FIRST FIVE YEARS FUND

2025 STATE FACT SHEET

Child Care & Early Learning in the **United States**

Data is specific to the 50 states and DC

In the United States, federal and state early learning opportunities serve more than **4,460,808 children** and families,[1] or **20% 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.

STATE OF EARLY LEARNING & CARE IN THE **U.S.**

NEED

22,847,032
Children 5 & Under[5]

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

SUPPLY

110,060
Licensed Child Care Centers in 2024 (+16,016 from 2023)[7]

108,397
Licensed Family Child Care Homes in 2024 (+29,322 from 2023)[8]

COST*

$15,570
Annual Price of Center-Based Care ($1,298 per month)[9]

$11,379
Annual Price of Home-Based Care ($948 per month)[10]

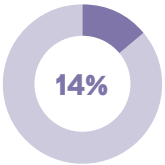
12%
Portion of Median Married-Couple Family Income ($127,629) Spent on Center-Based Care[11]

39%
Portion of Median Single-Parent Family Income ($39,508) Spent on Center-Based Care[12]

**estimates are based on price of infant care for one child and averages across states*

CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CCDBG)

6,384,155 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER ELIGIBLE[13]
920,689 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER SERVED[14]

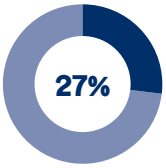


ELIGIBLE CHILDREN 5 & UNDER SERVED[15]

Based on federal eligibility (85% SMI)

HEAD START PRESCHOOL

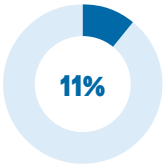
1,963,195 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE[16]
525,829 CHILDREN ENROLLED[17]



ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED[18]

EARLY HEAD START

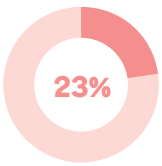
1,963,195 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE[19]
218,006 CHILDREN ENROLLED[20]



ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED[21]

STATE-FUNDED PRE-K

1,735,836 CHILDREN ENROLLED[22]



3-AND 4-YEAR-OLDS SERVED[23]

MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START

20,862 CHILDREN ENROLLED[24]

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

72,615 CHILDREN SERVED[25]

IDEA PART C

(EARLY INTERVENTION)
460,321 CHILDREN SERVED[26]

IDEA PART B, SEC. 619

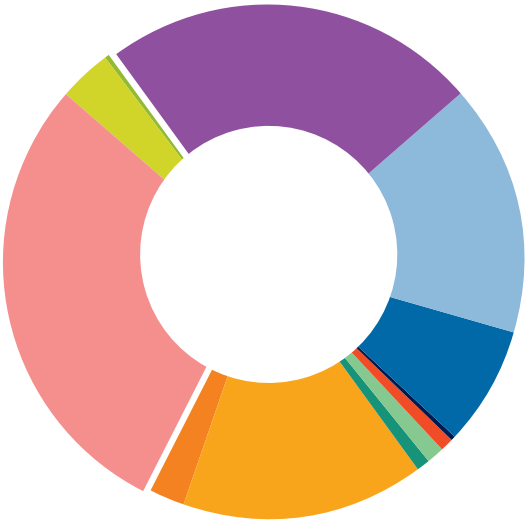
(PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION)
527,163 CHILDREN SERVED[27]

FEDERAL AND STATE CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING FUNDING

STATE INVESTMENT

$13.7B	State-Funded Pre-K[37]
$1.6B	CCDBG State Match[38]
$26.1M	PDG B-5 State Match[39]

Note: Amounts reflect total program funding. In some cases these levels include funding that is allocated to technical assistance, research and evaluation, and other administrative supports.



FEDERAL INVESTMENT

$11.27B	CCDBG and Mandatory Funds[28]
$7.6B	Head Start Preschool[29] (includes MSHS and AIAN)
$3.5B	Early Head Start[30] (includes AIAN EHS)
$86.9M	PDG B-5[31]
$435.3M	MIECHV[32]
$515.0M	IDEA Part C[33]
$416.6M	IDEA Part B, Sec. 619[34]
$7.3B	TANF Early Care and Education[35]
$1.1B	TANF Transferred to CCDBG[36]

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 the United States:

- **215,372 child care providers** accept CCDBG subsidies.[40]
- On average, states have capped eligibility at **71% of State Median Income**.[41]
- A family of three is eligible if they earn up to **$33,072/year** in Nevada (low end of the range) and up to **$109,956/year** in Maine (high end of the range).[42]
- The average maximum monthly copayment for a family of three is **$284**, ranging from **$15 in Oregon** to **$1,075 in Vermont**.[43]

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. Ratio requirements for licensed center-based care vary across the U.S.:[44]

INFANT	1:3 to 1:6
TODDLER	1:4 to 1:11
PRESCHOOL	1:8 to 1:20

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).[45]

In the United States, there are **1,836 Head Start grants**, which fund **14,996 program sites** and serve **764,697 children**.[46, 47, 48]

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.[49]

- **In September 2024, 10 states and DC received 3-year renewal grants, totaling approximately $87 million in funding.** These new grants are allowing states to carry out the activities identified in their strategic plans from the year prior.
- **Thus far, 49 states, DC, and 4 territories have benefitted from PDG B-5 funding.** Continued federal funding is necessary for states and territories to continue to build and improve effective mixed-delivery systems.

Learn more with the PDG B-5 grantee map here.[50]

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.)[51] In the United States, **5,678,790** claimed the CDCTC in 2022.[52]