

In Arkansas, federal and state early learning opportunities serve more than **61,414 children** and families,¹ or **28% of children** ages 5 and under.²

High quality child care and early learning programs support child development and offer parents peace of mind while they work or attend school.

In the U.S., the demand for quality care far outweighs the supply, with more than **30% of working families** with young children unable to access the formal care they want or need.³ While there are several federally funded programs that help working families access quality child care opportunities, limited funding leaves many eligible children unserved. The impacts of these challenges extend beyond families and carry over to the workplace. As a direct result, the national economy loses **\$122 billion annually** in the form of lost earnings, productivity, and revenue.⁴

PROGRAM REACH

Below is a list of existing child care and early learning programs which together form a mixed delivery system that supports parental choice and aims to meet children's individual needs. These programs have unique eligibility requirements and service delivery models. However, at current funding levels, each only reaches a fraction of eligible families.

STATE OF EARLY LEARNING & CARE IN ARKANSAS

NEED

220,168
Children 5 & Under⁵

62%
Children 5 & Under with
All Available Parents
in the Workforce⁶

SUPPLY

1,733
Licensed Child Care Centers
in 2024 (-24 from 2023)⁷

212
Licensed Family Child Care
Homes in 2024 (-7 from 2023)⁸

IMPACT

\$793M
Estimated Economic
Impact of Child Care
Challenges Each Year⁹

COST*

\$9,178
Annual Price of
Center-Based Care
(\$765 per month)¹⁰

\$7,963
Annual Price of
Home-Based Care
(\$664 per month)¹¹

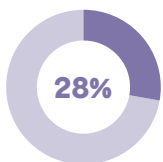
9.1%
Portion of Median
Married-Couple Family
Income (\$100,841) Spent
on Center-Based Care¹²

29%
Portion of Median
Single-Parent Family
Income (\$31,747) Spent
on Center-Based Care¹³

**estimates are based on price
of infant care for one child*

CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CCDBG)

65,228 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER ELIGIBLE¹⁴
18,328 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER SERVED¹⁵

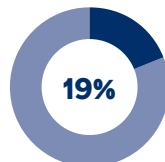


ELIGIBLE CHILDREN
5 & UNDER SERVED¹⁶

Based on federal eligibility (85% SMI)

HEAD START PRESCHOOL

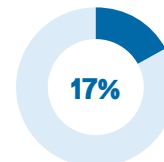
26,903 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE¹⁷
5,236 CHILDREN ENROLLED¹⁸



ELIGIBLE
CHILDREN
SERVED¹⁹

EARLY HEAD START

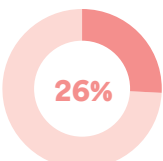
26,903 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE²⁰
4,673 CHILDREN ENROLLED²¹



ELIGIBLE
CHILDREN
SERVED²²

STATE-FUNDED PRE-K

19,004 CHILDREN ENROLLED²³



3-AND 4-YEAR-
OLDS SERVED²⁴

MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START

85 CHILDREN ENROLLED²⁵

MATERNAL, INFANT, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD HOME VISITING (MIECHV)

2,557 CHILDREN SERVED²⁶

IDEA PART C

(EARLY INTERVENTION)
1,691 CHILDREN SERVED²⁷

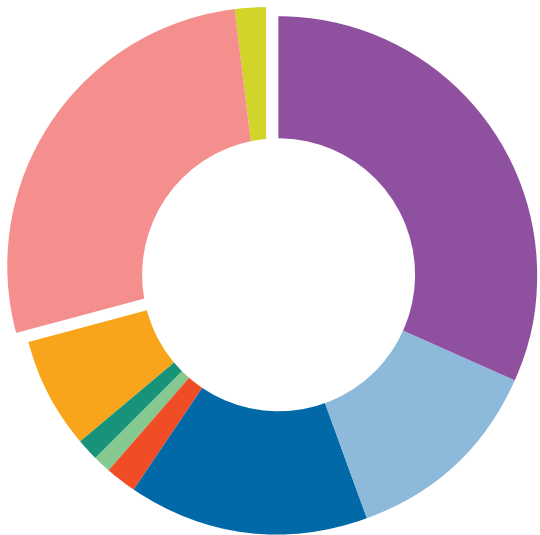
IDEA PART B, SEC. 619

(PRESCHOOL SPECIAL
EDUCATION)
9,925 CHILDREN SERVED²⁸

ARKANSAS: FEDERAL AND STATE CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING FUNDING

STATE INVESTMENT

- \$115.3M State-Funded Pre-K³⁸
- \$7.9M CCDBG State Match³⁹
- N/A PDG B-5 State Match⁴⁰



FEDERAL INVESTMENT

- \$135.1M CCDBG and Mandatory Funds²⁹
- \$54.7M Head Start Preschool³⁰
(includes AIAN when applicable)
- \$63.8M Early Head Start³¹
(includes AIAN when applicable)
- \$0 PDG B-5³²
- \$8.8M MIECHV³³
- \$4.9M IDEA Part C³⁴
- \$5.9M IDEA Part B, Sec. 619³⁵
- \$29.6M TANF Early Care and Education³⁶
- \$0 TANF Transferred to CCDBG³⁷

CCDBG

CCDBG allows states to provide child care assistance to low-income working families with children under age 13, helping parents access child care in a setting of their choice.

In Arkansas:

- 857 child care providers accept CCDBG subsidies.⁴¹
- Eligibility is capped at 53% of State Median Income.⁴²
- A family of three is eligible if they make \$5,151/month or less (\$61,812/year).⁴³
- With a subsidy, a family of three pays a maximum monthly co-payment of \$28/month, compared to \$765/month without.⁴⁴

State Lead Agencies must establish child care licensing requirements that ensure children are cared for in safe, quality environments. Different rules may apply depending on the setting (e.g., center or home-based) and some providers may be exempt from licensing requirements (e.g., faith-based programs).

Appropriate teacher-child ratios are crucial to ensure safety, quality, and individual attention. Licensed center-based care providers in Arkansas must meet the following ratios:⁴⁵

INFANT	1:5
TODDLER	1:8
PRESCHOOL	1:12 for age 2.5 - 3 1:15 for age 4 1:18 for age 5



Scan or click the QR code for full references and links. For more information contact FFYF at mail@ffyf.org.

HEAD START

Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start (collectively referred to as “Head Start”) provide a continuum of high-quality early learning and comprehensive services that support health and development, and strengthen family well-being. Federal funds go directly to local grantees, with programs in every congressional district (explore Head Start’s reach in these [maps](#)).⁴⁶

In Arkansas, there are 29 Head Start grants, which fund 202 program sites and serve 9,909 children.^{47, 48, 49}

Children are eligible if their family income is below the federal poverty line, they are receiving TANF, SNAP, or SSI, or if they are in foster care or experiencing homelessness. Additionally, programs are expected to reserve at least 10% of slots for children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

PDG B-5

Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) is a competitive federal grant designed to improve states’ early childhood systems. To date, Arkansas has been awarded \$39.5M in PDG B-5 funds.⁵⁰ Arkansas’s PDG B-5 plans have included:⁵¹

- Strengthen preparation and professional learning for infant and toddler teachers, including revising the Infant Toddler Certificate and re-establishing the Infant Toddler Specialist Network that provides training.
- Review and revise the Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards to ensure they are developmentally appropriate and align with kindergarten.

Learn more with the PDG B-5 grantee map [here](#).⁵²

CDCTC

The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) directly helps working parents offset the cost of child care. In 2025, the CDCTC was permanently updated for the first time since 2001. Many filers could see their credit increase by as much as \$450 (for one child) or \$900 (for two+ children).⁵³ In Arkansas, 43,350 taxpayers claimed the CDCTC in 2022.⁵⁴