

In the United States, federal and state early learning opportunities serve more than 4,218,475 children and families,¹ or 18% of children ages 5 and under.²

High quality child care and early learning programs support child development and offer parents peace of mind while they work or attend school.

Unfortunately, the demand for quality care far outweighs the supply, so many families struggle to access and afford the care options they want or need. While there are several federally funded programs that provide working families with access to quality child care opportunities, limited funding leaves many eligible children unserved. The impacts of these challenges extend beyond families and carry over to the workplace. As a direct result, the national economy loses **\$122 billion annually** in the form of lost earnings, productivity, and revenue.³

Below is a list of existing child care and early learning programs which together form a mix delivery system that supports parental choice and aims to meet children's individual needs. These programs have unique eligibility requirements and service delivery models. However, at current funding levels, each only reaches a fraction of eligible families.

STATE OF CHILD CARE IN THE U.S.
22,882,579

 Children 5 & Under⁴
\$10,456

 Annual Price of Home-Based Infant Care (\$871 per month)⁹
65%

 Children 5 & Under with All Available Parents in the Workforce⁵
\$121,394

 Median Income of Married-Couple Family¹⁰
92,786

 Licensed Child Care Centers in 2023 (+1204 compared to 2022)⁶
12%

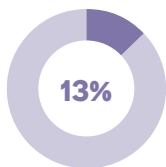
 Portion of Income Spent by a Married-Couple Family on Center-Based Infant Care¹¹
94,227

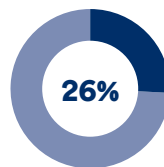
 Licensed Family Child Care Homes in 2023 (-728 compared to 2022)⁷
\$36,492

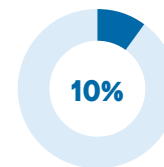
 Median Income of Single-Parent Family¹²
\$14,257

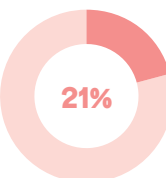
 Annual Price of Center-Based Infant Care (\$1,188 per month)⁸
39%

 Portion of Income Spent by a Single-Parent Family on Center-Based Infant Care¹³
CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CCDBG)

 6,280,772 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER ELIGIBLE¹⁴
 839,226 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER SERVED¹⁵

 13% ELIGIBLE CHILDREN 5 & UNDER SERVED¹⁶
HEAD START

 2,019,026 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE¹⁷
 531,450 CHILDREN ENROLLED¹⁸

 26% ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED¹⁹
EARLY HEAD START

 2,019,026 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE²⁰
 206,316 CHILDREN ENROLLED²¹

 10% ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED²²
STATE-FUNDED PRE-K

 1,606,415 CHILDREN ENROLLED²³

 21% 3-AND 4-YEAR-OLDS SERVED²⁴
MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START

 20,169 CHILDREN ENROLLED²⁵
MATERNAL, INFANT, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD HOME VISITING (MIECHV)

 68,917 FAMILIES SERVED²⁶
IDEA PART C

 (EARLY INTERVENTION)
 438,988 CHILDREN SERVED²⁷
IDEA PART B, SEC. 619

 (PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION)
 527,163 CHILDREN SERVED²⁸

FEDERAL AND STATE CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING FUNDING IN THE U.S.



Note: Amounts reflect total program funding. In some cases these levels include funding that is allocated to technical assistance, research and evaluation, and other administrative supports.

\$11.27B	CCDBG and Mandatory Funds ²⁹
\$10.25B	Head Start and Early Head Start ³⁰ (includes AIAN HS/EHS and MSHS)
\$300M	PDG B-5 ³¹
\$428.4M	MIECHV ³²
\$514.8M	IDEA Part C ³³
\$416.6M	IDEA Part B, Sec. 619 ³⁴
\$7.1B	TANF Early Care and Education ³⁵
\$976.2M	TANF Transferred to CCDBG ³⁶

STATE INVESTMENT

11.7B	State-Funded Pre-K ³⁷
\$1.6B	CCDBG State Match ³⁸
\$89.2 M	PDG B-5 State Match ³⁹

ELEMENTS OF PROGRAM QUALITY

Program quality varies substantially within and across states.

Quality child care and early learning relies on a strong workforce, yet early childhood educators have some of the lowest paying jobs in the U.S., making it difficult to recruit and retain educators. Child care workers earn **\$14.60 per hour (\$30,370 annually)**.⁴⁰

Teacher-child ratios are crucial for ensuring safety, quality, and individual attention. Ratio requirements for licensed center-based care vary significantly across the United States:⁴¹

- **Infant** 1:3 to 1:6
- **Toddler** 1:4 to 1:12 for age 2
- **Preschool** 1:8 to 1:20 for age 4

Only 5 state pre-K programs met 10/10 of NIEER's Quality Standards Benchmarks, which represent minimum standards to support quality preschool programs.⁴²

Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) is a competitive federal grant designed to improve states' early childhood systems.⁴³

- **In January 2023, 42 states were awarded grants (21 "planning" grants and 21 "renewal" grants).** This round prioritized investments in the child care and early learning workforce. The renewal grantees are implementing their strategic plans, through efforts like statewide compensation reforms and expanding professional development opportunities.
- **In May 2024, PDG B-5 Renewal Grant funding opportunity was announced.** It adds priorities around bolstering infant and toddler services and supporting children's social-emotional development and mental health.

CHILD AND DEPENDENT CARE TAX CREDIT (CDCTC)

The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) directly helps working parents offset the cost of child care.

In its current form, the credit only reaches a small percentage of families and has been swiftly outpaced by the escalating cost of child care as it lacks any adjustment for inflation.

Last permanently updated in 2001, the current credit averages \$500-\$600 a year.⁴⁴

CDCTC IN THE U.S. BY TAX YEAR

2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5,113,710: Number of taxpayers claiming the CDCTC • \$552: Average credit⁴⁵
2021	<p><i>The CDCTC was temporarily expanded and made refundable for one year in response to the pandemic.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6,345,380: Number of taxpayers claiming the CDCTC (an additional 1,231,670 from 2020) • \$2,099: Average Credit (an additional \$1,548 from 2020, on average)⁴⁶
TODAY	<p><i>The temporary expansion expired; the CDCTC reverted back to 2001 levels.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$500-600: Average credit

NOTE: Major provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA) expire at the end of 2025⁴⁷, giving Congress the opportunity to modernize the CDCTC and other tax provisions to better help working families offset the cost of quality child care.⁴⁸



Scan or click the QR code for full references and links. For more information contact FFYF at mail@ffyf.org.

*This fact sheet includes data from 50 states and Washington, D.C.