



# EARLY LEARNING FACT SHEET

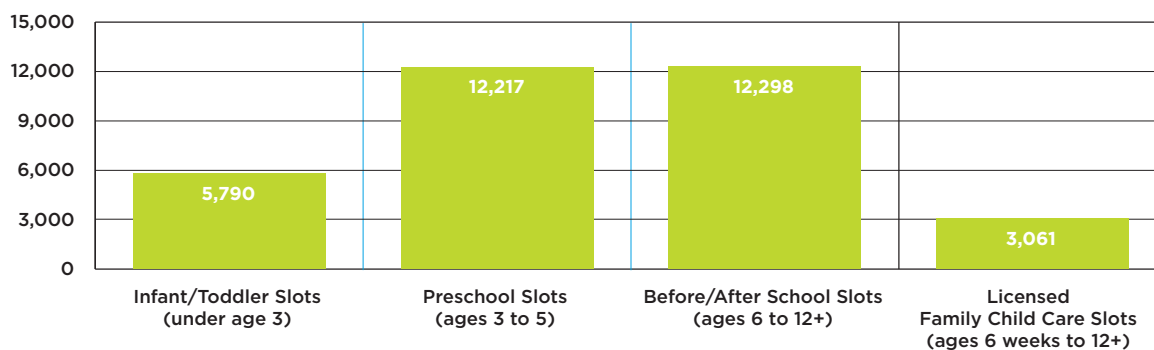
*Promoting early learning and development Birth to 8*

## Focus on Program Licensing

Each day, thousands of children in Rhode Island attend licensed child care, early learning, and afterschool programs. Child care is a necessity for most working families to earn a living. When high-quality, child care can provide enriching learning opportunities for children to build essential social-emotional, language, and cognitive skills that promote success in school and life. Due to family work schedules, many children are enrolled in child care programs for 40 to 50 hours per week. Parents list health and safety as their highest priority when selecting a program and they rely on state child care licensing and monitoring systems to ensure health and safety standards are met.<sup>12</sup>

In 2019, the responsibility for licensing child care programs in Rhode Island was transferred to the state Department of Human Services to be managed in coordination with the state's Child Care Assistance Program. In Rhode Island, organizations that provide care and/or supervision for children without a parent or guardian present for any part of a 24-hour day must have a license to operate a child care program. Individuals may care for up to three unrelated children in a private home without a license. Programs that are operated by public and private schools and recreational camps are exempt from child care licensing.<sup>3</sup>

LICENSED CHILD CARE SLOTS, RHODE ISLAND, JANUARY 2019



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families from the RI Early Care and Education Data System, January 2019

## Inspections Matter!

Regular child care licensing inspections can improve the quality of care children experience. When the U.S. military began conducting four unannounced inspections of programs in the military child care system, the quality of care children received significantly improved. Research has also shown that making inspection reports available to the public on a website improves the practices of child care licensing inspectors and actually improves the quality of programs at levels comparable to more intensive quality improvement interventions.<sup>4,5</sup> Child care programs are more likely to be in compliance with health and safety regulations when they are inspected more often. The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education recommends that states conduct at least two routine inspections per year, with additional visits conducted to investigate complaints or verify corrective action.<sup>6,7</sup>

## Federal Child Care Health, Safety, & Quality Provisions

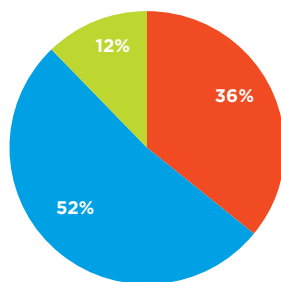
When the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) was reauthorized in 2014, Congress included several key requirements to ensure the health and safety of children in programs that receive CCDF funding.

States must:

- Ensure staff of child care programs receive pre-service and **ongoing training in key health and safety topics**, including the prevention of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) through use of safe sleep practices.
- Require staff in child care programs to undergo criminal **background checks**.
- Conduct **unannounced inspections** of all licensed and license-exempt child care providers that receive federal child care funding at least once per year.
- Maintain a localized list of all child care providers that is searchable by zip code and includes information about whether a **serious injury or death** to a child has occurred as a result of a health or safety violation.
- Maintain records of **substantiated parental complaints** about child care programs and make this information available to the public on request.
- **Post three years of licensing inspection reports for every provider on a public website**, including reports about any substantiated complaints. Inspection reports must include the date of the inspection and information about any corrective action.
- Post research-based, easy-to-understand **information about the quality level of each child care provider**. While not required, the federal government strongly encourages states to use a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), like Rhode Island's BrightStars quality rating and improvement system, to measure and improve the quality of programs.
- Spend at least 12% of federal CCDF funding on **strategies to improve the quality of child care programs**, including specific strategies to improve the quality of infant/toddler child care.

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2016). Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program: Final Rule. *Federal Register*, 81(190), 67438-67595.

### LICENSED CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS, RHODE ISLAND, JANUARY 2019



36% (315) ■ Early Learning Centers  
52% (457) ■ Family Child Care Homes  
12% (105) ■ Before/After School Programs

n=877

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families from the RI Early Care and Education Data System, January 2019. Note: 93 of the early learning centers (30%) are also licensed to offer before/after school care as are all family child care homes.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Schochet, L. (2017). *The importance of child care safety protections*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.
- <sup>2</sup> Crowley, A. A., Sangchoon, J. & Rosenthal, M. S. (2013). *Health and safety of child care centers: An analysis of licensing specialists' reports of routine, unannounced inspections*. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(10), e52-e58.
- <sup>3</sup> Rhode Island General Law 42-12.5 Licensing and Monitoring of Child Day Care Providers. Enacted by the General Assembly as Article 4 of H-5151 Aaa in 2019.
- <sup>4</sup> National Center for Child Care Quality Improvement. (2014). *Contemporary issues in licensing: Child care licensing inspection policies*. Washington, DC: Administration for Children & Families.
- <sup>5</sup> Witte, A. D. & Queral, M. (2004). *What happens when child care inspections and complaints are made available on the internet?* Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- <sup>7</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. (2019). *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance standards; guidelines for early care and education Programs, 4th ed.* Itasca, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics.



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