

Child Care in Washington State



March 2024

Statewide during the past 12 years, capacity has continued to rise while the total number of child care providers has decreased. The increases in capacity are a result of more family child care closures and larger centers opening. From 2010 to 2023 we have gained over 20,000 slots and decreased by 1,700 family child care providers and 300 centers.

The trend of less providers and more capacity being available at large centers has contributed to child care deserts, as the number of child care locations has decreased. Moreover, communities across the state have experienced differential outcomes in child care availability as some areas experienced greater child care decreases and in some cases lowered capacity. Center-based slots now make up almost 80% of the total child care capacity (not including school-age only programs). The cost of care at center-based programs is significantly higher than family child care homes, resulting in a smaller percentage of the overall capacity being more affordable for families.

The sharpest decrease in provider counts and capacity was from 2010 to 2014. Capacity hit its lowest point in 2014. Since 2014, provider counts have continued to decline at a lesser rate and capacity has generally been increasing. Most recently, capacity declined slightly in 2020, stabilized in 2021, and has increased by 10,000 slots since 2022. Washington has seen an increase of over 500 family child care programs and 70 centers since 2022. Current gains in providers are encouraging, however we continue to have significantly less providers than 12 years ago and the proportion of family child care slots to center-based slots continues to be much lower than in 2010.

Child Care Aware of Washington

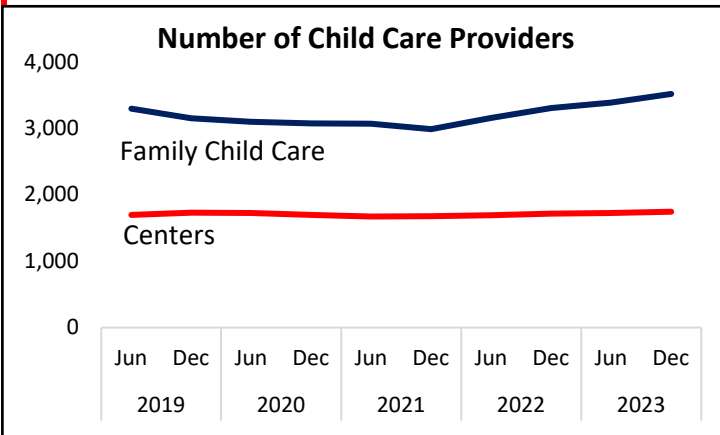
Child Care Aware of Washington provides thorough and independent information and support:

- For families seeking quality child care
- For child care programs seeking to improve quality
- For effective policymaking

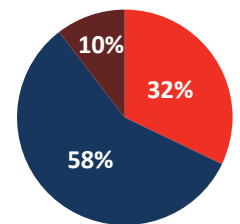
Since 1989, our regional member programs and statewide Family Center have enhanced the quality of child care and helped families by:

- Delivering training, technical assistance, & consultation to child care providers
- Supplying families with consumer education & referrals for child care

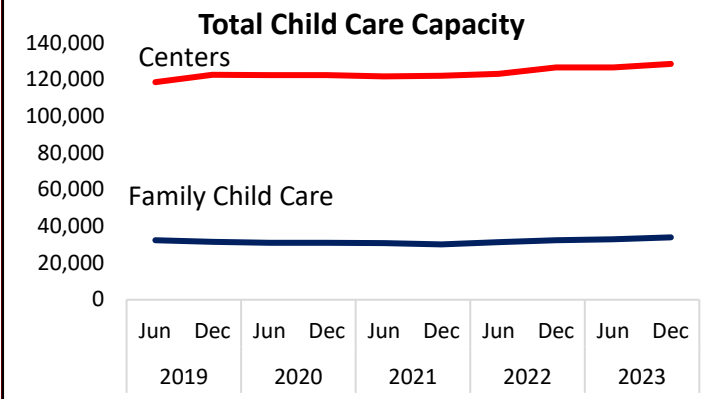
In Washington State, the number of child care providers has increased from 5,535 with capacity for 180,267 children in 2019, to 5,862 providers with capacity for 197,425 children in December of 2023.*



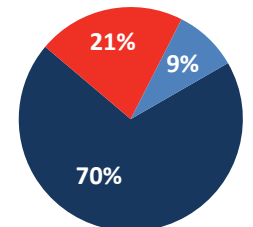
Child Care Provider Type



- Centers
- Family Child Care
- School Age Only



State Subsidy



- Accept all ages
- Do not accept
- Accept school age only

Early Achievers

Washington State

is served locally by six regions

- Child Care Aware of:
 - Central WA
 - Eastern WA
 - King & Pierce Counties
 - Northwest WA
 - Olympic Peninsula
 - Southwest WA

Early Achievers is Washington's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS), which gives training, technical assistance, coaching, awards, scholarships, and other benefits to child care providers to improve the quality of their care.

Statewide, 4,628 child care providers participate in Early Achievers.

Approximately 75% of licensed child care providers in WA are enrolled in Early Achievers, serving over 68,000 children*. Early Achievers provides families with valuable child care program quality recognition information so they can make informed child care choices.

Early Achievers (QRIS) Participation

Total	4,628
Child Care Centers	1,299
Family Child Care	2,842
Head Start & State Preschool Sites	487
Enrollment as of	3/24/2024

Demographics

Population¹

Total Population in 2020	7,656,200
Change since 2015	594,790
Children under 5 yrs	449,128
Children under 15 yrs	1,422,217
K-12 Enrollment ²	1,076,472
Pre-K-5th Enrollment ²	501,585

Economics

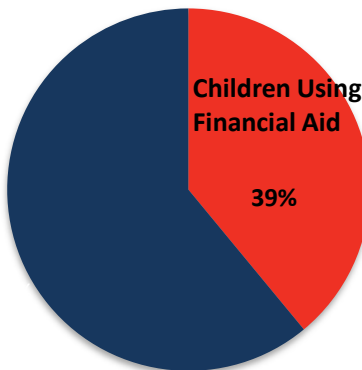
% of children under 18 living in poverty ³	11.5%
% of children under 6 w/ all parents working ⁴	68.9 to 76%
Median Household Income ¹	\$84,155
Unemployment Rate ⁵	4.6%

Helping Families Find Child Care in 2023

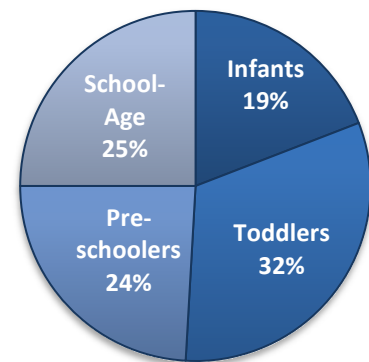
In 2023, Child Care Aware of Washington programs have helped 12,199 families find child care providers matching their unique needs.

In Washington State, we helped 12,199 families with 15,979 children in need of child care to search for matching providers 16,835 times.

Children Using Subsidies



Referral Demand by Child Age



Compensation in 2022

Comparison of Average Annual Salary/Income ⁶	
Child Care Center Teacher	\$33,855
Child Care Center Director	\$37,324
Family Child Care Provider	\$40,716
K-12 Teacher ⁷	\$91,982

Contact Child Care Aware of Washington

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253.383.1735

Monthly Cost of Child Care in 2023

Centers	Median Cost	75th Percentile Cost	State Subsidy	Median Cost as a % of Median Income
Infant	\$1,750	\$2,158	Varies by Region	25%
Toddler	\$1,533	\$1,914		22%
Preschool	\$1,365	\$1,689		19%
School Age	\$433	\$607		6%

Family Child Care	Median Cost	75th Percentile Cost	State Subsidy Rate	Median Cost as a % of Median Income
Infant	\$1,360	\$1,773	Varies by Region	19%
Toddler	\$1,250	\$1,625		18%
Preschool	\$1,100	\$1,500		16%
School Age	\$451	\$635		6%

Data Sources:

Most data is from Child Care Aware of Washington. More data and full citations are available at <https://www.childcareawarewa.org>.

*Includes licensed child care (centers and family child care) and exempt school-age programs only

¹ Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2022

² Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card Enrollment, 2023-2024

³ U.S. Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2022

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022

⁵ Washington State Employment Security Department; U.S. BLS, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2023 (not seasonally-adjusted)

⁶ Prenatal to Five Fiscal Strategies, Cost of Quality Survey, 2022

⁷ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Historical Comparison of Statewide School District Personnel, 2022-23

For more information, go to <https://www.childcareawarewa.org>