

# 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

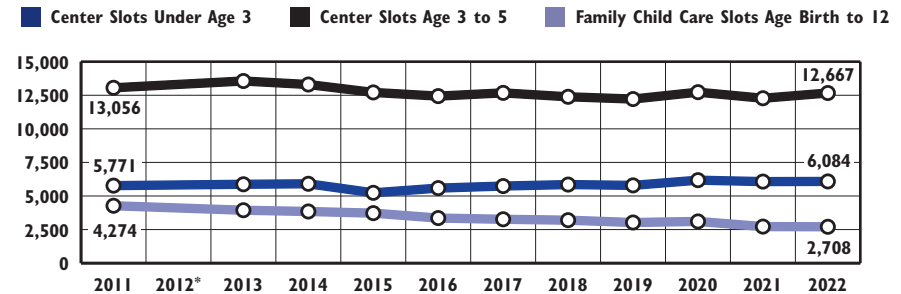
Access to stable, affordable, quality child care is a basic need for many working families and is critical for Rhode Island's economy. When parents

have difficulty finding and keeping child care, they are more likely to be absent from work and to leave their jobs.<sup>3</sup> Between 2016 and 2020, 73% of Rhode Island children under age six had all parents in the workforce, higher than the U.S. rate of 67%.<sup>4</sup>

Revenue from family fees and available public subsidies for child care are not adequate for most child care and early learning programs to pay competitive wages that are needed to attract and retain qualified and effective educators.<sup>5</sup> In 2021 in Rhode Island, the average wage was \$13.26/hour for a child care educator and \$14.08 for a preschool teacher.<sup>6</sup>

The federal *Child Care and Development Block Grant Act* requires states to establish and enforce clear health and safety standards for child care programs. States must conduct at least one unannounced inspection of all licensed providers each year and must maintain a public website with a searchable list of child care providers with information on the quality of each child care program and the findings from at least three years of licensing inspections. States must also publicly report data on serious injuries, substantiated child maltreatment, and deaths in child care programs.<sup>7</sup> In 2020, there were two children seriously injured, nine children who were maltreated, and zero children who died in a licensed child care program in Rhode Island.<sup>8</sup>

### Early Learning Program Capacity, Rhode Island, 2011-2022



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, 2011-2019 and Rhode Island Department of Human Services, 2020-2022. 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 2022, there were 94 fewer slots for infants and toddlers and 63 fewer slots for preschoolers in licensed centers, and there were 398 fewer slots in licensed family child care homes than in January 2020 (pre-pandemic). Since 2011, the number of infant/toddler slots is up 5% and the number of preschool slots is down 3% in centers. The number of family child care slots is down 37%.<sup>9</sup>

◆ As of January 2022, 86% of family child care providers and 80% 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 eligible low-income families.<sup>10</sup>

◆ In addition to licensed programs operated by community-based agencies and family child care providers, there are 55 traditional public schools, one public charter school, and one state-operated school in Rhode Island that have preschool classrooms.<sup>11</sup>

## Child Care and the COVID-19 Pandemic

◆ Rhode Island has been working to distribute \$57 million in American Rescue Plan Child Care Stabilization Funding to licensed child care providers to help programs stay open when faced with reduced revenue and higher operating costs due to the pandemic. Financially unstable before the pandemic, child care programs across the U.S. have faced tremendous financial difficulties.<sup>12</sup>

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Table 35.

Capacity of Licensed Early Learning Programs, Rhode Island, January 2022

CITY/TOWN	# OF LICENSED CENTERS	# OF CENTER SLOTS FOR INFANTS < AGE 18 MONTHS	# OF CENTER SLOTS FOR TODDLERS AGES 18 MONTHS THROUGH < 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	9	31	82	317	4	26	456
Bristol	4	29	32	72	4	24	157
Burrillville	3	7	11	74	1	6	98
Central Falls	3	31	47	229	14	94	401
Charlestown	4	4	10	92	0	0	106
Coventry	7	48	83	233	3	20	384
Cranston	28	199	303	1,155	43	289	1,946
Cumberland	7	16	63	329	8	66	474
East Greenwich	12	124	236	589	0	0	949
East Providence	15	87	159	518	1	6	770
Exeter	2	8	16	52	0	0	76
Foster	1	8	11	18	0	0	37
Glocester	3	24	31	100	0	0	155
Hopkinton	3	8	6	60	1	8	82
Jamestown	1	8	22	34	1	8	72
Johnston	20	200	266	511	8	54	1,031
Lincoln	6	48	107	246	5	32	433
Little Compton	1	0	0	20	0	0	20
Middletown	10	60	150	368	1	6	584
Narragansett	2	0	12	60	1	8	80
New Shoreham	1	4	8	26	0	0	38
Newport	3	32	32	145	1	8	217
North Kingstown	7	41	60	334	2	14	449
North Providence	9	57	112	218	8	53	440
North Smithfield	2	16	67	121	4	40	244
Pawtucket	12	77	146	485	27	181	889
Portsmouth	4	40	52	133	1	8	233
Providence	51	281	541	2,235	236	1,580	4,637
Richmond	0	0	0	0	1	12	12
Scituate	1	0	11	36	1	12	59
Smithfield	9	112	214	495	1	5	826
South Kingstown	13	96	177	385	3	24	682
Tiverton	3	0	28	124	1	8	160
Warren	5	32	48	201	1	8	289
Warwick	23	306	478	1,193	7	52	2,029
West Greenwich	3	13	30	93	0	0	136
West Warwick	6	54	115	321	3	20	510
Westerly	7	42	53	300	1	6	401
Woonsocket	13	24	98	745	4	30	897
Four Core Cities	79	413	832	3,694	281	1,885	6,824
Remainder of State	234	1,754	3,085	8,973	116	823	14,635
Rhode Island	313	2,167	3,917	12,667	397	2,708	21,459

## 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 2022.

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

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

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

<sup>3</sup> Glynn, S. J., Farrell, J., & Wu, N. (2013). *The importance of preschool and child care for working mothers*. Retrieved February 20, 2022, from: [www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org)

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020. Table DP03.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). *May 2021 State occupational employment and wage estimates, Rhode Island*. Retrieved April 2, 2022, from [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

<sup>7</sup> Matthews, H., Schulman, K., Vogtman, J., Johnson-Staub, C., & Blank, H. (2017). *Implementing the Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorization: A Guide for States*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy & National Women's Law Center.

<sup>8</sup> Rhode Island Department of Human Services. (2021). Consumer statement. Retrieved April 22, 2022 from, [www.kids.ri.gov](http://www.kids.ri.gov)

<sup>9,10</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, 2010-2019 and Rhode Island Department of Human Services, 2020-2022. RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), 2016-2020.

<sup>11</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, public schools operating preschool classrooms, 2022.

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