



# East Alabama Early Care & Education Summit

Strengthening Workforce Stability and  
Economic Growth Across East Alabama

September 17, 2026

Southern Union State Community College

*A Southern Union State Community College initiative in partnership  
with regional business, government, and education leaders.*

## A Workforce Challenge We Can't Ignore

Early care and education is essential infrastructure that supports children, families, employers, and the long-term economic vitality of East Alabama.

Yet today, more than 2,000 additional childcare seats are needed to support working families and the region's growing workforce.



**Let's work together to strengthen access, quality and capacity of childcare in our area. Please join us:**

**East Alabama Early Care & Education Summit  
September 17, 2026**

 Location: Southern Room - SUSCC Opelika Campus - 301 Lake Condry Road

 For more info: Sandy Little at [slittle@suscc.edu](mailto:slittle@suscc.edu)

**The East Alabama Early Care and Education Summit will bring together business, government, education, and community leaders to:**

- ✓ Share regional data on childcare access and workforce impact
- ✓ Strengthen understanding of early care as workforce infrastructure
- ✓ Elevate the perspectives of employers, providers, and families
- ✓ Identify opportunities to expand access, quality, and affordability
- ✓ Encourage regional collaboration around solutions

## Access and Affordability

Licensed early care programs in Lee County can serve only 48% of children under age six, leaving thousands of families without care.

Average annual childcare cost:  
**\$8,000 per child**  
Median household income:  
**\$61,000**

Without reliable care, parents often reduce work hours, delay employment, or leave the workforce.

## Why Quality Early Education Matters

High-quality early education improves academic outcomes and strengthens the long-term workforce.

Research including the Perry Preschool Project and Alabama's First Class Pre-K program shows lasting academic and workforce benefits.

Strong early education today builds a stronger workforce tomorrow.

## Child Care and the Workforce in Lee County



**When families cannot access childcare, workforce participation declines and employers struggle to recruit and retain employees.**



## Strengthening Early Care and Education Strengthens Our Region

Early care and education supports:

- Children and families
- Workforce participation
- Employer recruitment and retention
- Regional economic growth

When communities invest in early care and education, the entire region benefits.



SOUTHERN UNION  
STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE