



2023

Child Care and Early Education in Arkansas



In Arkansas, federal and state early learning opportunities serve more than 49,143 children and families,¹ or 22% of children birth through age 5.²

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 In Arkansas: The estimated annual economic impact of the infant-toddler child care crisis: \$793M.⁸

Families Lack Access to High-Quality ECE Options in Arkansas

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

Unmet Need



221,881 Children Birth Through Age Five³



25% of Children Birth Through Age Five Living in Poverty⁴



63% of Children Birth Through Age Five With All Available Parents in the Workforce⁵



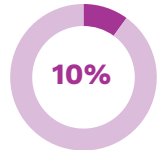
22% of Children Birth Through Age Five Served By Federal- and State-Funded Early Learning Opportunities⁶

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)

9,234 Children Birth Through Age Five Served⁹



Eligible Children Birth Through Age Five Served¹⁰

Learn more about CCDBG in Arkansas [here](#).

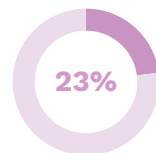
Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)

1,913 Families Served¹⁵

Learn more about MIECHV in Arkansas [here](#).

State-Funded Pre-K

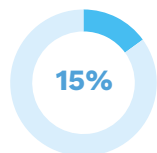
17,528 Children Enrolled¹⁶



of three- and four-year-old children attend public ECE¹⁷

Early Head Start

4,300 Children Enrolled¹¹



Eligible Children Served¹²

IDEA Part C

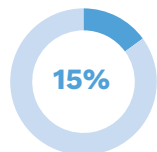
1,218 Children Served¹⁸

IDEA Part B, Sec. 619

9,469 Children Served¹⁹

Head Start

5,481 Children Enrolled¹³



Eligible Children Served¹⁴

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 Arkansas Snapshot



Accessibility

Many families struggle to find the care they need.

- **35%** of Arkansas residents live in a “child care desert.”²⁰
- **Rural families** are disproportionately represented among those who live in a “child care desert.”²¹
- **1%** 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 **\$8,021**, and home-based infant care is **\$6,577**.²³
- Families receiving a CCDBG subsidy pay between **\$30** and **\$30** per month for one child in care.²⁴
- A two-parent household spends **8%** 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

- **\$26,300** child care worker annual salary (\$12.65 per hour).²⁷



Program Quality

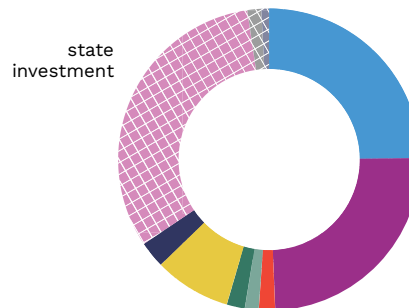
Program quality varies substantially across and within states.

- **Met 8/10** of NIEER’s Quality Standards Benchmarks for state-funded pre-K programs. Only 5 states met all 10 benchmarks in 2022.²⁸
- **27%** of children received developmental screenings at 9, 18, and 30 months in the past year.²⁹

For full sourcing information, visit [here](#).

Federal and State ECE Funding in Arkansas

Federal funding is foundational to providing ECE.



\$106.4M • Head Start and Early Head Start³⁰

\$104.9M • CCDBG and Mandatory Funds³¹

\$7.5M • MIECHV³²

\$6.3M • IDEA Part C³³

\$8.3M • IDEA Part B, Sec. 619³⁴

\$35.2M • TANF Early Learning and Care Expenditures³⁵

\$12M • PDG B-5³⁶

\$137.5M • State-Funded Pre-K³⁷

\$6.3M • CCDBG State Match³⁸

\$3.6M • PDG B-5 State Match³⁹

Arkansas received an additional \$625M through COVID-19 relief.⁴⁰

Spotlight: ECE Successes in Arkansas

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, **2,585** child care programs in Arkansas received support, impacting up to **235,700** children.⁴¹
- These funds also allowed states to demonstrate what would be possible when equipped with additional resources. Funds have been used for quality improvement grants. These grants could be used for whatever is necessary to improve the quality of care provided, such as new staff sign-on bonuses, substitutes, professional development, and mental health services for children and families, among other uses.*

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 2023 renewal grant application, among other uses, Arkansas noted that they would use funding to:

- **Increase the number of high-quality slots by 120 for infants and 120 for toddlers in child care deserts.**
- **Improve the quality of existing services,** and expand the Family Child Care (FCC) Network’s work to offer technical assistance and coaching to FCC providers while improving coaching opportunities for infant and toddler teaching staff.**

*Arkansas Department of Human Services | **BUILD