FIRST FIVE YEARS FUND

2026 STATE FACT SHEET

Child Care & Early Learning in **Texas**

In Texas, federal and state early learning opportunities serve more than **507,389** children,[1] or **22%** 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.

Texas'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.

TEXAS AT-A-GLANCE

NEED

2,334,457
Children 5 & Under[3]

61%
Children 5 & Under with All Available Parents in the Workforce[4]

8%
Gap in Supply of Child Care vs. Potential Need[5]

COST

$10,894
Annual Price of Center-Based Care ($908 per month)[6]

$10,062
Annual Price of Home-Based Care ($839 per month)[7]

IMPACT

$16.2B
Estimated Annual Economic Impact of the Child Care Crisis[8]

TEXAS INCOME ELIGIBILITY

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

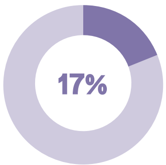
CCDBG
85% of state median income, families earning up to **$73,692** for a family of 3[10]

HEAD START
100% of the federal poverty level, **$27,320** for a family of 3[9]

TEXAS PROGRAM REACH

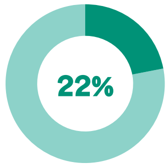
Existing federal child care and early learning programs, combined with state-funded pre-K, form a mixed delivery system that aims to meet children's individual needs. However, at current funding levels, only a fraction of eligible families are served.

CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CCDBG)
622,681 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER ELIGIBLE[11]
107,916 CHILDREN 5 & UNDER SERVED[12]



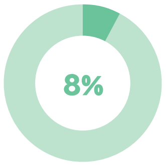
ELIGIBLE CHILDREN 5 & UNDER SERVED[13]
Based on federal eligibility (85% SMI)

HEAD START PRESCHOOL
232,349 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE[14]
50,869 CHILDREN ENROLLED[15]



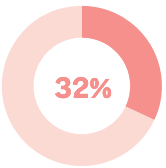
ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED[16]

EARLY HEAD START
232,349 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE[17]
18,581 CHILDREN ENROLLED[18]



ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED[19]

STATE-FUNDED PRE-K
248,483 CHILDREN ENROLLED[20]



3-& 4-YEAR-OLDS SERVED[21]

IDEA PART C
(EARLY INTERVENTION)
31,976 CHILDREN SERVED[22]

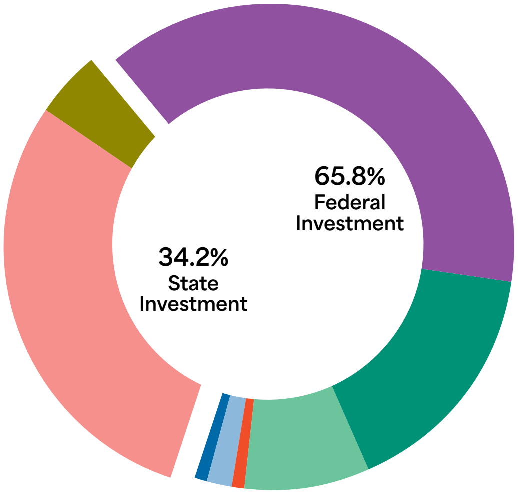
IDEA PART B, SEC. 619
(PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION)
40,039 CHILDREN SERVED[23]

MATERNAL, INFANT, & EARLY CHILDHOOD HOME VISITING (MIECHV)
9,525 CHILDREN SERVED[24]

CHILD & DEPENDENT CARE TAX CREDIT (CDCTC)
530,370 FAMILIES RECEIVED[25]

TEXAS

FEDERAL & STATE CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING FUNDING



STATE INVESTMENT

$996.6M	State-Funded Pre-K[26]
$150.6M	CCDBG State Match[27]
N/A	PDG B-5 State Match[28]

FEDERAL INVESTMENT

$1.3B	CCDBG and Mandatory Funds[29]
$542.1M	Head Start Preschool[30] (includes AIAN when applicable)
$285.7M	Early Head Start[31] (includes AIAN when applicable)
$0	PDG B-5[32]
$30.1M	MIECHV[33]
$53.7M	IDEA Part C[34]
$25.7M	IDEA Part B, Sec. 619[35]
$0	TANF Early Care and Education[36]
$0	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.

- Income eligibility: **85% of state median income** (**$73,692 per year** for a family of 3)[38,39]
- Monthly cost of center-based infant care
  - No subsidy: **$908**[40]
  - Maximum copayment with subsidy: **$360**[41]
  - Potential savings: **$548**
- **8,203** child care providers accept CCDBG subsidies[42]
- Child care workers' median wage: **$13.96 per hour** (**$29,050 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 for 0-11 months 1:5 for 12-17 months
TODDLER	1:9 for 18-23 months 1:11 for 24-35 months
PRESCHOOL	1:15 for age 3 1:18 for age 4

Scan or click the QR code for full references and links at www.ffyf.org/factsheet26. For more information contact FFYF at mail@ffyf.org.

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 Texas: **111 Head Start grants** fund **978 program sites**, serving **69,450 children**.[47, 48, 49]
- This includes **109 children** through American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Head Start.[50]

PDG B-5

To date, Texas has been awarded **$49.8 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. Texas's PDG B-5 accomplishments include:[52]

- Researching and developing an eligibility screener to be used across child care scholarships, public preschool, and Head Start/Early Head Start.
- Updating a website that allows families to complete developmental screeners and connect them to resources to support their child's healthy development.

CDCTC

In 2022, **530,370** Texas 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]