

Accredited Early Care and Education

DEFINITION

Accredited early care and education is the percentage of nationally-accredited private preschools, licensed child care centers and certified family child care homes. Child care centers and preschools are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Family child care homes are accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC).

SIGNIFICANCE

Research on early care and education reveals strong associations between the quality of the program and children's developing skills and well-being.¹ Children who receive high-quality early care and education score higher on tests of language and cognitive skills and demonstrate stronger social and emotional development than children who receive poor quality care. The impact of program quality is stronger for children from low-income families.² Programs vary markedly in quality, ranging from rich, growth-promoting experiences to mediocre, custodial care.³

High-quality child care and early education is characterized by smaller numbers of children in a classroom or group, fewer children per adult, educated and experienced caregivers,

nurturing and dependable relationships between staff and children and safe, stimulating environments.⁴ Researchers have consistently found that both the formal education levels of providers and specialized training in child development are associated with richer language and literacy environments, more positive staff-child interactions, more sensitive caregiving and improved child development and learning.^{5,6} The relationship between provider education and the quality of care delivered has been found to be true in child care centers, family child care homes and informal care provided by family, friends and neighbors.⁷

National accreditation is a marker for high quality early care and education and is a popular strategy for program improvement in both centers and family child care homes.^{8,9} Achieving accreditation means programs have been found to meet standards that exceed minimum state licensing requirements. Child care centers and preschools that successfully achieve national accreditation tend to have directors with higher levels of education and take advantage of accreditation support projects, including workshops, grants, consulting assistance and mentoring from other directors.¹⁰



Regulation of Early Care and Education Centers

- ◆ **In Rhode Island, full-day early care and education centers are licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). Part-day programs and child care centers operating a private kindergarten are approved by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE). Programs may have both a license from DCYF and an approval from RIDE.**
- ◆ **In December 2007, there were 329 licensed or approved early learning programs in Rhode Island. Of these, 133 had both a license from DCYF and an approval from RIDE, while 134 had only a license from DCYF and 62 had only an approval from RIDE.¹¹**
- ◆ **In Rhode Island in 2007, 14% of early learning programs were accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and 1% of family child care homes were accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC).¹²**



Strategies to Improve the Quality of Child Care

- ◆ **The quality of child care and early learning is strongly related to the wages, education and retention of teachers. Expanding provider access to higher education and connecting education to improved compensation improves child care workforce quality and reduces turnover.¹³**
- ◆ **A growing number of states have developed quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) that systematically measure program quality, support and reward incremental quality improvements, and align investments to promote quality.¹⁴ Rhode Island is currently piloting BrightStars, a new statewide QRIS for child care and early learning programs.**
- ◆ **Improving child care licensing systems and making inspection and verified complaint data public is an effective strategy to improve quality.¹⁵**

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Table 31. Early Childhood Programs with NAEYC or NAFCC Accreditation, Rhode Island, 2008

CITY/TOWN	CHILD CARE CENTERS AND PRESCHOOLS			FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES		
	NUMBER	NAEYC ACCREDITED	% NAEYC ACCREDITED	NUMBER	NAFCC ACCREDITED	% NAFCC ACCREDITED
Barrington	10	0	0%	6	0	0%
Bristol	5	1	20%	3	0	0%
Burrillville	3	1	33%	6	0	0%
Central Falls	4	0	0%	35	0	0%
Charlestown	5	1	20%	4	0	0%
Coventry	8	1	13%	18	0	0%
Cranston	32	2	6%	74	1	1%
Cumberland	10	0	0%	18	0	0%
East Greenwich	11	1	9%	4	0	0%
East Providence	16	1	6%	12	0	0%
Exeter	2	0	0%	0	0	N/A
Foster	2	0	0%	1	0	0%
Glocester	3	1	33%	3	0	0%
Hopkinton	2	2	100%	5	0	0%
Jamestown	1	1	100%	1	0	0%
Johnston	13	2	15%	16	0	0%
Lincoln	6	0	0%	8	0	0%
Little Compton	1	0	0%	1	0	0%
Middletown	11	1	9%	4	0	0%
Narragansett	2	0	0%	0	0	N/A
New Shoreham	1	0	0%	0	0	N/A
Newport	5	0	0%	2	0	0%
North Kingstown	13	1	8%	9	0	0%
North Providence	9	2	22%	18	0	0%
North Smithfield	1	1	100%	5	1	20%
Pawtucket	14	1	7%	70	0	0%
Portsmouth	6	0	0%	3	0	0%
Providence	46	11	24%	600	4	1%
Richmond	1	0	0%	2	0	0%
Scituate	1	0	0%	4	0	0%
Smithfield	8	0	0%	2	0	0%
South Kingstown	12	3	25%	12	0	0%
Tiverton	3	0	0%	5	0	0%
Warren	3	0	0%	3	1	33%
Warwick	28	4	14%	31	0	0%
West Greenwich	4	1	25%	1	0	0%
West Warwick	7	1	14%	10	0	0%
Westerly	7	0	0%	0	0	N/A
Woonsocket	13	5	38%	20	0	0%
Core Cities	89	18	20%	737	4	1%
Remainder of State	240	27	11%	279	3	1%
Rhode Island	329	45	14%	1,016	7	1%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Number of accredited programs is from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, January 2008 and National Association for Family Child Care, January 2008. Total number of child care centers, family child care homes, and preschools are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, December 2007 and the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, December 2007.

Programs that are not currently licensed or certified by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families or approved as a preschool by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education are not included in the table. Some public school classrooms have NAEYC accreditation, but they are not included in this table.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

References

- ^{1,3,5,7} *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development.* (2000). Shonkoff, J. P. & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- ² Carroll, J., Ochshorn, S., Kagan, S. L. & Fuller, B. (2004). *Effective investments in early care and education: What can we learn from research?* Denver, CO: National Conference of State Legislatures.
- ⁴ *Is this the right place for my child? 38 research-based indicators of high-quality child care.* (2006). Arlington, VA: National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies.
- ⁶ Whitebook, M. (2003). *Bachelor's degrees are best: Higher qualifications for pre-kindergarten teachers lead to better learning environments for children.* Washington, DC: The Trust for Early Education.
- ^{8,10} *Achieving center accreditation: Factors that impact success.* (2001). Wheeling, IL: Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University.
- ⁹ Hamm, K., Gault, B. & Jones-DeWeever, A. (2005). *In our own backyards: Local and state strategies to improve the quality of family child care.* Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.

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