High-quality early care and education (ECE) is proven to dramatically improve a child’s opportunities for a better future while offering parents greater job stability and overall economic security.

The Economic Impact
Access to affordable, high-quality child care can increase parental labor force participation and family economic stability. However, widespread problems finding and paying for child care adversely affect both state and national economies. As a direct result of child care issues, the national economy loses $122 billion annually in the form of lost earnings, productivity, and revenue. In Wisconsin: The estimated annual economic impact of the infant-toddler child care crisis: $1.9B.

There are several early learning programs that provide working families with access to high-quality, affordable ECE opportunities, but currently the demand for care far outweighs the supply, and funding constraints leave many eligible children unserved. Each of these programs has its own eligibility requirements, purpose, and service delivery model. Together they form a mixed-delivery system that supports parental choice and aims to meet children’s individual needs.

Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

12,328
Children Birth Through Age Five

8%
Eligible Children Birth Through Age Five

Learn more about CCDBG in Wisconsin here.

Early Head Start

3,589
Children Enrolled

10%
Eligible Children Served

Head Start

9,458
Children Enrolled

24%
Eligible Children Served

Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)

2,165
Families Served

Learn more about MIECHV in Wisconsin here.

State-Funded Pre-K

41,249
Children Enrolled

31%
of three- and four-year-old children attend public ECE

IDEA Part C

5,710
Children Served

IDEA Part B, Sec. 619

8,449
Children Served

Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC)

Through the tax code, the CDCTC helps parents with the cost of work-related child care expenses. Learn more about CDCTC here.
Early Care and Education (ECE) in Wisconsin Snapshot

Federal and State ECE Funding in Wisconsin

Federal funding is foundational to providing ECE.

Accessibility

Many families struggle to find the care they need.
- 54% of Wisconsin residents live in a “child care desert.”
- Hispanics/Latinos and rural families are disproportionately represented among those who live in a “child care desert.”
- 3% of children under age 3 receive early intervention services.

Affordability

The cost of ECE is too expensive for many families.
- The annual price of center-based infant care is $13,572, and home-based infant care is $10,400.
- Families receiving a CCDBG subsidy pay between $23 and $869 per month for one child in care.
- A two-parent household spends 10% of their income on child care, while HHS defines spending over 7% to be a burden.

ECE Workforce

Early childhood educators have some of the lowest paying jobs in the United States, earning poverty-level wages.
- $27,050 child care worker annual salary ($13.00 per hour).

Program Quality

Program quality varies substantially across and within states.
- Met 3/10 of NIEER’s Quality Standards Benchmarks for state-funded pre-K programs. Only 5 states met all 10 benchmarks in 2022.
- 37% of children received developmental screenings at 9, 18, and 30 months in the past year.

COVID-19 Relief:
Throughout the pandemic, there was strong bipartisan support for federal relief funding to keep the child care sector afloat.
- As a result, 7,785 child care programs in Wisconsin received support, impacting up to 322,600 children.
- These funds also allowed states to demonstrate what would be possible when equipped with additional resources. Funds have been used to stabilize and support the workforce, including by providing salary supplements to early educators based on educational attainment and longevity in the field. Beginning summer 2023, the REWARD Wisconsin Stipend Program will expand to support the majority of early educators at higher stipend amounts who have been working in the field for at least 6 months.

Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5):
PDG B-5 is a competitive federal grant designed to improve states’ early childhood systems. In their 2020 renewal grant application, among other uses, Wisconsin noted that they would use funding to:
- Conduct a series of surveys with Wisconsin’s ECE workforce to gather information about their working conditions, wages, and future plans.
- Created the Parent/Caregiver Equity Advisory Cabinet (PCEAC), which ensures that family perspectives are included in the development process for early childhood programs, policies, and services.

For full sourcing information, visit here.

"Wisconsin Early Childhood Association | "BUILD"