



Early Childhood Education: a National Snapshot



Across the country, state and federally funded early childhood opportunities serve more than 4,498,946 children and families¹

High-quality early childhood education (ECE) is proven to dramatically improve a child’s opportunities for a better future—particularly children from low-income families—while offering parents improved job stability and overall economic security. Research shows that every \$1 invested in the education and care of children from birth through age five generates \$7.30 in return for our country. To ensure all children can access high-quality early learning and care, the federal government partners with states to support local efforts and innovations.

Over time, ECE programs have been created to meet the diverse needs of children and families. These programs vary in their purpose, services offered, and demographics served. A 2017 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that these programs work in conjunction to benefit those they serve. To learn more about the specific programs that support young children and their families, read FFYF’s [ABCs of Federal Early Learning and Care Funding Streams](#) resource.

Much of the progress at the state and local level has been made possible by strong partnerships with the federal government aimed at expanding access and increasing quality for more children. Many state and community programs are funded exclusively with federal dollars, while others leverage federal funding to create and expand high-quality early learning and care opportunities beyond what is possible with state funding alone. Together, these investments from federal and state governments create an effective mixed-delivery system that supports the care, education, and healthy development of children.

¹ This figure includes beneficiaries of Head Start, Early Head Start, CCDF, MIECHV, state-funded Pre-K, and IDEA Parts B Sec. 619 and C. In some cases, children and families are served by more than one program.

Across the country, the child care industry has an estimated economic impact of

\$99.24 B

including revenue generated by child care providers and spillover or related productivity in other sectors. ²

Across the country,

51%

of residents live in a “child care desert”. ³

\$7,881

is the average annual cost of home-based child care in the US.

20.3%

decline in availability of home-based care from 2010 to 2016. ^{4,5}

\$10,132

is the average annual cost of center-based child care in the US.

12%

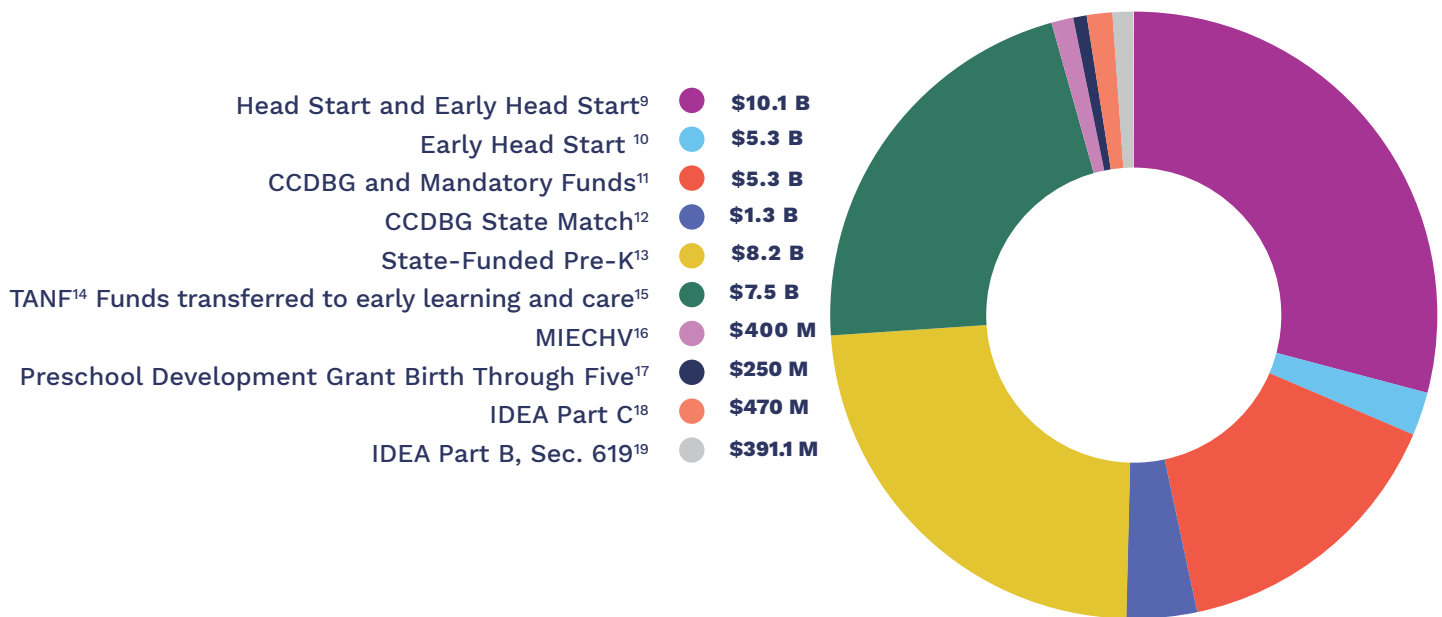
of the average state median income ^{6,7}

Across the country, more than

2 M JOBS

are sustained by the child care sector. ⁸

Federal and State Early Childhood Education Funding



The Economic Impact of Early Learning and Care

In the US, there are 14,945,418 children under six with all available parents in the workforce, meaning that those families need to seek some kind of care for their children.²⁰ In addition to the significant impact of early childhood education on children and families in the short and long term, early learning and care can have an immediate impact on the economy. Access to affordable child care can increase labor force participation and support parents seeking additional education and training, which contributes to higher earnings over an individual's lifetime.

Impacts of the High Cost of Care

Various programs support children and families before they enter school. While this patchwork of programs supports local innovations, there is still unmet need, and the cost of care prohibits many parents from entering or remaining in the workforce. In 2017, the average cost of center-based infant care exceeded the cost of a year at a public college in 28 states and the District of Columbia.²¹ Further, the supply of home-based care, which is often the more affordable and flexible option, has decreased since 2010.

To view state specific data, [visit FFYF's website.](#)

² Committee for Economic Development ³ Center for American Progress defines "child care desert" as any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no child care providers OR more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots. ⁴ Child Care Aware of America Cost of Care ⁵ Committee for Economic Development ⁶ Child Care Aware of America Cost of Care ⁷ Ibid. ⁸ Committee for Economic Development ⁹ U.S. Department of Education ¹⁰ Ibid. ¹¹ Office of Child Care ¹² Office of Child Care FY2018 CCDF Allocations (Including Redistributed Funds) ¹³ The National Institute for Early Education - State of Preschool 2018 ¹⁴ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) ¹⁵ Office of Family Assistance TANF FY2017 Financial Data ¹⁶ Health Resources and Services Administration ¹⁷ Office of Child Care ¹⁸ U.S. Department of Education ¹⁹ Ibid. ²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau ²¹ Child Care Aware of America Cost of Care