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Candidates on Children (Zero to Five)

Compiled by Brookings Institution experts, this chart is part of a series of issue indices to be published during the 2008 Presidential election cycle. The policy issues included in this series were chosen by Brookings staff and represent the most critical topics facing America's next President.

CANDIDATES



Barack Obama (D)
 Senator from Illinois



John McCain (R)
 Senator from Arizona

Published 5/15/2008. Updated 09/30/2008. The index displays the top candidates from both major parties. Opportunity 08, a Brookings project in partnership with ABC News, aims to help presidential candidates and the public focus on critical issues facing the nation, providing ideas, policy forums, and information on a broad range of domestic and foreign policy questions. Brookings is an independent think tank (501c3) that does not support or oppose any candidate for public office. Voters should learn all they can about the candidates on a range of issues and should not rely on any single source of information before making their decision.

Candidates	Obama (D)	McCain (R)
<p>Overview: Children Zero to Five</p>	<p>His comprehensive “Zero to Five” plan will provide critical supports to young children and their parents by investing \$10 billion per year to: Create Early Learning Challenge Grants to stimulate and help fund state “zero to five” efforts; Quadruple the number of eligible children for Early Head Start, increase Head Start funding and improve quality for both; Work to ensure all children have access to pre-school; Provide affordable and high-quality child care that will promote child development and ease the burden on working families; Create a Presidential Early Learning Council to increase collaboration and program coordination across federal, state, and local levels. – BarackObama.com</p> <p>Read more and read more</p>	<p>Every child, regardless of their financial means, [should] arrive on the first day of elementary school ready to learn...As President, John McCain will focus federal resources on ensuring that the neediest children have access to a range of high quality programs. The objective will be to ensure that these children have the opportunity to begin school with a strong foundation in language and numbers, and that they have the social and emotional skills necessary to succeed.</p> <p>There is no shortage of federal programs targeted at early child care and preschool....There is much to be achieved by leveraging and better coordinating these programs to increase availability of high quality programs. – John McCain.com</p> <p>Read more</p> <p>He believes that outside of essential military and veterans programs there should be a one-year pause in discretionary spending growth that should be used for a top-to-bottom review of the effectiveness of federal programs. – John McCain.com</p> <p>Read more</p>
<p>Pre-K/Preschool</p>	<p>[His plan will] Encourage all states to adopt voluntary, universal pre-school...States may use Early Learning Challenge Grants to fund high-quality preschool programs that seek to enroll every four-year-old or every three-and four-year-old. The Early Learning Challenge Grants will provide states with the flexibility to adopt sliding-scale systems, target, and other measures designed to give children in greatest need priority. – BarackObama.com</p> <p>Read more</p>	<p>As President, John McCain will ensure that there are no federal prohibitions against preschool programs offering basic healthcare screenings to children (with parental consent) in their care. – John McCain.com</p> <p>Read more</p> <p>See overview above for more on PreK/Preschool.</p>

Candidates	Obama (D)	McCain (R)
<p>Head Start</p>	<p>Barack Obama will quadruple the number of infants and toddlers participating in Early Head Start.... Obama supports increasing Head Start funding to provide low-income preschool children with critically important learning skills. He also recognizes and supports the important role parents play in the success of Head Start. [To] Improve quality of Head Start and Early Head Start Barack Obama will provide \$250 million in dedicated funds to create or expand regional training centers designed to help Head Start centers implement successful models. – BarackObama.com</p> <p>Read more</p>	<p>We should build Centers for Excellence in Head Start...The Secretary of HHS will pick at least one Head Start Center in each state...[Each] Center of Excellence will use their funds [of at least \$200,000 per year] to expand their programs to serve more children, disseminate their best practices to other Head Start agencies (similar to a charter school dissemination grant), and improve coordination of early childhood education in their city or state. – John McCain.com</p> <p>Read more</p>
<p>Child Care</p>	<p>Barack Obama will reverse this policy [of insufficient funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant] and ensure that CCDBG remains adequately funded every year...[he] will encourage states to use their CCDBG quality set-aside funding and other federal support to develop strategic plans that better coordinate all state birth-to-five services....Obama will also double the resources for quality within CCDBG to support efforts such as developing quality rating systems. Other examples include improving student/teacher ratios, providing family support in child care settings and increasing professional development and teacher training. – BarackObama.com</p> <p>Read more</p>	<p>Estimates are that 70-85 percent of children from low-income families have access to early care and/or preschool, and that nearly 90 percent of children younger than five with employed mothers are in a regular child care arrangement. However, due to complicated formulas and budgetary constraints, not every low-income child is getting access to high quality care and education on a consistent basis. Federal dollars can do far more to broaden access to high quality programs.</p> <p>As President, John McCain will focus federal resources on ensuring that the neediest children have access to a range of high quality programs. – JohnMcCain.com</p> <p>Read more</p>
<p>Child Tax Credits and Exemptions</p>	<p>Obama will increase the number of working parents eligible for EITC benefits, increase the benefits available to parents who support their children through child support payments, increase benefits for families with three or more children, and reduce the EITC marriage penalty, which hurts low-income families. – BarackObama.com</p> <p>Read more</p> <p>Barack Obama will reform the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit by making it refundable and allowing low-income families to receive up to a 50 percent credit for their child care expenses. – BarackObama.com</p> <p>Read more</p>	<p>John McCain believes the tax code should be less of a burden on those, whether they are mothers and fathers or single parents, who are trying to raise a family. He proposes to raise the personal exemption for each dependent from \$3,500 to \$7,000. – JohnMcCain.com</p> <p>Read more</p>

Candidates	Obama (D)	McCain (R)
Child Safety	<p>Obama is committed to preventing child abuse and supports proven and effective means to combat the tragedy of child abuse...</p> <p>Barack Obama helped create a national sex offender database through his co-sponsorship of Dru's Law...Obama also cosponsored the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act...Obama supports the KIDS Act, which requires sex offenders to provide their Internet identifiers...for use in the National Sex Offender Public Registry.</p> <p>Obama also introduced legislation that would help protect children from lead poisoning by requiring all non-home-based child care facilities, including Head Start programs and kindergartens, to be lead-safe within five years. -BarackObama.com</p> <p>Read more</p>	<p>America's most precious asset is its children. The innocence of childhood provides hope for the future and refreshes and restores the ideals of this great country. However, there are those who prey upon this innocence...John McCain has taken a hard line against pedophiles that would use the Internet to prey upon children by proposing the first-of-its-kind national online registry for persons who have been convicted of sex crimes against children. Senator McCain's legislation requires that sex offenders register all online accounts It is the responsibility of government to do all that can be done to protect children from predators who lurk on the Internet. -JohnMcCain.com</p> <p>Read more</p>
Home Visiting	<p>Barack Obama will expand evidence-based home visiting programs to all low-income first-time mothers. The Nurse-Family Partnership, for example, provides home visits by trained registered nurses to low-income expectant mothers and their families. - BarackObama.com</p> <p>Read more</p>	<p>No public statements available.</p>
Child Health	<p>Voted yes for reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) (August, 2007)</p> <p>Obama will expand eligibility for the Medicaid and SCHIP programs and ensure that these programs continue to serve their critical safety net function. - BarackObama.com</p> <p>Read more</p> <p>The main goal of the Obama health care proposal is to achieve universal coverage, but it does not include an individual mandate for all Americans. Obama proposes that all children must have health insurance coverage. See Opportunity 08 Candidate Issue Index on Health Care for more details.</p>	<p>Voted against the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) (August, 2007)</p> <p>In 1997, Congress created SCHIP... I was pleased to join many of my colleagues in supporting its establishment... however, I am greatly concerned that...the CHIP Reauthorization Act, which was reported by the Finance Committee, would greatly expand SCHIP beyond its original framework, lead to an explosion in new spending, and reduce private health coverage in our countryI support the ideas contained in the alternative bill, the Kids First Act, which I believe would keep SCHIP focused on providing health insurance coverage to low-income children and would do so without dramatic increases in federal spending or higher taxes on Americans. - McCain.senate.gov</p> <p>Read more</p> <p>The main goal of the McCain health care proposal is to reduce health care costs and make health insurance more affordable. See Opportunity 08 Candidate Issue Index on Health Care for more details.</p>

Candidates	Obama (D)	McCain (R)
<p>Foster Care/Adoption</p>	<p>The foster care system is failing children who need help the most. Obama recognizes that part of the solution is to increase the quantity of foster homes, improve training for foster parents and increase coordination between law enforcement and child welfare officials so that abuse can be stopped...Obama will invest in innovative new job training and workforce development programs that will provided those in foster care with the skills necessary to compete in the modern American workforce. -BarackObama.com</p> <p>Read more</p>	<p>In 1993, John McCain and his wife, Cindy, adopted a little girl from Mother Teresa's orphanage in Bangladesh...As president, motivated by his personal experience, John McCain will seek ways to promote adoption as a first option for women struggling with a crisis pregnancy. In the past, he cosponsored legislation to prohibit discrimination against families with adopted children, to provide adoption education, and to permit tax deductions for qualified adoption expenses, as well as to remove barriers to interracial and inter-ethnic adoptions. -JohnMcCain.com</p> <p>Read more</p>
<p>Proposed Legislation: (110th Congress)</p>	<p>Obama introduced the Lead Poisoning Reduction Act (2007), which would assess and reduce the levels of lead found in child-occupied facilities in the United States.</p> <p>Obama co-sponsored the Education Begins at Home Act, which would expand programs of early childhood home visitation; the Working Family Child Assistance Act (2007), which would modify the income threshold for the refundable portion of the child tax credit; and the Healthy Kids Act and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act of 2007, both of which would expand SCHIP coverage; and the Home Lead Safety Tax Credit Act (2007), which would provide a tax credit for property owners who remove lead-based paint hazards.</p>	<p>McCain introduced the Securing Adolescent from Exploitation-Online Act (2007), which would expand reporting requirements relating to child pornography.</p>