimum of 24 units in ECE or child development, and 175 days of work experience

5 The Child Development Assistant Teacher Permit requires 6 credits in ECE or child development.

6 While class size is not statutorily controlled, it is typically limited to 24 children.

7 Decisions regarding vision and hearing screening are made at the local level.

8 Contractors must provide meals and snacks that meet nutritional requirements specified by the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program or the National School Lunch Program. Contractors must provide breakfast and/or lunch if specified in their application for services that those meals would be provided.

9 These figures reflect state spending for preschool programs only and do not reflect spending for General Child Care programs.