Early Childhood Education in North Carolina

State and federal funding enables more than 87,887 children and families in North Carolina to access high-quality, public and private, early childhood programs.¹

Federal and State Early Childhood Education Funding in North Carolina

North Carolina Quick Facts

| 13,000 | Children Enrolled in Head Start²⁰ |
| 10.88% | Eligible Children Served by Head Start²⁰ |
| 5,109 | Children Enrolled in Early Head Start²¹ |
| 3.57% | Eligible Children Served by Early Head Start²² |
| 26,325 | Children Under Six Served by CCDBG and Mandatory Funds²³ |
| 13.4% | Eligible Children Under Six Served by CCDBG and Mandatory Funds²³ |

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.¹⁵

In North Carolina

16.8% of parents make career sacrifices due to child care issues.¹⁶

Labor force participation of mothers with children under the age of 5 decreased from 65.1% in 2019 to 63.9% in 2021.¹⁷

Nationwide¹⁸

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.
North Carolina Early Learning and Care Snapshot

Need
- Population Under Six: 726,199
- Under Six Living in Poverty: 21.44%
- 63.20% of children under six have all available parents in the workforce

Access
- 44% of North Carolina residents live in a “child care desert”
- For Hispanics/Latinos and rural families, this percentage is even higher

Affordability
- The average price of child care is $9,832 per year
- The median household income is $91,329

Quality
- Met 8/10 of NIEER’s State Preschool Quality Standards

High Price of Care
Too often, the care that is available costs more than families can afford.

Annual Price of Infant Care in North Carolina
Center-Based $11,046 per year
- Married Parents: 12.1% Percent of Median Income
- Single Parent: 41.8% Percent of Median Income

Home-Based $9,836 per year
- Married Parents: 10.8% Percent of Median Income
- Single Parent: 37.2% Percent of Median Income

Low Compensation for Early Educators
Despite the critical nature of their work, early educators are among the most underpaid workers in the nation.

$10.62 Child Care Workers Hourly Rate

$22,090 Child Care Worker Est. Annual Salary

$15,080 Federal Minimum Wage

The Temporary Impact of ARPA Funding
In North Carolina, 107,877 child care spots were saved by ARPA funds.

92% said funding helped them stay open.

75% used funds for compensation but still struggle to provide competitive wages and benefits.

63% of those in family child care homes.