

Licensed Capacity of Early Learning Programs

DEFINITION

Licensed capacity of early learning programs is the number of child care and early learning programs and slots licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services for children under age six. Licensed centers include child care programs, preschools, nursery schools, and center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

SIGNIFICANCE

Nationally, more than half of children under age five regularly attend a child care or early learning program. Research shows that when children attend child care and early learning programs that are high-quality, there are lasting benefits including improved math, language, and social skills.¹

However, for many families, high-quality child care is not affordable or available. Nationally, 83% of parents report that finding quality, affordable child care in their area is a serious problem, and nearly three in four parents report that child care issues negatively impacted their career. Families that have infants and toddlers, parents of children with disabilities, immigrant families, and parents working nonstandard hours face limited options for licensed child care.²

Access to stable, affordable, quality child care is a basic need for many

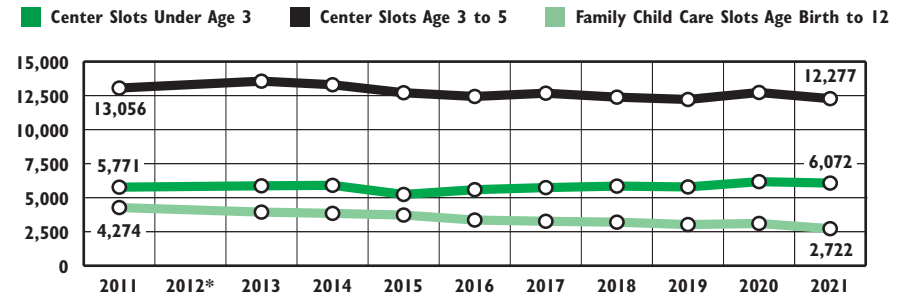
working families and is critical for Rhode Island's economy. When parents have difficulty finding and keeping child care, they are more likely to be absent from work and to leave their jobs.³ Between 2015 and 2019, 74% of Rhode Island children under age six had all parents in the workforce, higher than the U.S. rate of 66%.⁴

Tuition and public funding for child care are not adequate to pay reasonable wages needed to attract and retain qualified and effective educators. Staff turnover is not ideal for young children, especially infants and toddlers, who need consistent, stable, nurturing relationships with caregivers to support healthy brain development.⁵

In 2019 in Rhode Island, the average wage was \$12.01/hour for a child care educator and \$13.80 for a preschool teacher. Early educators with a bachelor's degree were paid 31% less than their colleagues in K-8 public schools. The poverty rate for early educators was 26%, 11 times higher than the rate for public school teachers.⁶



Early Learning Program Capacity, Rhode Island, 2011-2021



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, 2011-2019 and Rhode Island Department of Human Services, 2020-2021. RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), 2016-2020. *In the 2013 Factbook, data was collected as of January 2013, instead of December 2012.

◆ In January 2021, there were 106 fewer slots for infants and toddlers and 453 fewer slots for preschoolers in licensed centers, and there were 384 fewer slots in licensed family child care homes than in January 2020. Since 2011, the number of infant/toddler slots is up 5% and the number of preschool slots is down 6% in centers. The number of family child care slots is down 36%.⁷

◆ As of January 2021, 88% of family child care providers and 74% of early learning centers in Rhode Island accept children participating in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which covers all or part of the cost of child care for low-income working families.⁸

◆ In addition to licensed programs operated by community-based agencies and family child care providers, there are 52 traditional public schools in Rhode Island, one public charter school and one state-operated school that have preschool classrooms.⁹



Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Child Care

◆ Financially unstable before the pandemic due to inadequate public investments and services that cost more than most parents can afford, child care programs across the U.S. have faced tremendous financial difficulties as enrollment has dropped markedly. Significant support is needed to prevent the permanent closure and collapse of the child care system.¹⁰

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Table 35.

Capacity of Licensed Early Learning Programs, Rhode Island, January 2021

CITY/TOWN	# OF LICENSED CENTERS	# OF CENTER SLOTS FOR CHILDREN <AGE 3	# OF CENTER SLOTS FOR CHILDREN AGES 3-5	# OF LICENSED FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES	# OF LICENSED FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME SLOTS*	TOTAL LICENSED EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM SLOTS
Barrington	8	104	300	4	26	430
Bristol	4	61	68	5	32	161
Burrillville	2	27	36	1	6	69
Central Falls	3	98	187	15	101	386
Charlestown	3	0	74	1	8	82
Coventry	7	131	233	3	20	384
Cranston	30	551	1,125	37	250	1,926
Cumberland	7	112	332	7	58	502
East Greenwich	16	375	623	0	0	998
East Providence	14	221	432	2	14	667
Exeter	2	24	20	0	0	44
Foster	1	19	18	0	0	37
Glocester	3	55	100	1	12	167
Hopkinton	3	8	60	1	8	76
Jamestown	1	30	34	1	8	72
Johnston	20	394	477	9	64	935
Lincoln	5	98	201	5	30	329
Little Compton	1	0	20	0	0	20
Middletown	11	228	383	0	0	611
Narragansett	2	12	60	1	6	78
New Shoreham	1	12	26	0	0	38
Newport	4	73	163	1	8	244
North Kingstown	7	104	322	3	14	440
North Providence	10	144	238	7	47	429
North Smithfield	2	85	121	3	26	232
Pawtucket	13	324	761	30	193	1,278
Portsmouth	4	92	133	0	0	225
Providence	53	801	2,309	241	1,614	4,724
Richmond	0	0	0	1	12	12
Scituate	1	11	36	0	0	47
Smithfield	8	330	403	1	5	738
South Kingstown	13	273	410	3	22	705
Tiverton	3	24	124	1	8	156
Warren	5	80	203	1	6	289
Warwick	23	753	1,062	7	46	1,861
West Greenwich	3	46	89	0	0	135
West Warwick	6	151	289	3	20	460
Westerly	7	95	300	2	12	407
Woonsocket	11	126	505	6	46	677
Four Core Cities	80	1,349	3,762	292	1,954	7,065
Remainder of State	237	4,723	8,515	111	768	14,006
Rhode Island	317	6,072	12,277	403	2,722	21,071

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Human Services, number of licensed child care center slots and programs for children under age six and number of licensed family child care homes and slots, January 2021.

Licensed centers include child care programs, preschools, nursery schools, and center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

*Family child care slots are for children ages birth to 12 years old.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

References

¹⁵ Donoghue, E. A. & AAP Council on Early Childhood. (2017). Quality early education and child care from birth to kindergarten. *Pediatrics*, 140(2): e20171488.

² Malik, R., et al. (2018). *America's child care deserts in 2018*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

³ Glynn, S. J., Farrell, J., & Wu, N. (2013). *The importance of preschool and child care for working mothers*. Retrieved February 10, 2017, from: www.americanprogress.org

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019. Table DP03.

⁶ *Early childhood workforce index 2020: Rhode Island*. (2021). Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of the Child Care Workforce.

⁷⁸ Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, 2010-2019 and Rhode Island Department of Human Services, 2020-2021. RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), 2016-2020.

⁹ Rhode Island Department of Education, public schools operating preschool classrooms, 2021.

¹⁰ Payment practices to stabilize child care. (2021). Washington, DC: Bipartisan Policy Center.