Early Childhood Education in Arkansas

State and federal funding enables more than 47,737 children and families in Arkansas to access high-quality, public and private, early childhood programs.¹

Federal and State Early Childhood Education Funding in Arkansas

$102.4M Head Start and Early Head Start²
$88.2M CCDBG and Mandatory Funds³
$4.6M CCDBG State Match⁴
$625.3M CCDBG COVID-Relief Allocations: CARES⁵ | CRRSA⁶ | ARPA (CCDF + Stabilization)⁷
$147.5M State-Funded Pre-K⁸
$7.5M MIECHV⁹
$6.3M IDEA Part C¹⁰
$8.3M IDEA Part B, Sec. 619¹¹
$34.5M TANF¹² Early Learning and Care Expenditures¹³

Arkansas Quick Facts

5,292 Children Enrolled in Head Start¹⁴
19.62% Eligible Children Served by Head Start¹⁵
4,178 Children Enrolled in Early Head Start¹⁶
12.41% Eligible Children Served by Early Head Start¹⁷
9,234 Children Under Six Served by CCDBG and Mandatory Funds¹⁸
9.6% Eligible Children Under Six Served by Early Head Start¹¹⁰
17,325 Children Enrolled in State Funded Pre-K¹¹¹
2,008 Families Served by MIECHV¹¹²
977 Children Served by IDEA Part C¹¹³
8,723 Children Served by IDEA Part B, Sec. 619¹¹⁴
33.34% Three- and Four-year old Children who Attend Public ECE¹¹⁵

Early Childhood Education Economic Impact

In addition to the benefits to young children, access to affordable, high-quality child care can increase parental labor force participation and family economic stability. Child care problems, however, adversely affect both state and national economies. As a direct result of child care issues, the national economy loses upward of $57 billion annually in the form of lost earnings, productivity, and revenue.¹⁴

In Arkansas

6.2% of parents make career sacrifices due to child care issues.¹⁵
Labor force participation of mothers with children under the age of 5 decreased from 64.9% in 2019 to 62.4% in 2021.¹⁶

Nationwide¹⁷

The percent of families that reported difficulty finding space in a home- or center-based program increased dramatically from 22% in December 2021 to 58% in January 2022.

71% of parents report that difficulty finding child care has impacted their ability to work.
Arkansas Early Learning and Care Snapshot

High Price of Care

Too often, the care that is available costs more than families can afford.

Annual Price of Infant Care in Arkansas

Center-Based  
Married Parents  
$7,498 per year  
Single Parent  
Percent of Median Income

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Married Parents</th>
<th>Single Parent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Median Income</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
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</table>

Home-Based  
Married Parents  
$5,843 per year  
Single Parent  
Percent of Median Income

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<tr>
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<th>Married Parents</th>
<th>Single Parent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Median Income</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
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Low Compensation for Early Educators

Despite the critical nature of their work, early educators are among the most underpaid workers in the nation.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Federal Minimum Wage</th>
<th>Child Care Workers Hourly Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$15,080</td>
<td>$9.80</td>
<td></td>
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Of providers who received stabilization grants:

- 92% said funding helped them stay open.
- 75% used funds for compensation but still struggle to provide competitive wages and benefits.
- 46% used funds to pay debts taken on in the course of the pandemic, including
- 63% of those in family child care homes.

The Temporary Impact of ARPA Funding

In Arkansas, 53,073 child care spots were saved by ARPA funds.

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<tr>
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<th>Child Care Worker Est. Annual Salary</th>
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<td>$20,380</td>
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Nationally, child care workers make less than 98% of all occupations.

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1 This figure includes beneficiaries of Head Start, Early Head Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV), state-funded Pre-K, and the individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Parts B, 1 and 619, and C, in some cases, children and families are served by more than one program.

2 Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.

3 Office of Child Care (OCC) CCDF Allocations for States and Territories.

4 Ibid.

5 OCC CARES Act CCDBG Supplemental Funding Allocations for States and Territories.

6 OCC Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) of 2021 Allocations for States and Territories.

7 OCC American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Supplemental Stabilization and CCDF Discretionary Funding Allocation Tables for States and Territories.

8 National Institute for Early Education Research - State of Preschool 2021 (NIEER).

9 Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

10 U.S. Department of Education (ED).

11 Ibid.

12 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).


14 Council for a Strong America.


16 Committee for Economic Development (CED).


18 OEC Performance Indicator Report (PIR).

19 PIR and U.S. Census Bureau (Census).

20 PIR.

21 PIR and Census.

22 OCC FY2020 CCDF Preliminary Data Tables.


24 NIEER.

25 HRSA.

26 ED.

27 ED.

28 NIEER (includes preschool, Head Start, and Special Education).

29 Census.

30 Census.

31 Census.

32 Census.

33 CAP defines “child care desert” as any census tract with more than fifty children under age five that contains some child care providers or more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots.

34 Child Care Aware of America (CCAoA) (average of center-based and home-based infant and 4-year-old care).

35 CCAoA.

36 NIEER.

37 CCAoA.

38 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Early Childhood Workforce Index - 2020.

39 The Century Foundation.

40 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).