

# Accredited Early Care and Education

## DEFINITION

Accredited early care and education is the percentage of private preschools, licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes in Rhode Island that are nationally accredited. 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).

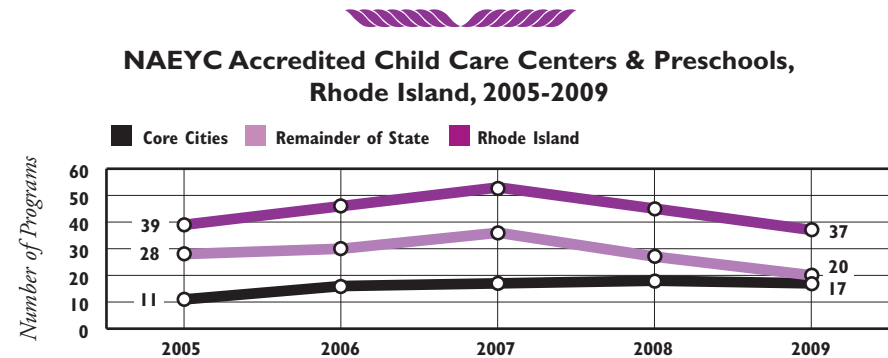
## SIGNIFICANCE

Research on early care and education reveals strong associations between program quality and children's development of skills and well-being.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Programs vary markedly in quality, ranging from rich, growth-promoting experiences to mediocre, custodial care.<sup>3</sup>

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 and

stimulating environments.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5,6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8,9</sup> Many states use a tiered funding strategy to pay higher child care subsidy rates to programs that achieve measurable quality standards, including NAEYC or NAFCC accreditation, through a state Quality Rating and Improvement System. States with tiered financial incentives, specifically tiered reimbursement rates and/or annual bonuses, have seen an increase in the numbers of programs achieving quality benchmarks, including accreditation.<sup>10</sup> As of 2009, 29 states and the District of Columbia have differential child care subsidy reimbursement rates based on program quality.<sup>11</sup>



Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2005-2009.

◆ Between 2005 and 2009, the number of child care centers and preschools in Rhode Island that had achieved NAEYC accreditation climbed from 39 to 53 and then fell to 37.<sup>12</sup> During the same time period, the total number of programs remained fairly stable.<sup>13</sup>

◆ In 2006, NAEYC implemented new, more rigorous accreditation criteria and increased their application fees, which may have resulted in fewer Rhode Island programs renewing or applying for accreditation.<sup>14</sup> In 2007, Rhode Island's child care subsidy program was significantly cut, leading to fewer public dollars in the child care system, which negatively impacts the ability of programs serving low-income families to achieve and maintain high-quality care benchmarks.<sup>15</sup>

## Strategies to Improve the Quality of Child Care

◆ Seventeen 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.<sup>16</sup> BrightStars, Rhode Island's new statewide QRIS for child care and early learning programs, was launched in January 2009 with voluntary quality ratings for child care centers and preschools.

◆ The quality of early learning programs is strongly related to the wages, education and retention of teachers. Expanding provider access to higher education and connecting education to improved compensation improves workforce quality and reduces turnover.<sup>17</sup>

◆ Improving child care licensing systems by making inspection and verified complaint data public is another effective strategy to improve quality.<sup>18</sup>

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Table 31. Early Childhood Programs with NAEYC or NAFCC Accreditation, Rhode Island, 2009

CITY/TOWN	CHILD CARE CENTERS AND PRESCHOOLS			FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES		
	NUMBER	NAEYC ACCREDITED	% NAEYC ACCREDITED	NUMBER	NAFCC ACCREDITED	% NAFCC ACCREDITED
Barrington	11	0	0%	4	0	0%
Bristol	6	1	17%	8	0	0%
Burrillville	3	0	0%	3	0	0%
Central Falls	4	0	0%	30	0	0%
Charlestown	4	1	25%	3	0	0%
Coventry	7	1	14%	18	0	0%
Cranston	34	3	9%	54	1	2%
Cumberland	9	0	0%	17	0	0%
East Greenwich	11	0	0%	2	0	0%
East Providence	16	1	6%	12	0	0%
Exeter	2	0	0%	1	0	0%
Foster	2	0	0%	0	0	NA
Glocester	3	0	0%	2	0	0%
Hopkinton	2	1	50%	4	0	0%
Jamestown	1	1	100%	1	0	0%
Johnston	13	2	15%	11	0	0%
Lincoln	6	0	0%	6	0	0%
Little Compton	1	0	0%	1	0	0%
Middletown	11	0	0%	5	0	0%
Narragansett	2	0	0%	0	0	NA
New Shoreham	1	0	0%	0	0	NA
Newport	5	0	0%	3	0	0%
North Kingstown	12	1	8%	5	0	0%
North Providence	8	1	13%	17	0	0%
North Smithfield	1	1	100%	6	0	0%
Pawtucket	16	1	6%	61	0	0%
Portsmouth	7	0	0%	2	0	0%
Providence	49	10	20%	498	2	<1%
Richmond	2	0	0%	2	0	0%
Scituate	1	0	0%	4	0	0%
Smithfield	8	0	0%	4	0	0%
South Kingstown	10	2	20%	8	0	0%
Tiverton	3	0	0%	3	0	0%
Warren	3	0	0%	2	1	50%
Warwick	31	3	10%	22	0	0%
West Greenwich	4	1	25%	0	0	NA
West Warwick	8	1	13%	9	0	0%
Westerly	7	0	0%	0	0	NA
Woonsocket	13	5	38%	17	0	0%
Core Cities	95	17	18%	618	2	0%
Remainder of State	242	20	8%	227	2	1%
Rhode Island	337	37	11%	845	4	<1%

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Number of accredited programs is from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, January 2009 and National Association for Family Child Care, January 2009. Data on the number of child care centers, family child care homes, and preschools are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, December 2008 and the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, December 2008.

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

- <sup>1,3,5,7</sup> Shonkoff, J. P. & Phillips, D. A. (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- <sup>2</sup> 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.
- <sup>4</sup> *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.
- <sup>6</sup> 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.
- <sup>8</sup> *Achieving center accreditation: Factors that impact success*. (2001). Wheeling, IL: Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University.
- <sup>9</sup> 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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