

Child Care & Early Learning in Florida

In Florida, federal and state early learning opportunities serve more than **319,447** children,¹ or **24%** of children ages 5 and under.²

High-quality child care and early learning programs support children's healthy development while giving parents peace of mind as they work or attend school.

While several federally funded programs help working families access quality child care, limited funding leaves many eligible children unserved. These challenges not only affect families but also employers and the broader economy. Each year, child care shortages across the country impose significant economic costs on families, businesses, and state tax revenues.

Florida's early learning landscape operates through a mixed-delivery system of diverse programs, each with distinct eligibility requirements, funding structures, and service delivery models designed to maximize parental choice.

FLORIDA AT-A-GLANCE

NEED

1,354,186

Children 5 & Under³

66%

Children 5 & Under with All Available Parents in the Workforce⁴

15%

Gap in Supply of Child Care vs. Potential Need⁵

COST

\$14,230

Annual Price of Center-Based Care (\$1,186 per month)⁶

\$11,947

Annual Price of Home-Based Care (\$996 per month)⁷

IMPACT

\$10B

Estimated Annual Economic Impact of the Child Care Crisis⁸

FLORIDA INCOME ELIGIBILITY

CDCTC

Available to families of all income levels (higher credit for lower incomes)

CCDBG

63% of state median income, families earning up to **\$37,296** for a family of 3¹⁰

HEAD START

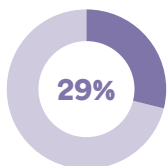
100% of the federal poverty level, **\$27,320** for a family of 3⁹

FLORIDA PROGRAM REACH

Existing federal child care and early learning programs, combined with state-funded pre-K, form a mixed delivery system that aims to meet children's individual needs. However, at current funding levels, only a fraction of eligible families are served.

CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CCDBG)

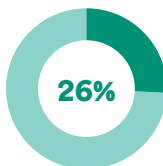
279,153 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER ELIGIBLE¹¹
80,159 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER SERVED¹²



ELIGIBLE CHILDREN
5 & UNDER SERVED¹³
Based on federal eligibility (85% SMI)

HEAD START PRESCHOOL

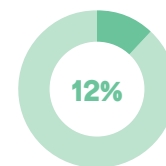
118,244 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE¹⁴
30,822 CHILDREN ENROLLED¹⁵



ELIGIBLE
CHILDREN
SERVED¹⁶

EARLY HEAD START

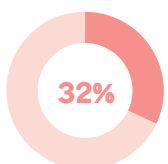
118,244 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE¹⁷
14,462 CHILDREN ENROLLED¹⁸



ELIGIBLE
CHILDREN
SERVED¹⁹

STATE-FUNDED PRE-K

149,100 CHILDREN ENROLLED²⁰



3- & 4-YEAR-
OLDS SERVED²¹

IDEA PART C (EARLY INTERVENTION)

17,965 CHILDREN

IDEA PART B, SEC. 619

(PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION)
24,826 CHILDREN SERVED²³

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

2,113 CHILDREN SERVED²⁴

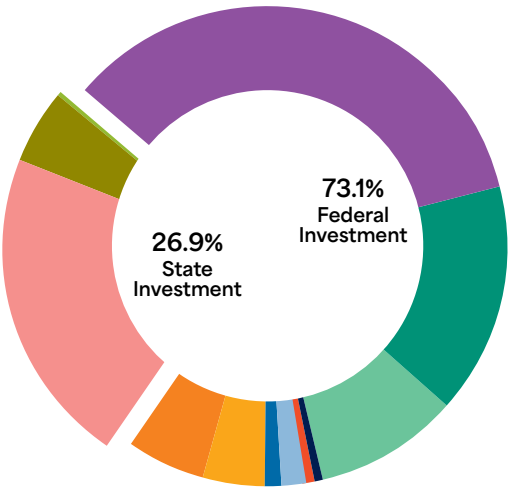
CHILD & DEPENDENT CARE TAX CREDIT (CDCTC)

424,350 FAMILIES RECEIVED²⁵

FLORIDA
FEDERAL & STATE
CHILD CARE AND
EARLY LEARNING
FUNDING

STATE INVESTMENT

- \$433.7M State-Funded Pre-K²⁶
- \$97.8M CCDBG State Match²⁷
- \$4.4M PDG B-5 State Match²⁸



FEDERAL INVESTMENT

- \$706.2M CCDBG and Mandatory Funds²⁹
- \$311.5M Head Start Preschool³⁰
(includes AIAN when applicable)
- \$196.0M Early Head Start³¹
(includes AIAN when applicable)
- \$14.8M PDG B-5³²
- \$12.9M MIECHV³³
- \$31.2M IDEA Part C³⁴
- \$20.5M IDEA Part B, Sec. 619³⁵
- \$82.5M TANF Early Care and Education³⁶
- \$110.6M 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.

- Income eligibility: **63% of state median income** (\$37,296 per year for a family of 3)^{38,39}
- Monthly cost of center-based infant care
 - No subsidy: **\$1,186**⁴⁰
 - Maximum copayment with subsidy: **\$295**⁴¹
 - Potential savings: **\$891**
- 6,827** child care providers accept CCDBG subsidies⁴²
- Child care workers' median wage: **\$17.23 per hour** (\$35,830 per year)⁴³

States must establish child care licensing requirements, including staff-to-child ratios, to 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).

The state has set the following ratios for licensed center-based care:⁴⁴

INFANT	1:4
TODDLER	1:6 for age 1 -2 1:11 for age 2-3 years
PRESCHOOL	1:15 for age 3 -4 years 1:20 for age 4-5

EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START

Early Head Start and Head Start provide high-quality early learning and comprehensive services – including health, nutrition, and family support – at no cost to eligible families. Programs are federally funded and locally administered.⁴⁵ Children are eligible based on family income, if they receive TANF, SNAP, or SSI benefits, or if they are in foster care or experiencing homelessness. Head Start programs must reserve at least 10% of enrollment slots for children with disabilities.

- Income eligibility: at or below the federal poverty level (\$27,320 for a family of 3)⁴⁶
- In Florida: **58 Head Start grants** fund **719 program sites**, serving **45,284 children**.^{47, 48, 49}
- This includes **2,346 children** through Migrant and Seasonal Head Start.⁵⁰

PDG B-5

To date, Florida has been awarded **\$63.5 million** in funds through Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5).⁵¹

PDG B-5 is a competitive federal grant program designed to improve states' early childhood systems. Florida's PDG B-5 accomplishments include:⁵²

- Providing training and coaching on business practices for child care and early education administrators.
- Conducting a workforce study and expanding pathways for educators, including through Registered Apprenticeship programs.

CDCTC

In 2022, **424,350** Florida families claimed the CDCTC.⁵³

The 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 or more children) in tax year 2026.⁵⁴



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