

Issue Brief

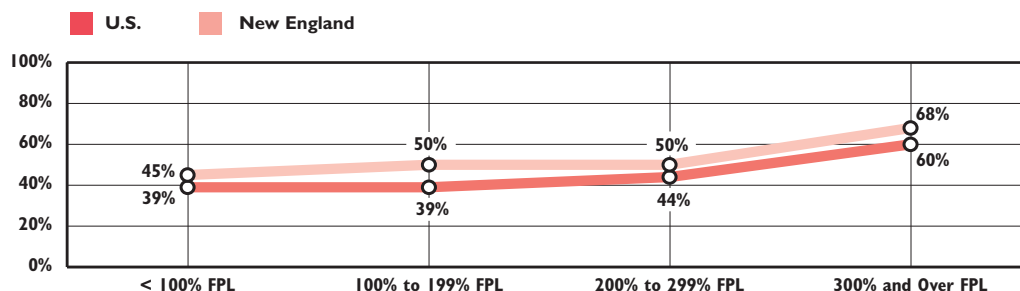
Investing in the Future: Financing Early Education & Care in Rhode Island

The first five years in a child's life are crucial to their success in school. Children begin learning at birth and brain development proceeds rapidly in early childhood. Disparities in learning based on access to enriched experiences and environments begin to appear in the first years of life and, without intervention, grow over time. Access to high-quality early learning opportunities from birth through kindergarten entry, at home and in the community, helps prepare children for success in school.^{1,2,3,4,5}

Access to high-quality early learning programs is tied to family income. Children in higher-income families are more likely to attend preschool than children from lower-income families. In fact, 83% of four-year-olds in the U.S. who have families with incomes in the top quintile attend preschool.^{6,7}

Many families cannot afford to enroll their children in high-quality early learning programs. Public funding for child care, Head Start, and Pre-K, helps some low-income families enroll in high-quality early learning programs, but many children from low- and moderate-income families are left out due to limited public funding.⁸ Even middle- and high-income families struggle to afford the cost of high-quality early care and education programs. Using a federal affordability guideline that families should spend no more than 10% of their income on child care/early learning, a Rhode Island family would need to earn \$101,000 annually in order to afford the average cost for one four-year-old enrolled year-round in a child care center/preschool (\$10,172) – well above the median family income for a family of three in Rhode Island (\$72,482).^{9,10,11}

**Preschool Attendance by Federal Poverty Level (FPL),
United States and New England, 2011-2013**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Population Reference Bureau's analysis of American Community Survey data, 2011-2013.
Note: Data for Rhode Island alone is not available, due to small numbers creating unreliable estimates.

Public funding helps more children enroll in high-quality early education programs. Providing access to high-quality early education and care is important to ensure all children have a strong foundation for success in school and beyond.

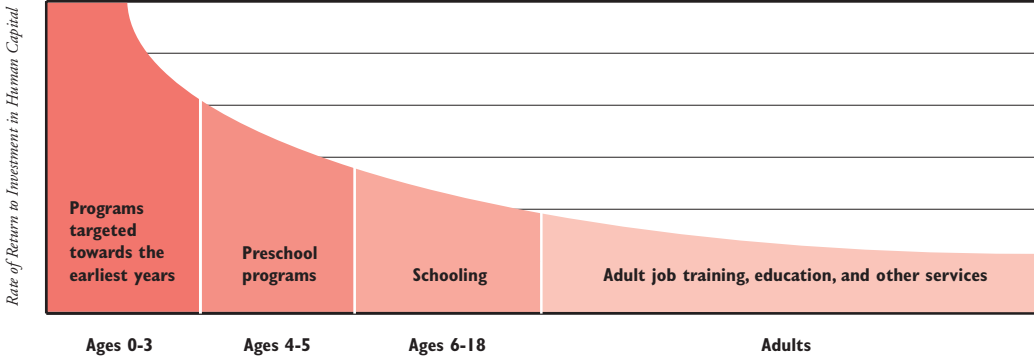
Early Education Funding Systems in Rhode Island

| FUNDING TYPE | ADMINISTRATOR | DESCRIPTION | SOURCES OF FUNDING |
|--|--|--|--|
| Child Care Assistance Program | RI Department of Human Services | The Child Care Assistance Program provides vouchers to low-income, working families to help pay for child care. Family co-payments are required for families with incomes over 100% FPL. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State funding • Federal funding: Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) |
| Head Start & Early Head Start | U.S. Department of Health & Human Services | Head Start is a preschool program for low-income children ages three and four, designed to help them enter kindergarten on an equal footing with their more advantaged peers. Early Head Start offers comprehensive services to low-income infants and toddlers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Head Start funding direct to local grantees • State supplemental funding for Head Start |
| State Pre-K | RI Department of Education | Rhode Island State Pre-K is a preschool program for four-year-olds designed to prepare children to succeed in school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State funding • Federal funding: Preschool Development Grant |
| Title I | RI Department of Education | Title I funds help school districts better serve students from low-income families. Schools may use Title I funds to provide early childhood education services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal funding administered by states to school districts |
| Early Intervention | RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services | Early Intervention provides special education services to children ages birth to two years with developmental delays or disabilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicaid • Private health insurance • Federal funding: <i>IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)</i> |
| Preschool Special Education | RI Department of Education | Preschool Special Education provides special education services to children ages three to kindergarten entry with developmental delays or disabilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local school district funding • State funding (education formula) • Federal funding: <i>IDEA</i> • Medicaid |
| Direct Pay by Families/ Private Tuition | | Many parents pay out of pocket to enroll their children in child care and early learning programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Incomes |

Public Funding is Limited in Early Years When the Economic Returns are Greatest

- ◆ Despite the research documenting the importance of early learning, public funding for education is highly concentrated to benefit older children. One study found that out of every public dollar spent for the development and education of a school-age child (ages 6 to 18), only 7 cents is invested in an infant or toddler (ages birth through 2) and 25 cents in a preschooler (ages 3 to 5). In general, state and local government provide the majority of the resources for school-age children, while the federal government plays a much larger role in funding early childhood programs.¹²
- ◆ Economic studies show that the return on investment is better for early childhood interventions than later investments. About 50% of the variance in inequality in life-time earnings is determined by age 18. Gaps in cognitive and non-cognitive skills emerge when children are very young, are related to adverse early environments, and could be mitigated with early childhood interventions.¹³
- ◆ Compared with interventions during the early childhood years, effective interventions for adolescents and adults produce lower economic returns. Economically, it makes more sense to invest early.¹⁴

Return on Investment by Age of Intervention

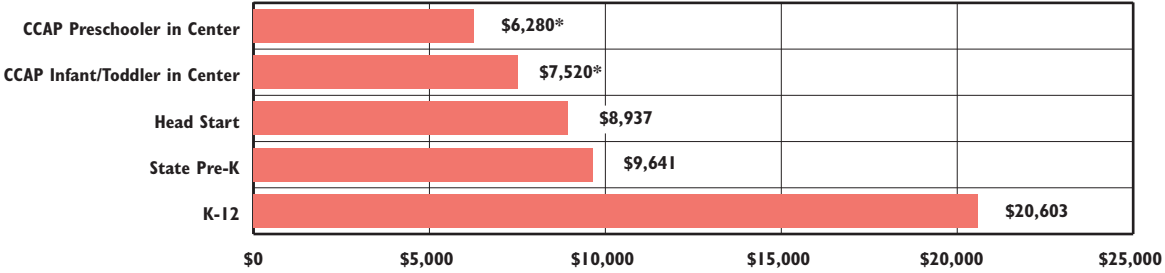


Source: Heckman, J. J. (2008). Schools, skills, and synapses. *Economic Inquiry*, 46(3), 289-324.

Rhode Island Investments

- ◆ In Rhode Island, public investments in early learning and development programs are much lower than investments for school-age children.

Annual Public Funding Per Child Enrolled, Rhode Island, 2014-2015



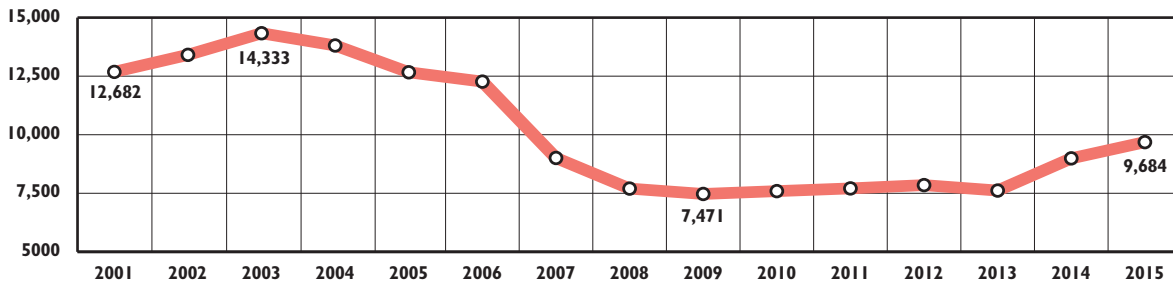
Sources: Data for CCAP calculated by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT for forty weeks of full-time enrollment (30 or more hours per week). Data for State Head Start, State Pre-K and K-12 from Barnett, W. S., et al. (2016). *The state of preschool 2015: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, National Institute for Early Education Research. K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as operating expenses.

* CCAP requires families with incomes between 100% FPL and 225% FPL to make co-payments to the program and deducts this amount from the payment the state makes to programs. Families pay up to 14% of family income to the child care/early learning provider.

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

- ◆ The Rhode Island Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provides a full or partial subsidy to help low-income, working parents pay for child care for children from birth through age 12. CCAP provides a foundation of access to early learning programs, with 5,898 children under age six enrolled (61% of all children enrolled) as of December 2015. The majority of children are enrolled in licensed child care/early learning programs, with 78% enrolled in a licensed center/preschool and 21% enrolled in a licensed family child care home. Only 1% of children with a CCAP subsidy are receiving care from a license-exempt provider (family, friend, or neighbor).¹⁵
- ◆ Families are eligible for CCAP if they have an income below 180% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and work more than 20 hours a week or need child care for employment activities in the Rhode Island Works program. Currently, families remain eligible as their income increases up to 225% FPL through a pilot program designed to help families move up the economic ladder and minimize the “cliff effect” associated with losing a child care subsidy as income increases but not making enough money to afford the cost of child care without a subsidy.¹⁶
- ◆ Prior to state funding cuts and a rollback in eligibility as part of the state fiscal year 2008 budget, Rhode Island families with incomes up to 225% FPL were eligible for CCAP. The original Starting Right child care law, enacted in 1998, called for a gradual expansion of the CCAP program to serve all families with incomes up to 250% FPL.^{17,18}

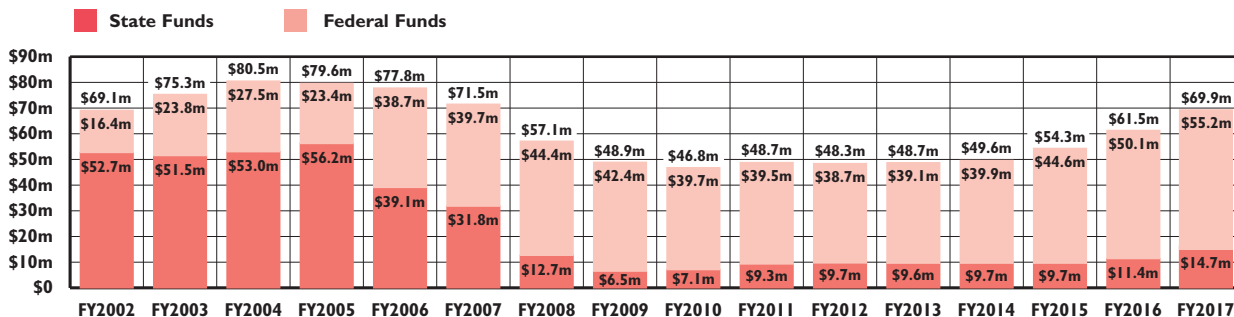
Number of Children with Child Care Subsidies, Rhode Island, 2001-2015



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, December 2001–December 2015.

- ◆ The enacted state fiscal year 2017 budget includes \$69.9 million for CCAP, with 79% from federal grants and 21% from general revenue. This is an \$8.4 million increase from SFY16, the largest increase in more than 10 years – but the total funding and state general revenue funding remains below levels from a decade ago.¹⁹ Federal funding sources include the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).²⁰

Child Care Assistance Program Expenditures in Millions of Dollars, SFYs 2002-2017

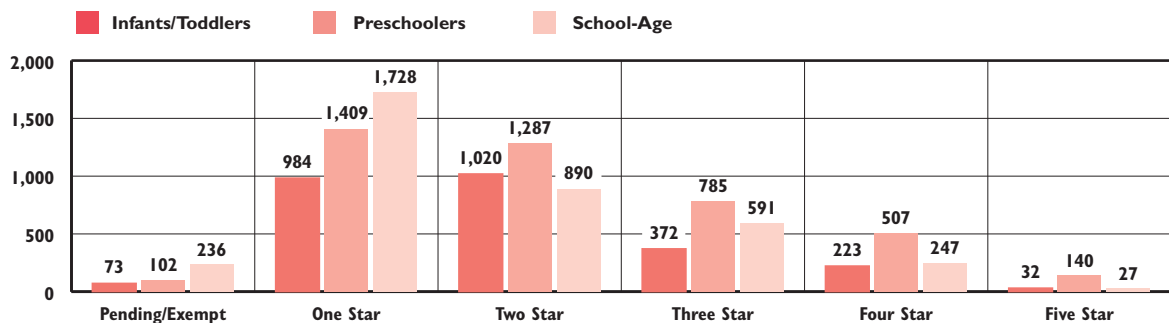


Source: Rhode Island House Fiscal Office. SFY2002-2016 are final expenditures. SFY17 is budget as enacted.

BrightStars, Rhode Island's Quality Rating & Improvement System

- ◆ Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia have a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to assess the quality of child care and early learning programs and to promote quality improvement.²¹
- ◆ Launched in 2009, BrightStars is Rhode Island's Quality Rating and Improvement System. As of January 2016, 82% of licensed centers/preschools, 87% of licensed family child care homes, and 60% of public schools that enroll preschoolers have a BrightStars rating. As of October 2014, all programs serving children with a CCAP subsidy are required to have a quality rating.²²
- ◆ Although programs continue to make quality improvements and incremental progress with improved ratings, only a minority of programs in the state have reached the high-quality benchmark of four or five stars (17% of licensed centers/preschools, 2% of family child care homes, and 13% of public schools). More than half (54%) of the centers with a high-quality rating of four or five stars receive Head Start funding, State Pre-K funding, or both.²³

Children Receiving CCAP by BrightStar Quality Rating of Program, March 2016



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database and Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children, BrightStars quality ratings, March 2016.

Tiered Reimbursement for High-Quality Child Care & Early Learning Programs

- ◆ Most states have tiered quality reimbursement rate systems, meaning that the higher quality a program is, the higher the rates paid by the state for low-income children enrolled in programs. Rhode Island is the only New England state and one of only twelve states in the country that does not have a tiered reimbursement system to support access to high-quality programs.²⁴
- ◆ High-quality care promotes children's learning and development, but it is more expensive to provide due to the higher cost of wages to attract and retain more qualified and effective staff. The federal government recommends that child care subsidy rates be set at or above the 75th percentile of the current market rate to promote access to high-quality care and learning programs. As of 2015, eight states had rates set at or above the 75th percentile of current market rates for programs at the highest quality level.²⁵

Current CCAP Rates Compared with Recommended Rates for Access to Quality Programs

| | CURRENT MAXIMUM RATE | PERCENTILE OF 2015 MARKET RATE SURVEY | RECOMMENDED MINIMUM RATE | PERCENTILE OF 2015 MARKET RATE SURVEY |
|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Infant/Toddler in Center | \$193.64/week | 12th to 21st | \$239.50/week | 75th |
| Preschooler in Center | \$161.71/week | 18th | \$215.00/week | 75th |

Sources: *DHS Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) established schedule of maximum weekly rates, effective July 2015*. Cranston, RI: Rhode Island Department of Human Services. Bodah, M. M. (2015). *Statewide survey of child care rates in Rhode Island*. Kingston, RI: Charles T. Schmidt, Jr. Labor Research Center, University of Rhode Island.

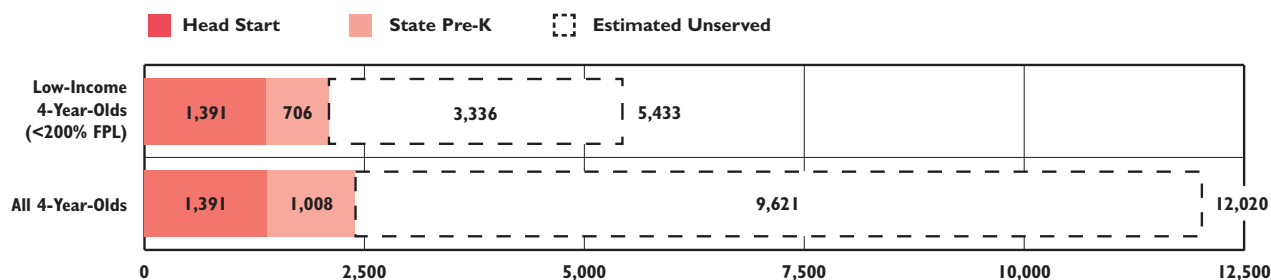
Head Start & Early Head Start in Rhode Island

- ◆ Head Start and Early Head Start are federally-managed comprehensive programs designed to improve school readiness for children living in poverty.²⁶ Children who participate in Head Start show immediate improvements in language and literacy skills. Lasting impacts have been found with reduced grade retention and special education placement in school and increased high school graduation and college enrollment rates.^{27,28,29}
- ◆ Head Start serves three- and four-year-olds statewide. As of 2015, Head Start served 2,233 preschoolers in Rhode Island, 38% of the estimated 5,868 eligible children ages three and four who live in poverty.³⁰
- ◆ Early Head Start serves children under age three. As of 2015, Early Head Start served 590 infants, toddlers, and pregnant women in Rhode Island in 23 of the 39 cities and towns, 7% of the 8,379 eligible children under age three who live in poverty.³¹
- ◆ Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Rhode Island have active waiting lists because they do not have enough funding to serve all eligible children.³² The federal government allocated \$27.3 million in federal fiscal year 2015 for Rhode Island Head Start and Early Head Start programs.³³ The state funds 130 Head Start slots each year to reduce waiting lists, spending \$800,000. In the past, Rhode Island has funded 400 Head Start seats, but state funding for Head Start was reduced in 2008.³⁴

Rhode Island State Pre-K

- ◆ The Rhode Island State Pre-K program was launched in the 2009-2010 school year, and as of the 2015-2016 school year, serves 594 four-year-olds who live in high-poverty communities. State Pre-K classrooms are operated by Head Start agencies (52%), community-based child care centers/preschools (39%), and public schools (9%). Children apply to participate in State Pre-K and participants are selected by lottery, with children from low-income families prioritized for enrollment based on the proportion of low-income children in the local school district.³⁵
- ◆ The State Pre-K program is projected to grow to serve 1,008 four-year-olds in 11 Rhode Island communities in the 2016-2017 school year, with \$5.2 million in state general revenue funding and \$5.8 million in federal Preschool Development Grant funding.^{36,37}
- ◆ Rhode Island's State Pre-K program has been recognized as one of only seven in the U.S. to meet all recommended quality benchmarks, but the state is ranked among the lowest nationally (41st out of 43 states) in terms of access for four-year-olds.³⁸

Four-Year-Olds, Access to Head Start and State Pre-K, Rhode Island, Projected for 2016-2017



Source: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT calculations assuming Head Start enrollment remains stable and 70% of children enrolled in State Pre-K are low-income (below 200% FPL).

- ◆ As of the 2016-2017 school year, 39% of low-income four-year-olds (families with incomes up to 200% FPL) and 20% of all four-year-olds in Rhode Island will be enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K.³⁹

Title I & Early Education

- ◆ Title I funding from the U.S. Department of Education helps school districts better serve economically disadvantaged children. Districts are allowed to use Title I resources to fund early childhood programs. Under the 2015 federal *Every Student Succeeds Act*, states will be required to help districts fund early childhood programs and to report on the number of children served in early childhood programs. Any early learning program funded with Title I dollars must meet or exceed Head Start performance standards.
- ◆ During the Title I application process, the Rhode Island Department of Education advises districts that Title I funds may support preschool programs. The district, in consultation with schools, teachers, and parents, designs the Title I program.⁴¹
- ◆ In Rhode Island as of 2015-2016, two school districts (Central Falls and Warwick) use Title I funds to support four district-operated preschool classrooms. Other districts use Title I funding to support summer learning programs to improve transition to kindergarten and/or evidence-based home visiting interventions for families with young children, such as Parents as Teachers.⁴² In the past, Title I funding has been used to support implementation of the State Pre-K program in Providence and Central Falls.⁴³

Private Pay & Access to Affordable Early Care & Education

- ◆ Many families pay for their children’s early learning opportunities out-of-pocket. Families with incomes above state or federal eligibility limits do not qualify for CCAP or Head Start, and only a small number of State Pre-K spaces (approximately 30%, or 302 spaces in the 2015-2016 school year) are available for families with incomes above 200% FPL. In fact, many families who qualify for CCAP are required to make co-payments ranging from 2% to 14% of family income.⁴⁴

Average Annual Cost for Full-Time Child Care, Rhode Island, 2015

| PROGRAM TYPE | COST PER CHILD |
|---|----------------|
| Child Care Center (infant care) | \$12,091 |
| Child Care Center (preschool care) | \$10,172 |
| Family Child Care Home (preschool care) | \$8,655 |

Source: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT analysis of average weekly rates from Bodah, M. M. (2015). *Statewide survey of childcare rates in Rhode Island*. Kingston, RI: University of Rhode Island.

- ◆ Using the federal affordability guideline, families with incomes up to six times the poverty level (\$120,000 for a family of three) struggle to pay tuition for an infant in a licensed center and families with incomes up to five times the poverty level (\$100,000 for a family of three) struggle to pay tuition for a preschooler in a licensed center/preschool.^{45,46,47}
- ◆ Family child care is slightly more affordable, but would still require families to make more than four times the poverty level (\$86,000 for a family of three) to pay the full cost of care for a preschooler in a licensed family child care home.^{48,49}

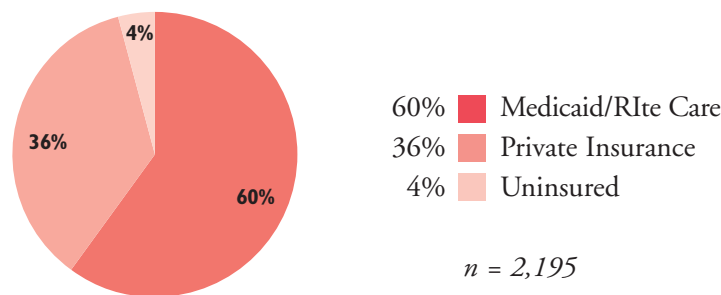
Paid Family Leave & Infant Care

- ◆ Experts recommend that healthy, full-term infants be at least three months old before enrolling in child care.⁵⁰ Paid time off from work helps parents provide the one-on-one care infants need and can improve child health and development, maternal health, and family economic security.⁵¹ Rhode Island is one of only four states with a paid family leave law.

Early Intervention

- ◆ Under the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, Early Intervention services are available to children under age three in Rhode Island who have a developmental delay or a condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay. This includes significant circumstances like loss, trauma, abuse, neglect, or lacking resources to meet basic needs. Early Intervention is paid for through private insurance, Medicaid, and state funds, and is free for families. The majority of Early Intervention services are delivered through home visits or visits to children enrolled in a child care or Early Head Start program.^{52,53}
- ◆ As of June 2015, there were 2,195 infants and toddlers receiving Early Intervention Services in Rhode Island, approximately 6% of all children under age three in the state.⁵⁴
- ◆ Early Intervention cost a total of \$20.9 million in SFY2015, with \$8 million funded through participants' private health insurance and \$10 million funded through RIte Care/Medicaid. Families with private insurance have claims submitted to their insurance for payment, but do not pay any copayments. Insurers are required to cover the cost of Early Intervention services. Each year the federal government awards Rhode Island a grant of \$2.15 million for Early Intervention through *IDEA* Part C.⁵⁵

Rhode Island Children Enrolled in Early Intervention By Insurance Type, 2015



Source: RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services, June 30, 2015.

Preschool Special Education

- ◆ Starting at age three, children with specific disabilities or developmental delays are eligible for special education through their local school district. As of June 2015, 2,927 preschool-age children were receiving special education services through a school district, approximately 7% of all children ages three to five.⁵⁶
- ◆ Preschool special education services provided by school districts is delivered in a variety of settings: 47% receive services within an inclusive early education classroom (in Head Start, State Pre-K, public school, or child care programs) where students with and without delays or disabilities are educated together, 17% are enrolled in a separate special education classroom or facility, 25% receive services through walk-in appointments, and 1% received services at home or in a hospital. Another 10% are enrolled in a regular early childhood classroom, but do not receive their special education services in that class.⁵⁷
- ◆ In FY14, preschool special education funding totaled \$15.4 million from state, local, and federal sources, including \$1.6 million from Section 619 of Part B of *IDEA*. Districts may bill Medicaid for health-related services and in FY2015, Medicaid paid \$599,711 to Rhode Island school districts for children in preschool special education.^{58,59}

Early Care and Education Staffing and Quality

- ◆ Staffing is a critical component of high-quality early care and education. The number of teachers assigned to a group of children, the education levels of the teachers, and the amount and quality of professional development and training are consistently associated with improved teacher-child interactions and improved learning and development outcomes for children.⁶⁰
- ◆ After reviewing the evidence, the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council recommend that all lead teachers in early care and education programs for children birth through age eight have a bachelor's degree with specialized training in child development and early education. Experts recognize that achieving this goal will take both a significant investment of new financial resources and time for staff to attain credentials.⁶¹

Inadequate Wages Make It Difficult to Attract and Retain Qualified, Effective Teachers

- ◆ Research shows that adequate compensation for early childhood teachers improves staff retention, attracts teachers with better qualifications, and results in higher-quality educational experiences for children. However, annual wages for child care and preschool teachers are among the lowest in the U.S., with child care workers paid wages at the third percentile and preschool teachers paid at the 19th percentile of the average wage range.⁶²
- ◆ Many early childhood educators, especially those who work with infants and toddlers, experience significant economic hardship, low social status, unsupportive and demanding work environments, clinical depression, and other chronic stressors.⁶³
- ◆ As of the 2014-2015 school year, teachers in Rhode Island's State Pre-K program, all of whom have PK-Grade 2 state certification, earned substantially less than elementary school teachers. Those who worked in public school settings earned 79% (\$52,000) and those who worked in community-based settings earned 66% (\$43,458) of average elementary school teacher's wages (\$65,918).⁶⁴
- ◆ In 2007, new federal legislation required Head Start programs across the country to work to make sure at least half of Head Start teachers obtained a four-year degree by 2013.⁶⁵ As of 2014 in Rhode Island, 70% of Head Start preschool teachers had a bachelor's degree or better. Almost all of the remaining teachers had associate's degrees or a CDA credential. The average wage for Head Start teachers in Rhode Island was \$31,384.⁶⁶
- ◆ Sixty percent of family child care providers in Rhode Island report making \$30,000 or less per year.⁶⁷

Education and Average Hourly Wages for Early Learning Teaching Staff Working in Licensed Centers and Preschools, Rhode Island, 2013

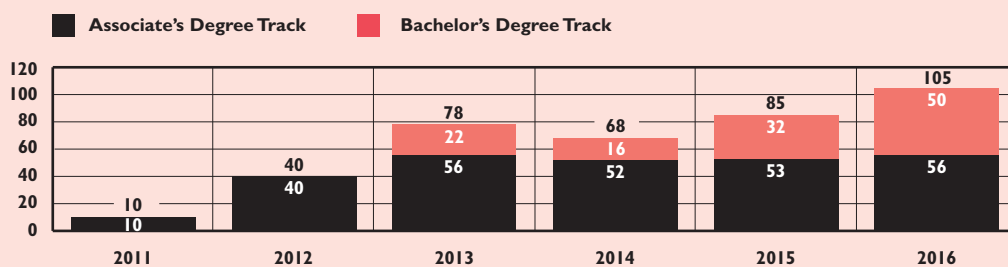
| | HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS | SOME COLLEGE | ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE | BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Infant/Toddler Classroom | \$9.70 | \$10.25 | \$10.52 | \$13.00 |
| Preschool Classroom | \$9.00 | \$10.25 | \$12.99 | \$15.25 |

Source: Oldham, E. & Hawes, S. (2014). *Rhode Island early learning workforce study: Licensed centers and family child care homes*. Retrieved June 7, 2016, from www.earlylearningri.org

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Workforce Development Model

- ◆ T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood, a model implemented by 24 states, provides scholarships and support to adults currently working in the early care and education field to advance their formal education. T.E.A.C.H. works with colleges to ensure students' needs are met and partners with employers to provide modest wage increases as coursework is completed.
- ◆ In Rhode Island, 33% of centers have sponsored a T.E.A.C.H. scholar and 168 early childhood educators have completed 1,248 college courses, with 31 educators attaining associate's degrees, two attaining bachelor's degrees, and three receiving PK-Grade 2 teacher certification.⁶⁸

Active T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholars, Rhode Island, 2011-2016



Source: Ready to Learn Providence, 2011-2016. Note: 2016 total scholars does not match sum of associate's degree and bachelor's degree scholars because one person completed her associate's degree and enrolled in a bachelor's program during the same calendar year.

Financing for High-Quality Early Care & Education Facilities

An adequate supply of early care and education facilities is needed to support the growing need for preschool and child care. Well-designed early care and education facilities support children's health, safety, development, and learning. Designing early learning facilities requires technical expertise to meet the needs of young children. Specific design considerations include:

- ◆ Secure entrance to ground floor space with adequate fire evacuation routes from each classroom.
- ◆ Separate spaces for each group of children (no more than 8 infants, 12 toddlers, and 18 to 20 preschoolers in a classroom and 6 to 12 children in a family child care home).
- ◆ Adequate space for each group of children to have a variety of learning centers, child-sized tables and chairs for family-style meals and snacks, and space for cribs and cots. Dedicated storage space is needed for children's belongings (including space for storing car seats and strollers), learning materials, and cleaning supplies.
- ◆ Accessible and easily supervised children's bathrooms with child-height toilets and sinks and changing areas for infants and toddlers.
- ◆ Adequate space for staff meetings, family events, and parent-teacher conferences.
- ◆ Safe and adequate indoor and outdoor space for running, climbing, and jumping.

States can support the development of high-quality early learning facilities and family child care homes by providing expert design assistance, planning grants, and financial support for building renovations, expansions, and new construction, including grants, subsidized loans, and performance-based loan forgiveness programs. In Rhode Island, the state has established a Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund managed by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation.^{69,70}

Recommendations

Invest in the Early Years

- ◆ Expand investments to improve access to high-quality early learning programs so that children enter kindergarten on a more level playing field with comparable skills and knowledge across all domains of learning (social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy, physical, and approaches to learning).
- ◆ Increase the annual per child funding amount for early learning programs to narrow the gap in resources available to educate young children compared with resources available for the K-12 population; recognize that young children need low child-to-teacher ratios for health, safety, and educational reasons.
- ◆ Ensure young children in the child welfare system have access to high-quality early learning programs.

Strengthen Financing for the Child Care Assistance Program to Support High-Quality Programs

- ◆ Implement a tiered reimbursement system with enhanced rates for child care programs that meet research-based quality standards in BrightStars, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System. High-quality programs should be paid rates at or above the 75th percentile of the 2015 market rate survey. Enhanced CCAP rates for high-quality programs will help ensure that high-quality child care is accessible for low-income, working families. Consider waiving or reducing family co-payments for families that select high-quality child care.
- ◆ Provide adequate support, resources, and incentives to help child care programs reach high-quality standards.
- ◆ Implement a permanent “cliff effect” policy for CCAP so families do not lose access to a child care subsidy before they are able to assume the full cost of care.
- ◆ Restore income eligibility for CCAP to 225% FPL. Begin by securing access for all families with incomes below 200% FPL.

Expand Public Preschool Options for 3- and 4-Year Olds – Especially Low-Income Children

- ◆ Expand access to Head Start to serve more eligible children living in poverty by taking advantage of opportunities for additional federal funding and increasing state funding for Head Start.
- ◆ Continue to grow the State Pre-K program, focusing on communities with the highest needs first, with a long-term goal of providing all children in Rhode Island with access to high-quality, publicly-funded preschool.

Ensure All Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities Get the Help They Need

- ◆ Expand screening for developmental delays and disabilities so that every child who needs Early Intervention or Preschool Special Education is identified and receives special education services. Ensure preschool special education services are delivered within a high-quality early learning program.

Invest in Early Childhood Educators and Facilities

- ◆ Sustain the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood model in Rhode Island as an employer-sponsored workforce development program that provides financial support and incentives to early childhood educators so they can make progress along career pathways to attain college credits and degrees in early childhood education (associate's and bachelor's).
- ◆ Implement targeted wage enhancement strategies to ensure that similarly qualified early childhood educators earn pay and benefits comparable to those of K-3 teachers and that the field is able to attract and retain more qualified and effective educators and caregivers.
- ◆ Provide expertise and financial support through the Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund to construct, renovate, and expand spaces to meet the needs of young children.

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