*State of Babies Yearbook: 2019* Toolkit

The [*State of Babies Yearbook: 2019*](http://www.stateofbabies.org) tells us that the littlest among us face big challenges, and that the policies and programs in their state can make a difference in their ability to reach their full potential.

To do better for our babies and our nation’s future, we need Congress and state policymakers to make the potential of every baby our national priority. When we *Think Babies* and invest in infants, toddlers and their families, we ensure a strong future for us all.

There are many ways you can leverage the *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019* to call on your federal and state policymakers to *Think BabiesTM* and develop solutions to improve outcomes for babies and families, including:

* **Contact your federal and state policymakers** and provide them with your state’s profile as a resource as they make decisions that impact babies and families.
* **Post on social media** to highlight your state’s rankings and call on your policymakers to support the policies and investments that babies and families need.
* **Submit an op-ed or letter to the editor** to your state and/or local media, highlighting your state’s rankings, your proposed solutions and how the *Yearbook* can inform policies and investments needed for young children in your state and community.
* **Spread the word** about your state’s rankings and what policymakers can do in your organization’s newsletter, blog, or via email.

We make it easy for you to tell your state’s story. The templates, engaging copy-and-paste content and resources in this toolkit are designed to support your advocacy on behalf of babies and families. These can be modified based upon your state and local context.

Learn more about *Think Babies* and how you can get involved at [thinkbabies.org](https://www.thinkbabies.org/sign-up/).

**Toolkit Contents:**

* Key Messages/Talking Points
* Sample Email to Policymakers
* Social Media Posts
* Sample Letter to the Editor
* Sample Op-Ed
* Sample Newsletter Article, Blog, or E-mail Communication

Key Messages/Talking Points

**Main Message**

The *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019* tells us that the littlest among us face big challenges, and that the policies and programs in their state can make a difference in their ability to reach their full potential.

**About *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019***

* The first of-its-kind, the *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019* seeks to bridge the gap between science and policy with national and state-by-state data on the well-being of America’s babies. Policymakers and advocates can use the data to identify and act on the challenges facing the youngest members of society.
* The *Yearbook* provides a snapshot of how babies are faring nationally and by state across nearly 60 indicators and policy domains in areas essential for a good start in life: Good Health, Strong Families and Positive Early Learning Experiences.
* ZERO TO THREE worked with Child Trends to select indicators related to the well-being of infants, toddlers and their families, as well as key policies. The data were obtained from national datasets (e.g., the Census Bureau’s *American Community Survey* and *National Survey of Children’s Health*) that provide reliable, ongoing and comparable information on all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
* States are ranked into one of four tiers based on how they fare on selected indicators and policy domains that represent their progress towards assuring babies’ access to health care, paid leave, quality early learning and more. The tiers from bottom to top are: Getting Started (G), Reaching Forward (GR), Improving Outcomes (GRO) and Working Efficiently (GROW)

**Results**

* The data are clear: the state where a baby is born makes a big difference in their chance for a strong start in life.
* While all states have room to grow, some are doing better for their babies with effective policy solutions to help infants and toddlers overcome early life challenges.

**Why This Matters**

* There are 12 million infants and toddlers in the United States. Each of these young children is born with unlimited potential. They are our next generation of parents, workers and leaders. The future of our nation depends on how we treat babies and their families today, and we can’t afford to squander the potential of a single child.
* The first three years of a child’s life shape every year that follows. Yet far too many babies face persistent hardships—food insecurity, unstable housing and exposure to violence—that undermine their ability to grow and thrive.
* A baby’s brain develops faster between ages 0 to 3 than at any later point in life, forming more than 1 million new neural connections every second.
* When babies have Good Health, Strong Families and Positive Early Learning Experiences, those neural connections are stimulated and strengthened, laying a strong foundation for the rest of their lives.
* When babies don’t get what their growing brains need to thrive, they don’t develop as they should. This leads to life-long developmental, educational, social and health challenges.

**What We Can Do**

* The time to make every baby our national priority is now. To do better for our babies and our nation’s future, we need Congress and state leaders to make babies a priority through policies built on the science of brain development and budgets that put babies and families first.
* ZERO TO THREE created the *Think BabiesTM* campaign to make the potential of every baby a national priority. When we *Think Babies* and invest in infants, toddlers and their families, we ensure a strong future for us all.
* *Think Babies* is a call to action for policymakers to prioritize the needs of infants, toddlers and their families. We must:
  + Make sure that every family who needs it has access to **quality, affordable child care** for their infants and toddlers that offer one-on-one relationships with caring adults and strong early learning experiences.
  + Give parents dedicated **time to bond with their babies** in the earliest months, when so much of their development is at stake.
  + Reach parents with the resources and services they want and need to **nurture their baby’s healthy development** and set them up for a healthy life.
  + Ensure families have **access to nutrition and other health services** that can give them a healthy start in life.
* Learn more about *Think Babies* and how you can get involved at [thinkbabies.org](https://www.thinkbabies.org/sign-up/).

Sample Email to Policymakers

Dear [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR],

As a constituent, I’m writing to share new information about how babies are faring in **[STATE]**.

ZERO TO THREE and Child Trends’[*State of Babies Yearbook: 2019*](http://www.stateofbabies.org) tells us that the littlest among us face big challenges, and charts which states are leading the nation with policies that help babies realize their full potential, and which have the most work to do. In **[STATE]**, while we have progress to celebrate, the data tell us that we also have room to grow to make our home a place where infants, toddlers and their families can thrive.

The *Yearbook* provides a snapshot of how babies are faring across nearly 60 indicators and policy domains in areas essential for a good start in life. States are ranked into one of four tiers based on how they fare on selected indicators and policy domains. Our rankings by policy domain are **[**[STATE RANKING](https://stateofbabies.org/states)**]** for Good Health, **[**[STATE RANKING](https://stateofbabies.org/states)**]** for Strong Families and **[**[STATE RANKING](https://stateofbabies.org/states)**]** for Positive Early Learning Experiences.

A baby’s brain develops faster between ages 0 to 3 than at any later point in life, forming more than 1 million new neural connections every second. When babies have the support they need, those connections are stimulated and strengthened, laying a strong foundation for the rest of their lives. When infants and toddlers don’t have the support they need to grow and thrive, their development suffers, leading to lifelong developmental, educational, social and health consequences.

Every day, you make decisions that impact the lives of babies in **[STATE]**. We need to **[INSERT PRIORITIES BASED ON YOUR ORGANIZATION’S OBJECTIVES]:**

* **[MAKE SURE EVERY FAMILY WHO NEEDS IT HAS ACCESS TO QUALITY, AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE FOR THEIR INFANTS AND TODDLERS THAT OFFER ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CARING ADULTS AND STRONG EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES.]**
* **[GIVE PARENTS DEDICATED TIME TO BOND WITH THEIR BABIES IN THE EARLIEST MONTHS, WHEN SO MUCH OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT IS AT STAKE.]**
* **[REACH PARENTS WITH THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES THEY WANT AND NEED TO NURTURE THEIR BABY’S HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND SET THEM UP FOR A HEALTHY LIFE.]**
* **[ENSURE FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO NUTRITION AND OTHER HEALTH SERVICES THAT CAN GIVE THEM A HEALTHY START IN LIFE.]**

I hope that you will find the *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019* a helpful resource as you consider the policies and investments needed in **[STATE]** to put babies and families first. I would be happy to discuss this further with you. **[INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION]**

Sincerely,

**[SIGNATURE]**

Social Media Posts

Share these posts with your networks to highlight national and state rankings and educate your policymakers about what babies and families need to thrive. Facebook and Twitter post copy is below, and graphics can be found [here](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/x9h2zyvzxyiin1n/AAAFFvAfx0-UzFPc1LzOo-RNa?dl=0).

**TWITTER:**

**General posts:**

* Where babies are born makes a big difference in their chance for a strong start in life!

📏How does your state measure up? Check out the new @ZEROTOTHREE State of Babies Yearbook: 2019 to find out: <http://bit.ly/2SkSf6M> #stateofbabies #thinkbabies

* ⏰ Our babies can’t wait - the time to make every baby a national priority is now.

See how babies are faring in your state and across the nation in the @ZEROTOTHREE State of Babies Yearbook: 2019: <http://bit.ly/2SkSf6M> #stateofbabies #thinkbabies

* The littlest among us face big challenges, and the policies and programs in their state can make a difference in their ability to reach their full potential.

How does your state measure up? <http://bit.ly/2Epsfnl> @ZEROTOTHREE #stateofbabies #thinkbabies

**State-specific posts:**

* The littlest in **[STATE]** face BIG challenges. Find out more from the new @ZEROTOTHREE State of Babies Yearbook: 2019 about how babies are faring at home and nationwide, and what you can do about it**:** <http://bit.ly/2Epsfnl> #stateofbabies #thinkbabies 👶
* Every baby is born with unlimited potential, yet too many face challenges that affect ability to reach it fully. Policymakers: put babies & fams 1st.

See how babies are faring in **[STATE]** at stateofbabies.org: http://bit.ly/2Epsfnl #stateofbabies #thinkbabies

**FACEBOOK:**

**General posts:**

* Where babies are born makes a big difference in their chance for a strong start in life! How does your state measure up? Check out the new @ZEROTOTHREE State of Babies Yearbook: 2019 to find out: <http://bit.ly/2ItUhCg>
* Our babies can’t wait - the time to make every baby a national priority is now. See how babies are faring in your state and across the nation in the @ZEROTOTHREE State of Babies Yearbook: 2019: <http://bit.ly/2ItUhCg>
* The littlest among us face big challenges, and the policies and programs in their state can make a difference in their ability to reach their full potential. How does your state measure up? <http://bit.ly/2SjY58A> @ZEROTOTHREE
* Every baby is born with unlimited potential, yet far too many face challenges that affect their ability to reach it fully. Policymakers: put babies and families first. See how babies are faring nationally and in your state at <http://bit.ly/2ItUhCg> @ZEROTOTHREE

**State-specific data:**

* In **[STATE]**, the littlest among us face big challenges. Find out more from the new @ZEROTOTHREE State of Babies Yearbook: 2019 about how babies are faring here and nationwide, and how policies and programs can make a difference in helping babies overcome early life challenges: <http://bit.ly/2ItUhCg>
* Every baby is born with unlimited potential, yet far too many face challenges that affect their ability to reach their full potential. Babies in **[STATE]** can’t wait: we need policymakers to put babies and families first. See how babies are faring nationally and in **[STATE]** at stateofbabies.org: <http://bit.ly/2ItUhCg> @ZEROTOTHREE

Sample Letter to the Editor

*For tips on how to write a letter to the editor,* [*click here*](https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/480-how-to-write-a-letter-to-the-editor-and-an-opinion-editorial)*.*

Thank you for highlighting the challenges facing infants and toddlers, **[ARTICLE NAME AND DATE]**. It’s unfortunate—yet true—that where children are born affects their chances for a strong start in life. **[STATE]** can do better for our babies and toddlers.

As an **[ADVOCATE/PARENT/SERVICE PROVIDER/ETC.]**, I’ve seen first-hand how devastating it can be when babies lack the support they need to become healthy, happy adults. **[INSERT EXAMPLE].**

According to ZERO TO THREE’s *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019*, the U.S ranks 31st in relative child poverty among 38 economically advanced countries—unacceptable for a nation that considers itself a world leader. Babies in **[STATE]** need help too. **[**[**INSERT STATE DATA**](https://stateofbabies.org/states)**].**

Every baby deserves to reach his or her full potential. We can realize that vision here in **[STATE]** by making infants and toddlers a priority through policies built on the science of brain development and budgets that put babies and families first. We need to **[BEING AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE AND USING AS FEW WORDS AS POSSIBLE, INSERT PRIORITIES BASED ON YOUR ORGANIZATION’S OBJECTIVES]**:

* **[MAKE SURE EVERY FAMILY WHO NEEDS IT HAS ACCESS TO QUALITY, AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE FOR THEIR INFANTS AND TODDLERS THAT OFFER ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CARING ADULTS AND STRONG EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES.]**
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* **[REACH PARENTS WITH THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES THEY WANT AND NEED TO NURTURE THEIR BABY’S HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND SET THEM UP FOR A HEALTHY LIFE.]**
* **[ENSURE FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO NUTRITION AND OTHER HEALTH SERVICES THAT CAN GIVE BABIES A HEALTHY START IN LIFE.]**

The 12 million infants and toddlers in the U.S. are our next generation of workers, parents and leaders and our future as a nation depends on how we treat them and their families today.

Sample Op-ed

*For tips on how to write an op-ed,* [*click here*](https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/480-how-to-write-a-letter-to-the-editor-and-an-opinion-editorial)*.*

**Headline: The State of [STATE]’s Babies**

**[INSERT SHORT ANECDOTE ABOUT A CHILD OR FAMILY WHO HAS STRUGGLED IN SOME WAY AND WHERE MORE SUPPORT COULD HAVE HELPED THE FAMILY ENSURE THAT THE CHILD WAS THRIVING].** Unfortunately, as an **[ADVOCATE/PARENT/SERVICE PROVIDER/ETC.]**,I’ve seen time and again that **[CHILD]** is not alone in lacking the support **[SHE/HE]** needs for a strong start in life. There are millions more who have experienced similar challenges, particularly infants and toddlers here in **[STATE]**.

The *State of Babies Yearbook: 2019,* developed by ZERO TO THREE and Child Trends, shows us that where babies live makes a big difference in their chances for future success. While all states in the U.S. have room to grow, some are doing better for their babies with effective policy solutions to help infants and toddlers overcome early life challenges.

Some 45 percent of U.S. babies live in families without enough income to make ends meet. In **[STATE]**, **[**[**X percent**](https://stateofbabies.org/states)**]** share that same challenge. When families have limited economic and social resources, they struggle to provide their babies with nurturing experiences. Unfortunately, leaders don’t think about babies enough when shaping policies. So many states, including our own, lack the solutions needed to support our youngest members of society. That needs to change, starting here in **[STATE]**.

To bridge the gaps to ensure that every **[STATE]** infant and toddler has what they need to thrive, and to serve as a model for other states facing similar challenges, we need policy solutions that focus on infants and toddlers. We must make babies a priority through policies built on the science of brain development and budgets that put babies and families first.

Babies are born with unlimited potential—helping them thrive from birth to age 3 sets a strong foundation for the rest of their lives. Children who are healthy—socially, emotionally and physically—are more likely to become healthy, stable successful adults. Investing in the well-being of the next generation by ensuring that all babies have good health, strong families and positive early learning experiences benefits us all.

Future presidents, doctors, scientists, artists and educators have already been born, but they need our help grow into the leaders our country will need. Moreover, our economic future as a nation depends on providing the tools for upward mobility and building a highly educated, skilled workforce. We can’t afford to squander the potential of a single child, especially here in **[STATE]**.

Sample Newsletter Article, Blog, or E-mail Communication

How are **[STATE]’s** babies faring? The [*State of Babies Yearbook: 2019*](http://www.stateofbabies.org)tells us that the littlest among us face big challenges. In **[STATE]**, while we have progress to celebrate, the data tell us that we also have room to grow to make **[STATE]** a place where infants, toddlers and their families can thrive.

The *Yearbook*, recently released by [ZERO TO THREE](https://www.zerotothree.org) and [Child Trends](https://www.childtrends.org), provides a snapshot of how babies are faring across nearly 60 indicators and policy domains in areas essential for a good start in life. States are ranked into one of four tiers based on how they fare on selected indicators and policy domains. **[STATE]** received an overall ranking of **[**[**STATE RANKING**](https://stateofbabies.org/states)**]**. Our rankings by policy domain are **[**[**STATE RANKING**](https://stateofbabies.org/states)**]** for Good Health, **[**[**STATE RANKING**](https://stateofbabies.org/states)**]** for Strong Families and **[**[**STATE RANKING**](https://stateofbabies.org/states)**]** for Positive Early Learning Experiences.

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ZERO TO THREE created the *Think BabiesTM* campaign to make the potential of every baby a national priority. To do better for our babies and our nation’s future, we need Congress and state policymakers to make babies a priority through policies built on the science of brain development and budgets that put babies and families first.

We need to **[INSERT PRIORITIES BASED ON YOUR ORGANIZATION’S OBJECTIVES]**:

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We encourage you to share this information with your partners and networks and join the team that is fighting for our future. [Learn more](https://www.thinkbabies.org/sign-up/) about the *Think Babies* campaign and how you can get involved.