

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION IN WASHINGTON STATE

Where We've Been

- Since 2015 Washington has invested in building a strong foundation of quality and diversity in its child care and early learning system, focusing on supporting providers, creating quality improvement systems and expanding access to care for low income families.
- Child care providers have overwhelmingly stepped up to the plate and met or exceeded quality standards required when serving children receiving a state subsidy.
- Currently about 3,000 child care providers accept state subsidies out of more than 5,600 total licensed providers.
- In 2021 the legislature passed the Fair Start for Kids Act, making child care and early learning more affordable for low-income Washington families by expanding access, capping copays, and expanding resources to support child care and early learning providers.
- Child care remains unaffordable for many families in lower middle, middle income families and above. The cost of child care often exceeds the cost of a family's mortgage or college tuition.
- Currently about 3,000 child care providers accept state subsidies out of more than 5,600 total licensed providers.
- The child care market was fragile before the COVID-19 pandemic, and while other industries have rebounded child care continues to struggle. Child care providers are unable to hire employees due to low wage levels; parents can't afford to pay for care if employee wages are increased. Child care is often described as a "broken market" which impacts families, providers and business.
- The Child Care Collaboration Task Force issued a report on the Mounting Cost of Care that estimates Washington employers are losing over \$2 billion a year in direct costs, and Washington's GDP is losing over \$6.5 billion a year in direct and opportunity costs due to employees inability to find affordable accessible child care (pre-pandemic).

Where We Are Going

- The Child Care Collaborative Task Force, created by the legislature in 2018, has issued multiple reports outlining the child care crisis created by a lack of funding for quality care, including the funding for livable wages for child care employees. The Task Force produced a Cost of Quality Child Care model which calculates the true cost of providing high-quality care, including compensation for workers and regional rates. DCYF will submit this new rate model to the federal government for approval in 2024, and to the legislature for approval and funding in 2025.
- In 2023 the Legislature tasked DCYF, in partnership with Child Care Aware of Washington and SEIU 925, to submit an implementation plan to expand access to Washington's mixed delivery child care and early learning system, capping family contribution at no more than 7% of household income and ensuring the child care workforce are provided living wages and benefits.
- The plan will build on FSKA, the Cost of Quality Care Rate Model, and a Labor Market Analysis. This plan will provide a blueprint for finally solving the child care crisis by outlining how to ensure all families can afford the high-quality care of their choice and the provider workforce receives compensation commensurate with the critical and skilled work they do.
- **Should child care be a public good that requires public investment?**

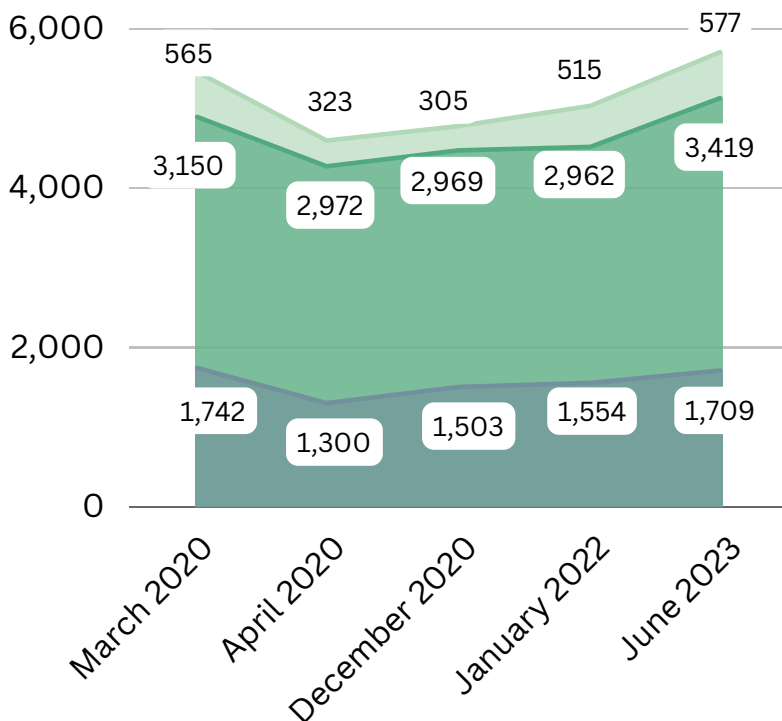
Current Licensed Providers and Capacity:

Open Licenses Only, Not Including Pending Applications

Program Type	Number of Providers	Licensed Capacity
Family Child Care Home	3,417	33,358
Child Care Center	1,710	126,512
School-Age Program	577	33,862
Outdoor Nature Based Program	19	358
Total	5,723	194,090

Open Child Care Providers, By Type:

- Child Care Center - Open
- Family Child Care Home - Open
- School-Age Program - Open



Licensed Capacity of Open Child Care Providers, By Type: (Slots Remaining)

- Child Care Center
- Family Child Care Home
- School-age Program

