FIRST FIVE YEARS FUND

2025 STATE FACT SHEET

Child Care & Early Learning in **Colorado**

In Colorado, federal and state early learning opportunities serve more than **94,784 children** and families,[1] or **25% 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: **28% of working families** with young children cannot reasonably 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. The 10-year economic impact of the child care shortage could be as high as $329 billion due the effects on households, businesses, and tax revenues.[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.

COLORADO

NEED

381,799
Children 5 & Under[5]

65%
Children 5 & Under with All Available Parents in the Workforce[6]

SUPPLY

2,170
Licensed Child Care Centers in 2024 (+4 from 2023)[7]

1,383
Licensed Family Child Care Homes in 2024 (-38 from 2023)[8]

37%
Gap in Supply of Child Care vs. Potential Need[9]

IMPACT

$5.0B-$7.6B
Estimated 10-Year Economic Loss Due to Child Care Gap[9]

COST*

$20,978
Annual Price of Center-Based Care ($1,748 per month)[10]

$13,666
Annual Price of Home-Based Care ($1,139 per month)[11]

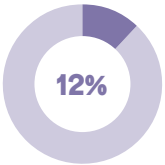
14.3%
Portion of Median Married-Couple Family Income ($147,124) Spent on Center-Based Care[12]

43.4%
Portion of Median Single-Parent Family Income ($48,348) Spent on Center-Based Care[13]

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

CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CCDBG)

92,600 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER ELIGIBLE[14]
10,812 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER SERVED[15]

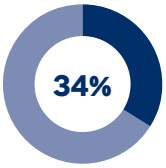


ELIGIBLE CHILDREN 5 & UNDER SERVED[16]

Based on federal eligibility (85% SMI)

HEAD START PRESCHOOL

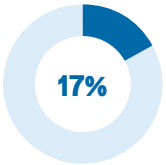
21,645 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE[17]
7,395 CHILDREN ENROLLED[18]



ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED[19]

EARLY HEAD START

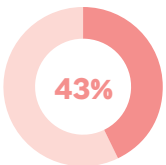
21,645 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE[20]
3,778 CHILDREN ENROLLED[21]



ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED[22]

STATE-FUNDED PRE-K

52,617 CHILDREN ENROLLED[23]



3-AND 4-YEAR-OLDS SERVED[24]

MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START

313 CHILDREN ENROLLED[25]

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

1,725 CHILDREN SERVED[26]

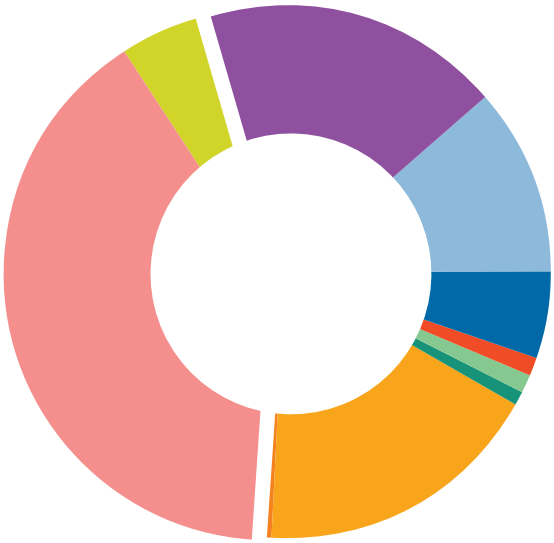
IDEA PART C

(EARLY INTERVENTION)
9,349 CHILDREN SERVED[27]

IDEA PART B, SEC. 619

(PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION)
9,108 CHILDREN SERVED[28]

COLORADO:
FEDERAL AND STATE CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING FUNDING



STATE INVESTMENT

$301.1M	State-Funded Pre-K[38]
$35.4M	CCDBG State Match[39]
N/A	PDG B-5 State Match[40]

FEDERAL INVESTMENT

$138.3M	CCDBG and Mandatory Funds[29]
$85.6M	Head Start Preschool[30] (includes AIAN when applicable)
$40.3M	Early Head Start[31] (includes AIAN when applicable)
$0	PDG B-5[32]
$9.1M	MIECHV[33]
$8.3M	IDEA Part C[34]
$5.5M	IDEA Part B, Sec. 619[35]
$134.5M	TANF Early Care and Education[36]
$1.1M	TANF Transferred to CCDBG[37]

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 Colorado:

- **1,914 child care providers** accept CCDBG subsidies.[41]
- Eligibility is capped at **46% of State Median Income**.[42]
- A family of three is eligible if they make **$3,833/month** or less (**$45,996/year**).[43]
- With a subsidy, a family of three pays a maximum monthly co-payment of **$391/month**, compared to **$1,748/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 Colorado must meet the following ratios:[45]

INFANT	1:5
TODDLER	1:5 for age 1-2 1:7 for age 2-3
PRESCHOOL	1:8 for age 2.5-3 1:10 for age 3-4 1:12 for age 4-5

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 Colorado, there are **55 Head Start grants**, which fund **250 program sites** and serve **11,173 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, Colorado has been awarded **$43.3M** in PDG B-5 funds.[50] Colorado's PDG B-5 accomplishments include:[51]

- Offered 12,000 professional development hours to nearly 100,000 individuals in the early childhood system and provided 2,500 families with programming.
- Relaunched and translated Colorado's workforce registry and professional development platform, and developed new training content in English and Spanish.

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 Colorado, **92,120 taxpayers** claimed the CDCTC in 2022.[54]