



2023

Child Care and Early Education in the U.S.*



In the U.S., federal and state early learning opportunities serve more than 4,146,545 children and families,¹ or 18% of children birth through age 5, in the U.S.²

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.⁷


Families Lack Access to High-Quality ECE Options in the U.S.


The high cost and limited supply of quality ECE have created serious challenges for many families.

Unmet Need

 **23,353,556** Children Birth Through Age Five³

 **18%** of Children Birth Through Age Five Living in Poverty⁴

 **65%** of Children Birth Through Age Five With All Available Parents in the Workforce⁵

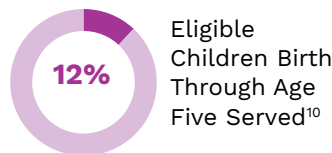
 **18%** of Children Birth Through Age Five Served By Federal- and State-Funded Early Learning Opportunities⁶

Note: 1,2,6: These figures include 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.

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)

961,793 Children Birth Through Age Five Served⁹



Learn more about CCDBG [here](#).

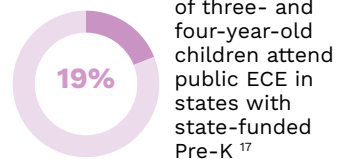
Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)

70,592 Families Served¹⁵

Learn more about MIECHV [here](#).

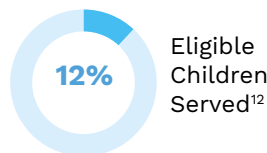
State-Funded Pre-K

1,504,079 Children Enrolled¹⁶



Early Head Start

208,120 Children Enrolled¹¹



IDEA Part C

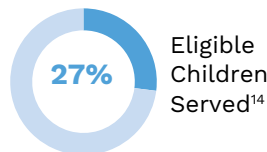
770,591 Children Served¹⁸

IDEA Part B, Sec. 619

472,622 Children Served¹⁹

Head Start

534,154 Children Enrolled¹³



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 the U.S. Snapshot



Accessibility

Many families struggle to find the care they need.

- **51%** of U.S. residents live in a “child care desert.”²⁰
- **Hispanics/Latinos and families with low incomes** are disproportionately represented among those who live in a “child care desert.”²¹
- **3%** of children under age 3 receive early intervention services.²²



Affordability

The cost of ECE is too expensive for many families.

- The annual price of center-based infant care is **\$13,266**, and home-based infant care is **\$9,559**.²³
- Families receiving a CCDBG subsidy pay between **\$33** and **\$401 per month** for one child in care.²⁴
- A two-parent household spends **9%** of their income on child care, while HHS defines spending over 7% to be a burden.²⁵



ECE Workforce

Early childhood educators have some of the lowest paying jobs in the United States, earning poverty-level wages.²⁶

- **\$29,010** child care worker annual salary (\$13.95 per hour).²⁷



Program Quality

Program quality varies substantially across and within states.

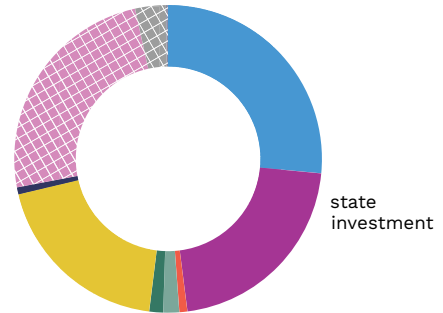
- **5 states met all 10** of NIEER’s Quality Standards Benchmarks for state-funded pre-K program in 2022.²⁸
- **35%** of children received developmental screenings at 9, 18, and 30 months in the past year.²⁹

For full sourcing information, visit

*The statistics in this fact sheet refer to the sum or average across 50 states and D.C.

Federal and State ECE Funding in the U.S.

Federal funding is foundational to providing ECE.



- **\$10.7B** ● Head Start and Early Head Start³⁰
- **\$8.68B** ● CCDBG and Mandatory Funds³¹
- **\$336.6M** ● MIECHV³²
- **\$673.2M** ● IDEA Part C³³
- **\$591.4M** ● IDEA Part B, Sec. 619³⁴
- **\$7.8B** ● TANF Early Learning and Care Expenditures³⁵
- **\$300M** ● PDG B-5³⁶
- **\$9.9B** ● State-Funded Pre-K³⁷
- **\$1.3B** ● CCDBG State Match³⁸
- **\$89.2M** ● PDG B-5 State Match³⁹

Note: Where relevant, the chart includes program funding for states and territories, in addition to technical assistance, research and evaluation, and other administrative supports.

The U.S. received an additional \$50.18B through COVID-19 relief.⁴⁰

Spotlight: ECE Successes in the U.S.

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, **221,445** child care programs in the U.S. received support, impacting up to **9,590,300** children.⁴¹
- Providers are using awards to help with operational costs such as rent and utilities, program materials and supplies, and cleaning and sanitation, as well as support the workforce through improved wages and benefits.

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 2023, 42 states were awarded grants.

- The 21 planning grantees plan to conduct comprehensive needs assessments and strategic plans, and create strategies that focus on the ECE workforce, maximize family engagement, and support program quality improvement.
- The 21 renewal grantees plan to build on their strategic plan, such as by implementing compensation reforms, expanding professional development training, building the supply of child care, and streamlining administrative requirements.