



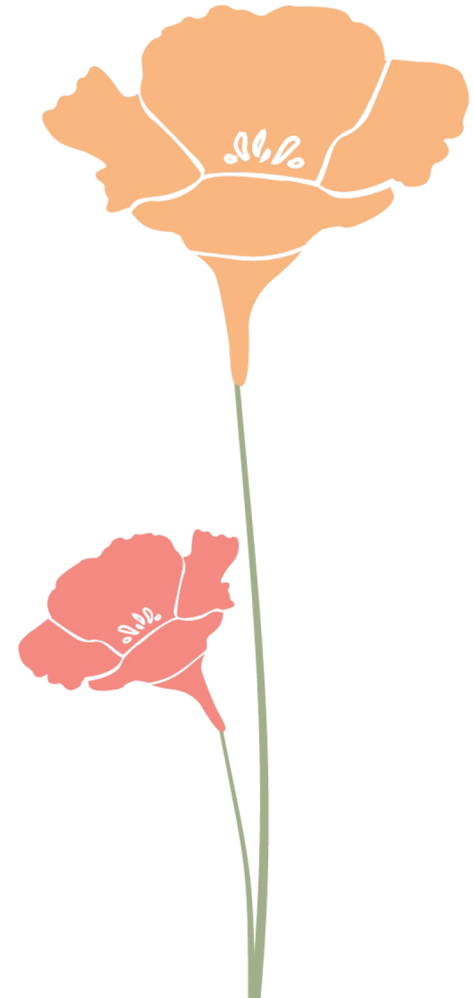
Inclusion in California  
Early Learning and Care

# Findings from the Inclusion in California Early Learning and Care Study

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Impact Inclusion Workgroup

February 13, 2024



# Study Background

- Child Care Policy Research Partnership Grant
  - Funded by Administration for Children and Families in HHS
  - Collaboration between CCDF Lead Agencies and research entities
  - Focus on CCDF subsidized programs
- Intended to impact policy implementation related to CCDF programs
- CCDF Lead Agency in California
  - CDE through June 30, 2021
  - CDSS as of July 1, 2021



# Study Objectives

- Describe the status of children with disabilities in subsidized early learning and care in California
- Identify the **facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of children with disabilities** in subsidized early learning and care and strategies to increase facilitators and decrease barriers
- (added later) Identify the implications for equity

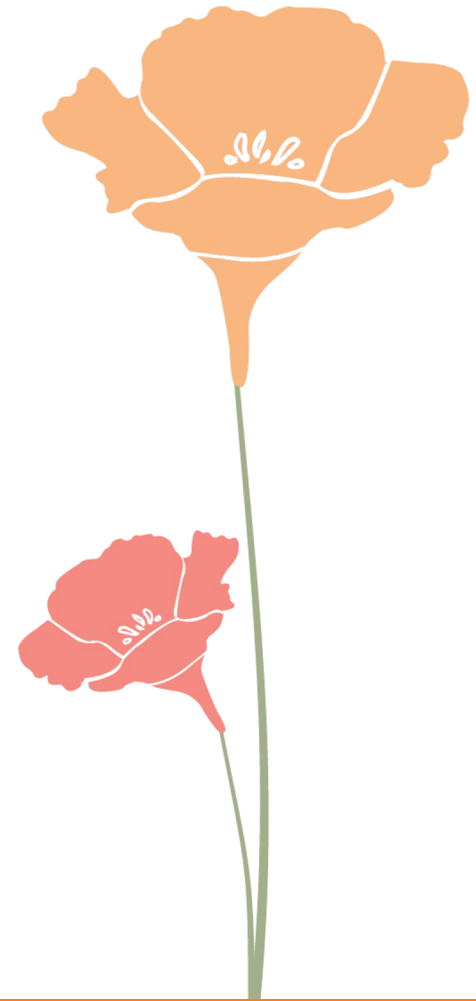
# Revised Study Design

Method	Data Collection	Sample
Administrative Data	Subsidized early learning and care Special Education (2019-2024)	All children ages 3-5 with disabilities
Key Informant Interviews	Interviews (2021)	23 professionals in a variety of roles in early childhood and early childhood special education
Case Study of California	Interviews (2022-2023)	Families, child care directors, teachers, district administrators, R&R staff, family center staff, Regional Center staff
Statewide Survey	Surveys (2024)	Child Care Directors Local Special Education/ECSE Administrators

# Case Study Interviews

Role	Number Interviews
Child Care Director	13
District Early Childhood Administrator	1
District Early Childhood Special Education/Special Education Administrator	7
Family	6
Family Resource Centers/Parent Training and Information Center	3
Local Child Care Planning Council	1
Resource and Referral	10
Regional Center	2
Teacher	6

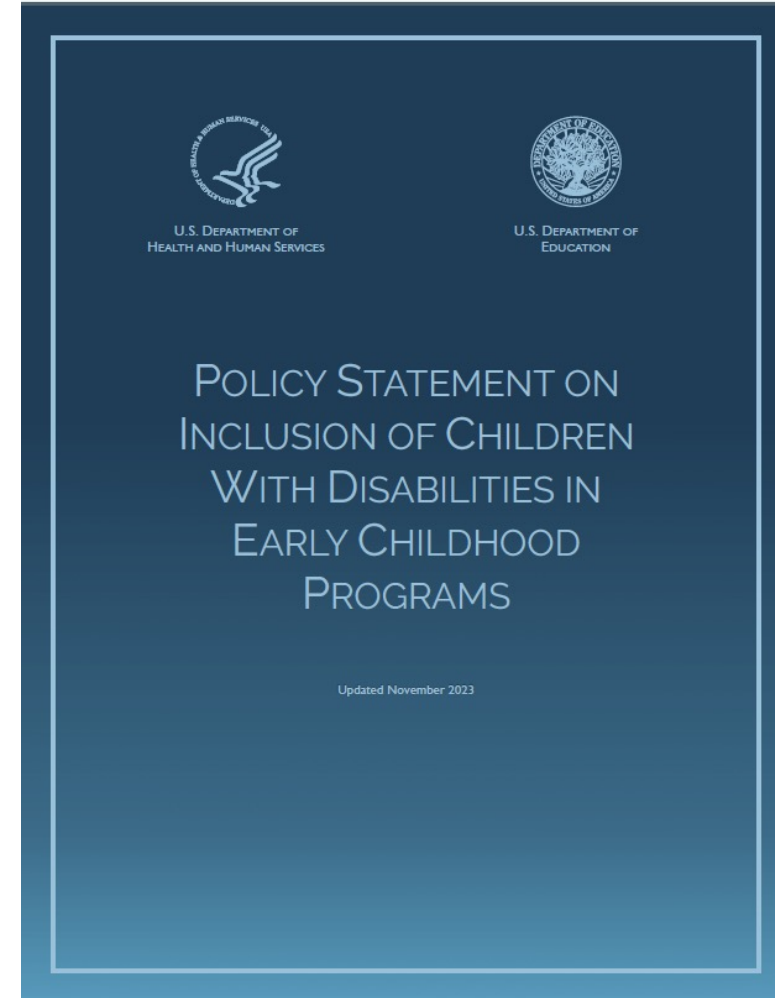
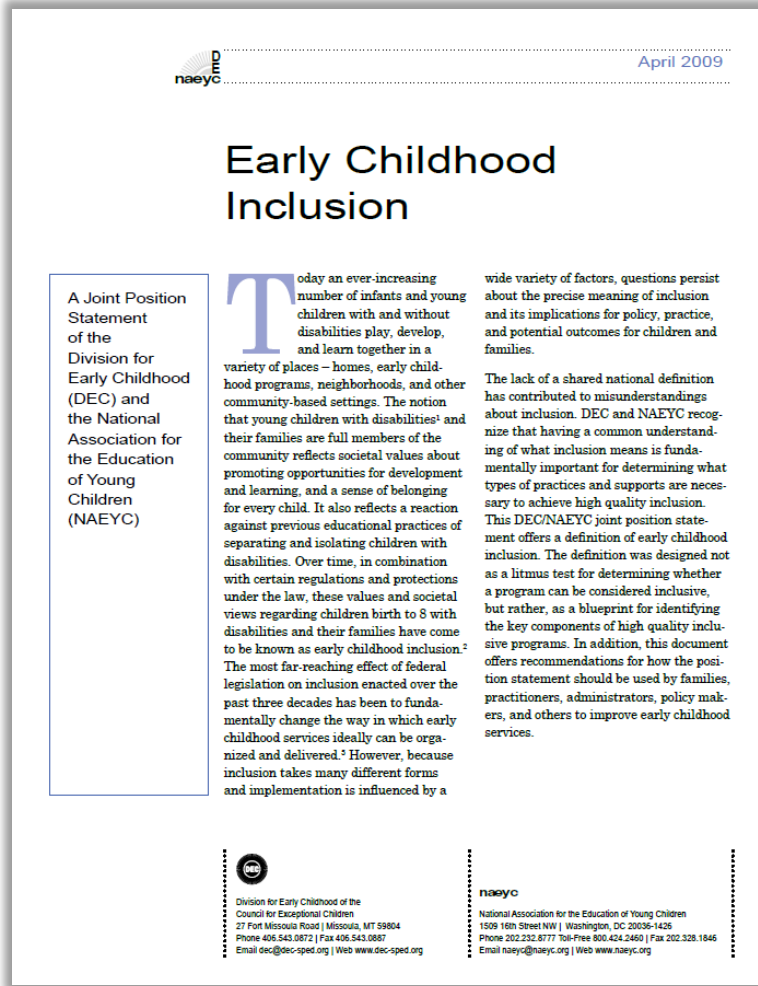
# What is Inclusion?





**There are many meanings of inclusion**

# Facets of Inclusion in the U.S.





System is not operating as it should to meet the child and family's needs.

This may not be the best option for the family (and therefore the child)

Child with IEP attends preschool and specialists work with child and teachers to support child's access to learning opportunities and participation in all classroom activities **AND family and child disruptions are minimized.**

Child with IEP attends preschool and specialists work with child and teachers to support child's access to learning opportunities and participation in all classroom activities.

Child with IEP attends preschool and specialists work only with child who is pulled from the classroom.

Child with IEP attends preschool and receives special education services in a different setting.

Family of child with IEP wants child in preschool but child does not attend. Child receives special education services in a special program.

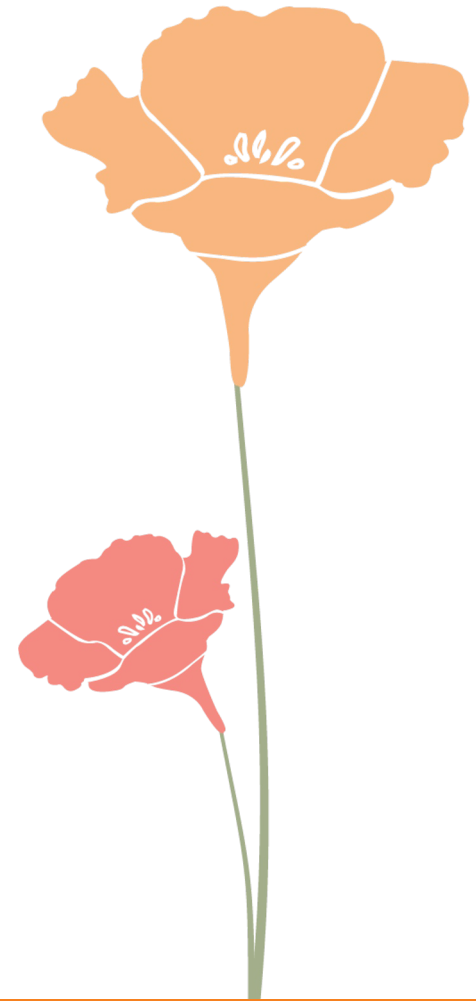
Child with a disability is in preschool but does not have an IEP.

There are many variations in what some call inclusion but only one is the gold standard.

# Defining Inclusion: Gold Standard

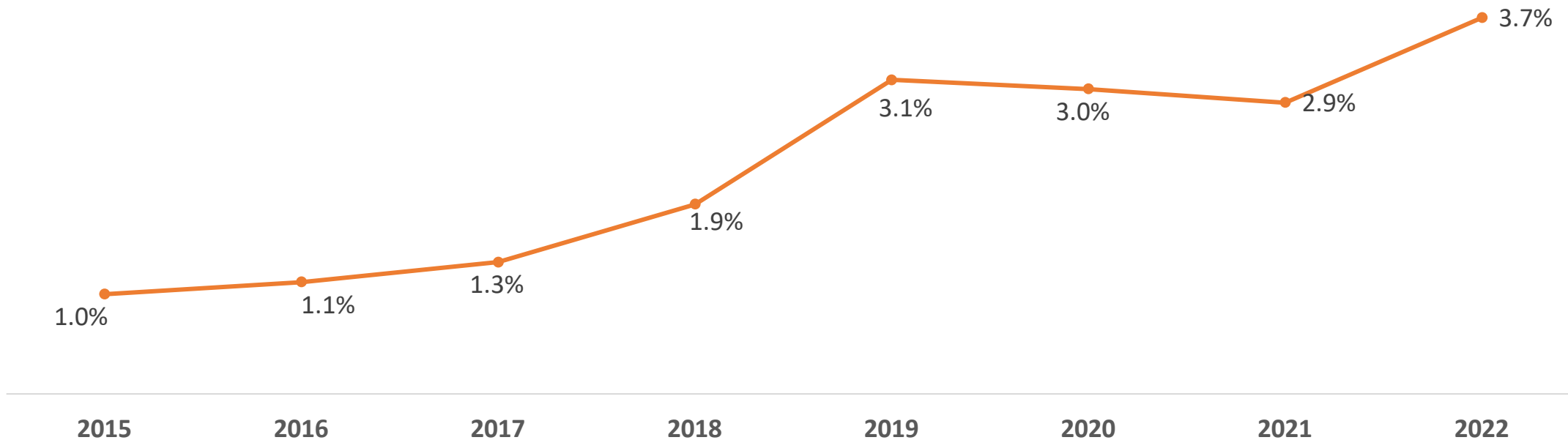
- Child with an IEP is receiving special education services with same-aged peers without disabilities
- Child with an IEP has access to the general curriculum
- Child with an IEP receives their special education services in (not pulled out of) the classroom
- Proportion of children with IEPs in the classroom is similar to the proportion of children with disabilities in the general population
- Specialists support the teacher in working with the child to achieve their IEP goals
- Specialists include the child's peers in service delivery
- Child and family transitions during the day or week are minimized

# Administrative data



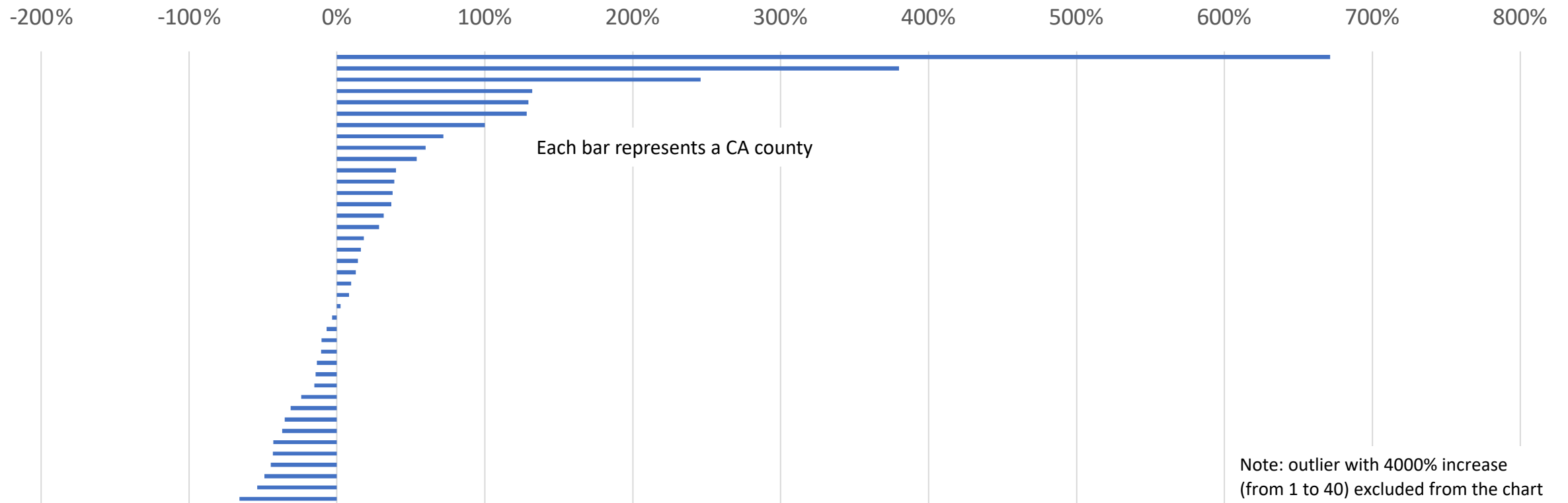
# The percentage of preschoolers who receive subsidized care and have a disability has historically been low.

Percentage of Preschoolers with Subsidy Who Have a Disability  
(CDMIS, October of Each Year)



Since 2019, most counties have had an increase in children with an IEP enrolled in subsidized early learning and care, although some have had a decrease

**Percent Increase in Preschoolers with Subsidy Who Have an IEP**  
Counties with at least 10 children with an IEP in March 2022



## CSPP continues to be by far the largest provider of subsidized care for preschoolers with IEPs.

Program Type	2019 total enrollment (N)	2019 with an IEP (N and %)	2022 Total enrollment (N)	2022 with an IEP (N and %)
General Child Care	4,528	83 (1.8%)	5,067	82 (1.6%)
CalWORKS Stage 2	17,857	38 (0.2%)	8,196	20 (0.2%)
CalWORKS Stage 3	13,964	41 (0.3%)	12,545	20 (1.6%)
Alternative Payment	14,121	75 (0.5%)	28,930	99 (0.3%)
California State Preschool Program	139,879	5,801 (4.1%)	93,176	5,509 (5.9%)
General Migrant Care	1,001	16 (1.6%)	683	6 (0.9%)
Programs for Children with Severe Disabilities	11	11 (100%)	0	0

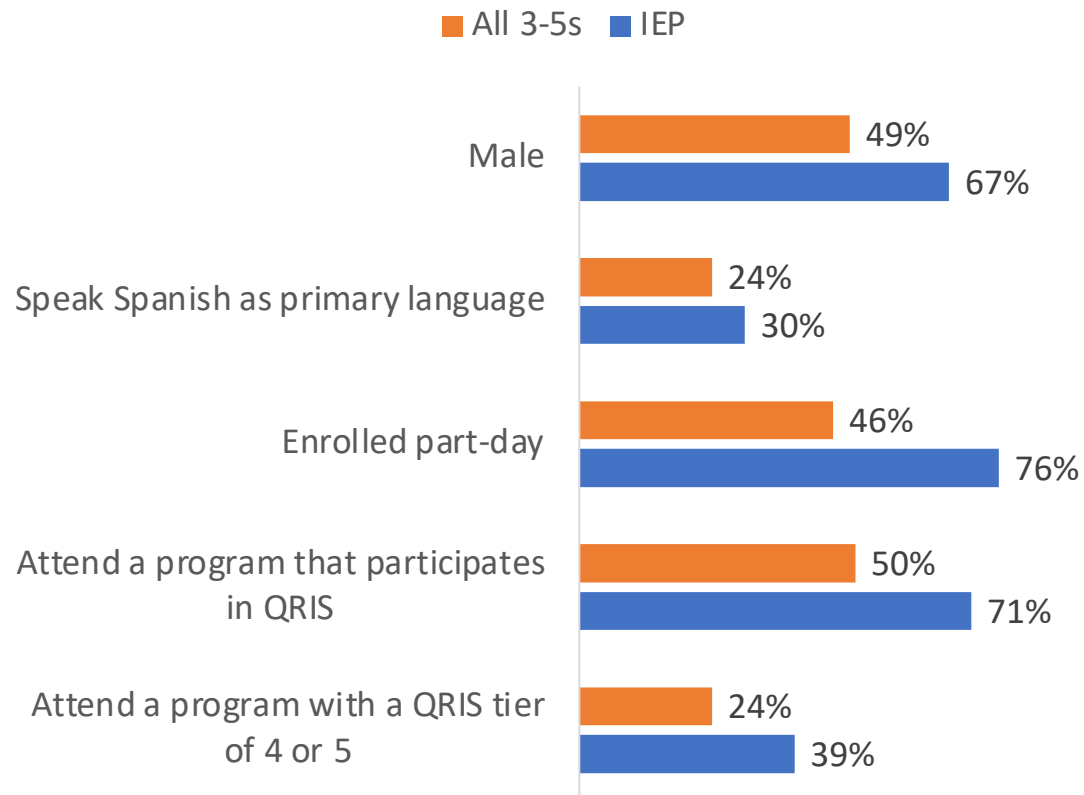
# Why are so many children with IEPs in CSPP?

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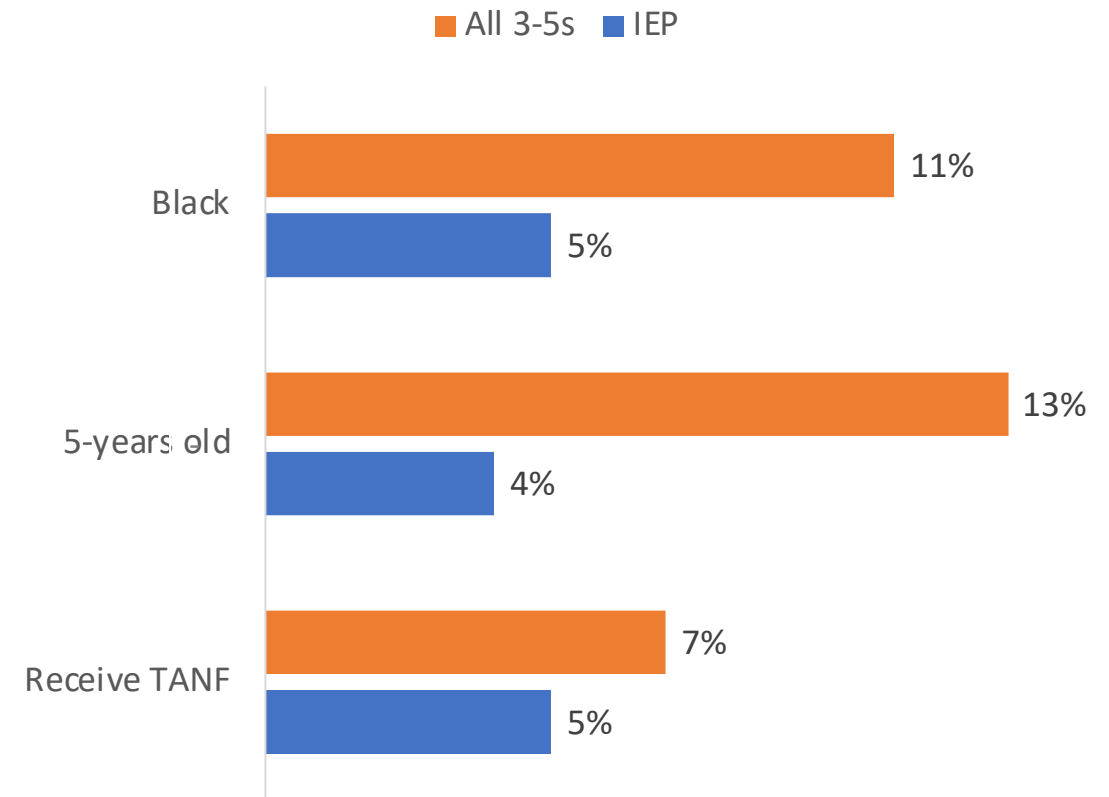
96% of the children with IEPs in subsidized care are in CSPP compared to 63% of all children in subsidized care

# Preschoolers with an IEP who received subsidized care differed from all preschoolers in subsidized care (2022)

Preschoolers with IEPs were **more** likely to:

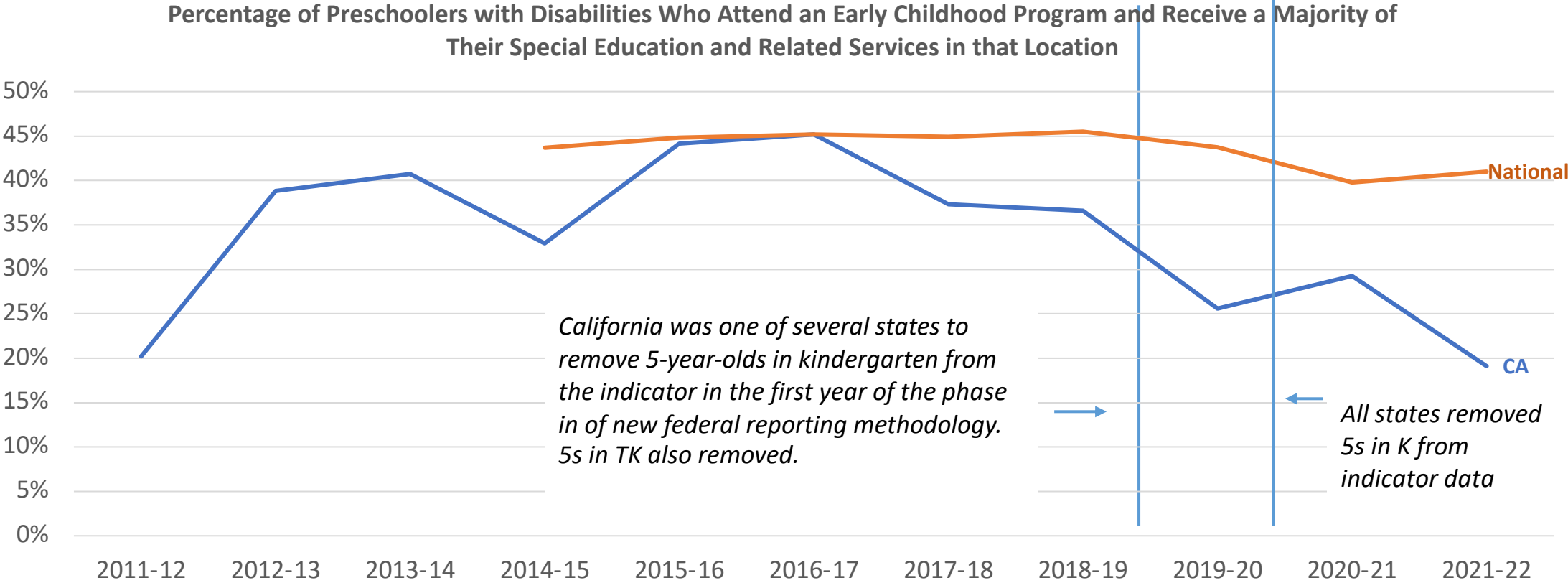


Preschoolers with IEPs were **less** likely to:



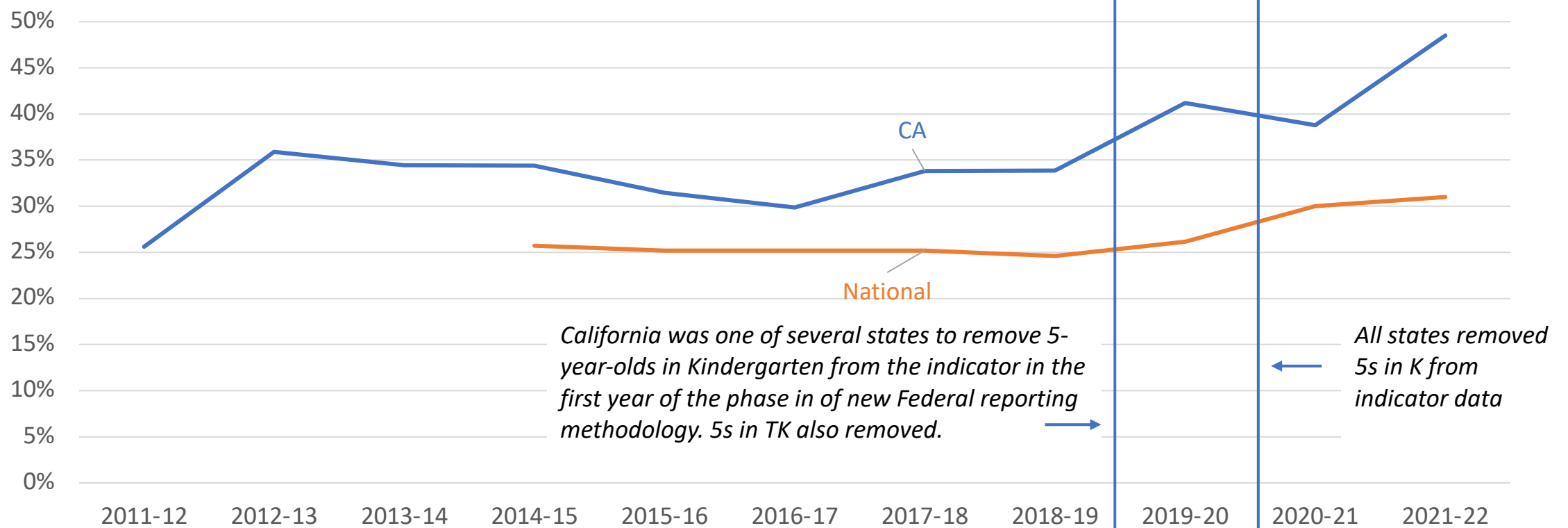


# The percentage of children with IEPs who received services in regular early childhood settings has historically been below the national average.



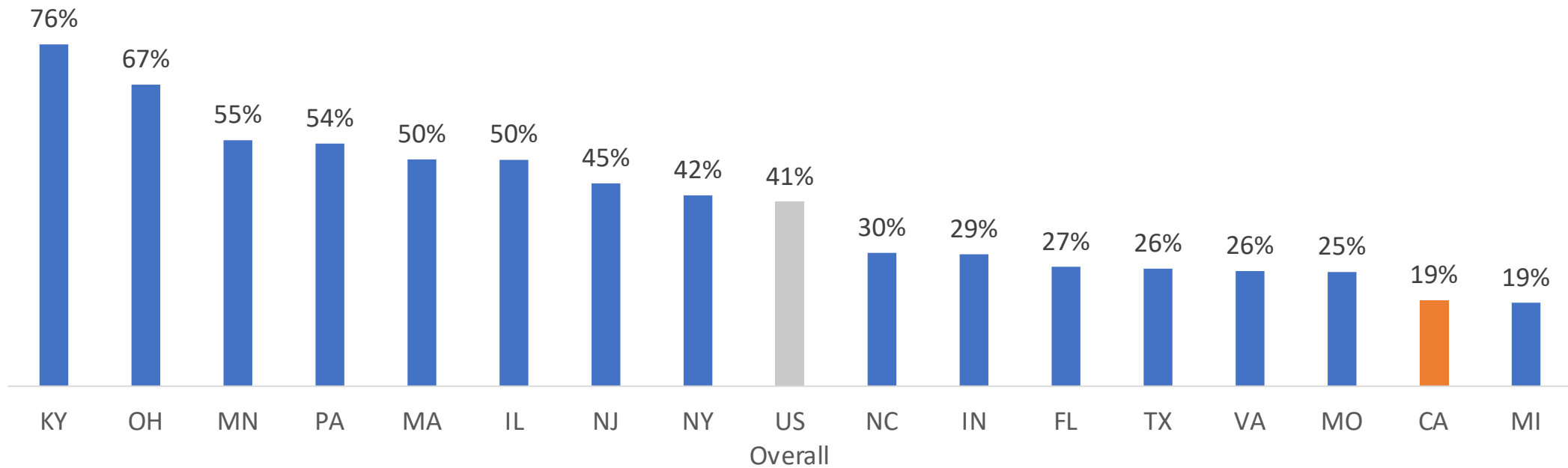
# The percentage of preschoolers receiving their services in segregated settings in California has consistently exceeded the national average

Percentage of children ages 3-5 receiving the majority of the special education services in segregated settings (Indicator 6b)



# California lags behind other states including those of similar size.

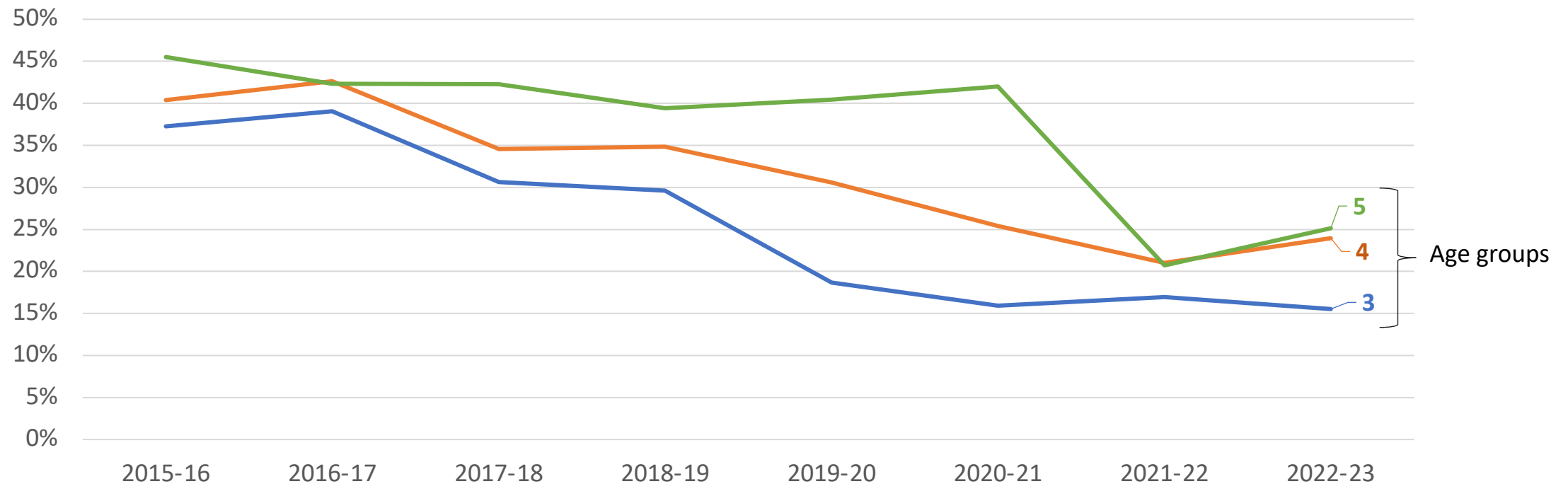
**Indicator 6A: Percentage of preschoolers with an IEP who receive the majority of special education services in a regular early childhood program (FY2021-22)**  
States with at least 10K preschoolers on an IEP



CA's percent for receipt of IEP services in EC program varies by age and has been dropping across all age groups. Three-year-olds currently have lower rates of inclusion than four- and five-year-olds in preschool.

**Indicator 6A by Age (5yo in K excluded)**

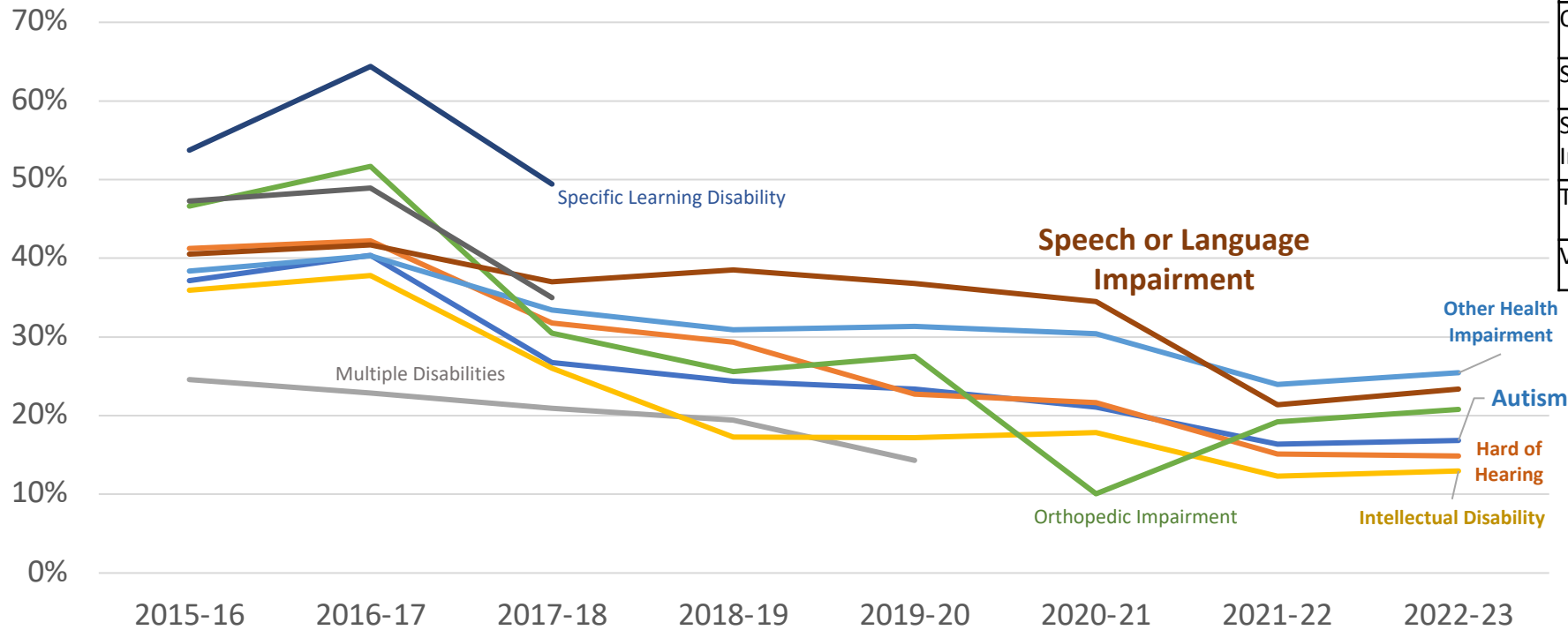
Percentage of preschoolers on an IEP who receive the majority of special education services in a regular early childhood program



# Inclusion rates have dropped across all disability types, some types more so than others

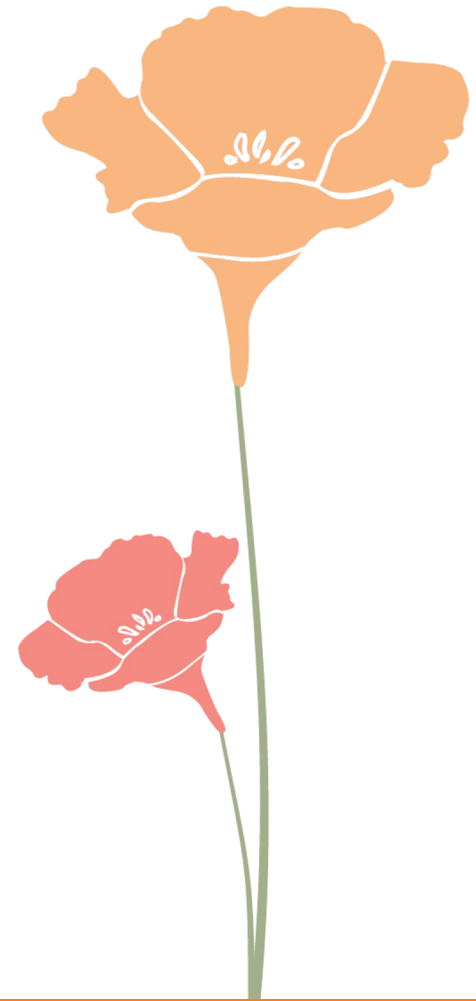
## Indicator 6A by Disability Type (5-yo in K excluded)

Percentage of preschoolers on an IEP who receive the majority of special education services in a regular early childhood program



Number served (2022-23)	
Autism	17,952
Deaf-Blindness	Unavailable
Emotional Disturbance	Unavailable
Hard of Hearing	827
Multiple Disabilities	527
Intellectual Disability	1,141
Other Health Impairment	2,005
Orthopedic Impairment	418
Specific Learning Disability	35
Speech or Language Impairment	23,264
Traumatic Brain Injury	26
Visual impairment	99

# Barriers and Facilitators



# Barriers: District Issues

- Over reliance on self-contained classrooms, impacted by not enough general education slots.
- Districts have minimal connections with community-based programs.
- Concern over who pays for community-based child care keeps districts from considering them as potential placements.
- What districts have to offer does not meet all families' needs for child care.
- Each district is trying to figure out how to increase access to inclusion on their own.
- Variation in teacher qualifications and academic vs. developmental focus of classrooms impacts appropriateness for children with disabilities.

# Facilitators: District Issues

- Commitment to placing more children in general education classrooms and a sense that things are getting better
- Recognition that things need to change, including certain mind sets
- TK will provide more opportunities as a gen ed setting for 4-year-olds
- CSPP teachers participating in professional development on working with children with disabilities
- Recognition of the need for joint planning time



# Barriers: Child Care Issues

- Many issues currently impacting child care, including staffing shortages.
- Teachers are not trained in how to support children with disabilities.
- Districts rarely support child care programs in understanding and meeting children's needs.
- When children attend multiple settings, supports available for children in district programs are not available in their child care programs.

# Facilitators: Child Care Issues

- General openness to serving children with disabilities
- Grant funding has increased opportunities for professional development and other supports for teachers

# Barriers: Family Issues

- District offer of FAPE may not meet the family's need for child care.
- Families may have to make tradeoffs (e.g., decline special education, transport child between multiple programs during the day)
- Attending multiple programs is not optimal for development.
- Participating in programs without appropriate support is also not optimal for development.

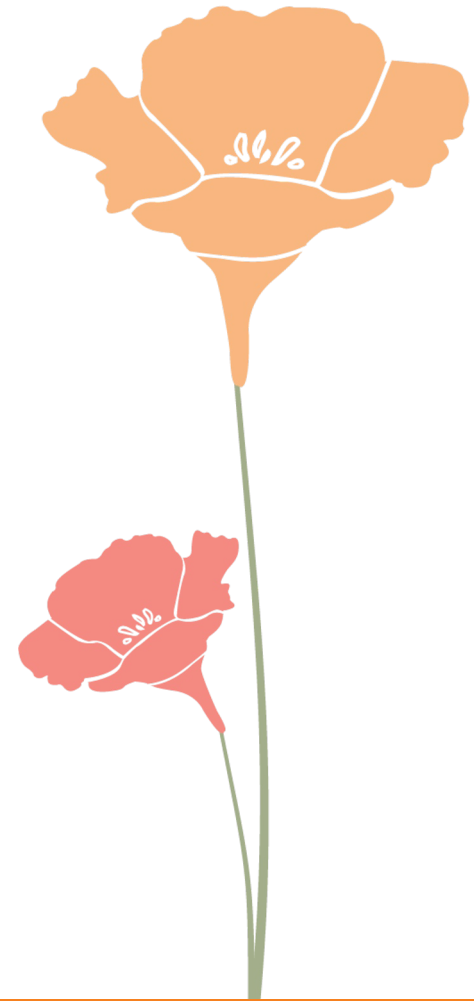
# What does equity in access mean for children with disabilities?

- Normalization principle: People with disabilities should have lives that are as similar as possible as those without disabilities.
- For families accessing subsidized care this means their choices for child care should be the same as any other family in their community.
- If school districts are requiring families experience disruptions or transitions because they have a child with a disability, is that equitable?

# What does equity in access mean for children with disabilities who experience poverty?

- Families who have a child with a disability and limited resources are especially disadvantaged by the chasm between school districts and child care centers
- School districts report: “Families work it out somehow”
- Low paying jobs have limited flexibility
- Families with more resources have more options for “working it out”

# Moving Forward



# Complexity and Multiple Causes

- No single cause or single barrier causing preschoolers with disabilities to not be included in early learning and care
- Complex web of barriers
  - Both within and across child care and education
- No single solution can address the problem
  - Does not mean that solutions that address a piece of the problem are useless; they are just not enough
- Both child care centers and school districts are operating within a set of constraints

# How to move forward?

- Address the system and structural issues for **increasing placement options** for preschoolers with disabilities, especially and including those whose families need child care
  - Need for cross-agency state leadership
  - Need for structures at local level to promote child care and school district collaboration
    - Special education cannot solve this
    - Each school district cannot solve this
    - Child care centers cannot solve this



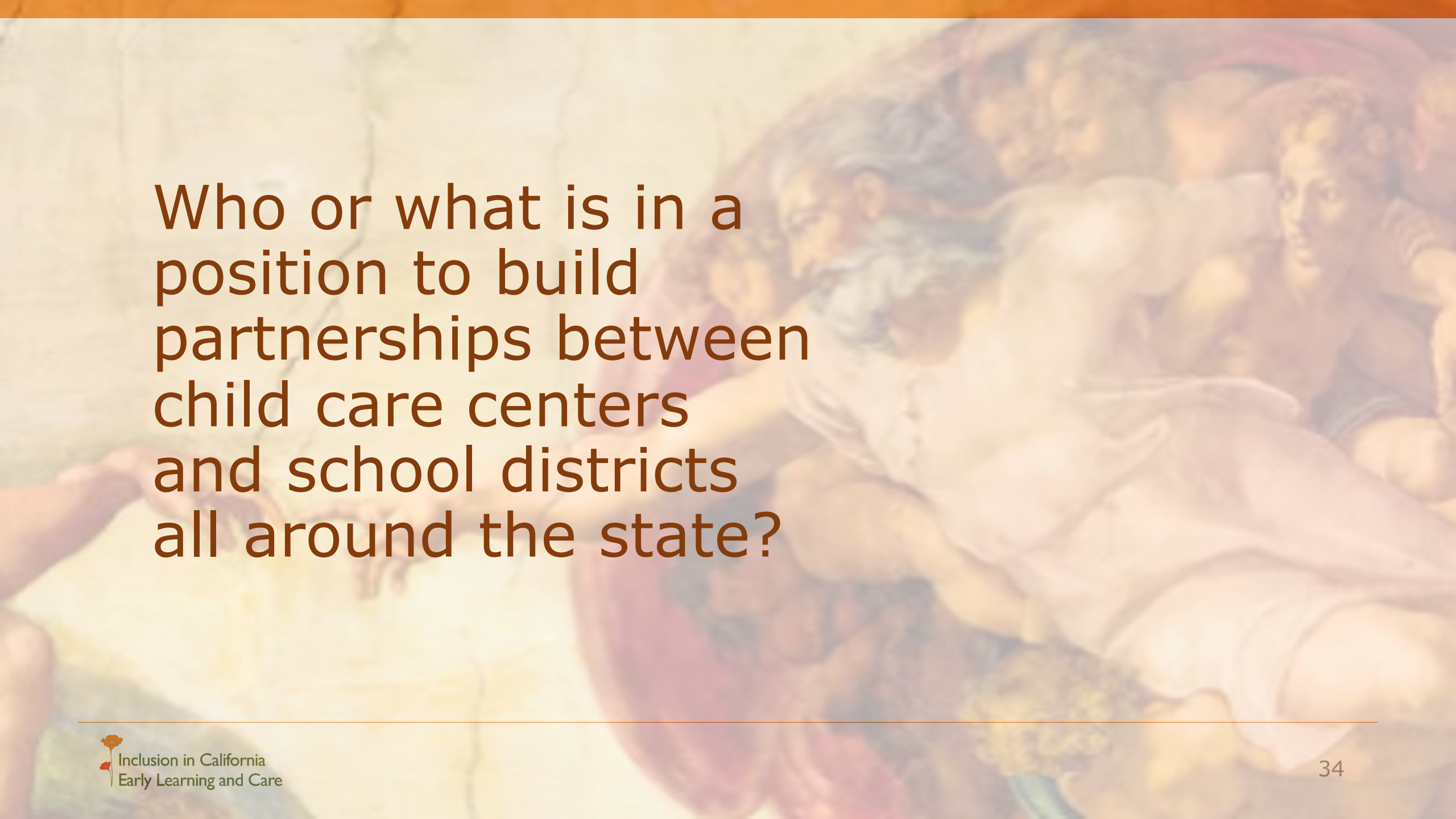
# New Federal Policy Statement (Nov 2023)



## Recommendations for Local Action

1. Establish an Inclusion Leadership Team and Vision for Inclusion
2. Develop Formal Collaborations with Community Partners
3. ....

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ecd/policy-statement-on-inclusion.pdf>



Who or what is in a position to build partnerships between child care centers and school districts all around the state?

# How to move forward?

- Need structures to provide support to school district personnel in how to **design systems that provide preschoolers with IEPs good learning environments in general ed classrooms**
  - Provide special education services within district EC programs
  - How to collaborate with child care centers to expand EC options for children with disabilities
  - Policy change to address “who pays”: Make all preschoolers with IEPs eligible for subsidized care
  - For special education personnel: How to support general education EC teacher vs. teaching a special day class or providing 1-on-1 therapy

# How to move forward?

- Need structures to provide statewide consistently funded **professional development and other resources** to
  - CSPP programs (including district operated)
  - All EC programs in the community, especially child care programs
- School districts have expertise around serving young children with disabilities – how can it be shared?

CA has a long history of providing PD to build capacity to serve preschoolers with disabilities with typical peers but statewide, funding has been inconsistent (need is constant), and there has not been enough of it.

- Is there a role for higher ed in this?

# Discussion

- How can this group and the entities you represent contribute to efforts to move forward?
- Thoughts?
- Questions?

# Thank you

This project is made possible by Grant No. 90YE0218 from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation ([OPRE](#)) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of these institutes. We are committed to providing access to our web pages for individuals with disabilities. If for any reason you are having difficulty accessing any of our resources please [contact us](#).



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