

Child Care in Washington State



September 2024

Since 2012, capacity in Washington 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 2024, Washington has gained over 24,000 child care 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 79% 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 10,500 slots since the beginning of 2022. Washington has seen an increase of over 500 family child care programs and 80 centers since 2022. Current gains in providers are encouraging, however there are still 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

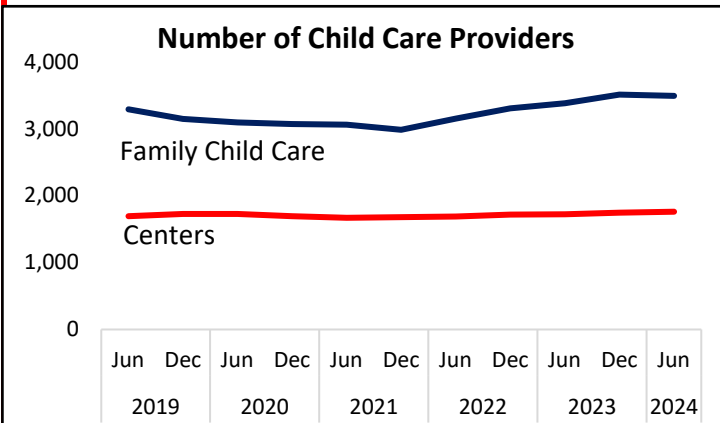
Child Care Aware of Washington provides thorough and independent information and support:

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

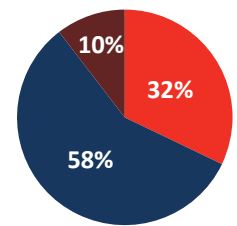
Since 1989, our regional member programs and statewide Family Center have enhanced the quality of child care and helped families by:

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

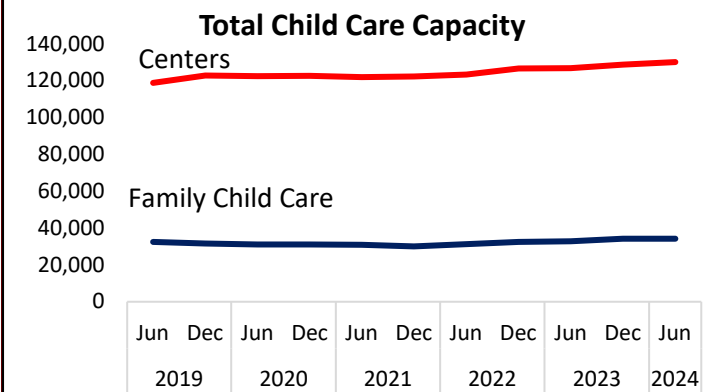
In Washington State, the number of child care providers has increased from 5,535 with capacity for 180,267 children in 2019, to 5,895 providers with capacity for 197,947 children in June of 2024.*



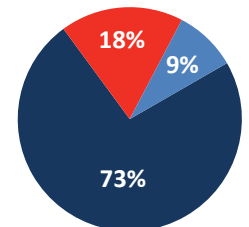
Child Care Provider Type



- 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 offers training, technical assistance, coaching, mental health consultation, awards, scholarships, and other benefits to child care providers **to improve the quality of care.**

Statewide, 4,811 child care providers participate in Early Achievers.

Approximately 80% 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	4,811
Child Care Centers	1,319
Family Child Care	3,006
Head Start & State Preschool Sites	486
Enrollment as of	8/6/2024

Demographics

Population¹

Total Population in 2023	7,951,150
Change since 2015	889,740

Children under 5 yrs	431,134
Children under 15 yrs	1,358,950
K-12 Enrollment ²	1,076,936
Pre-K-5th Enrollment ²	502,340

Economics

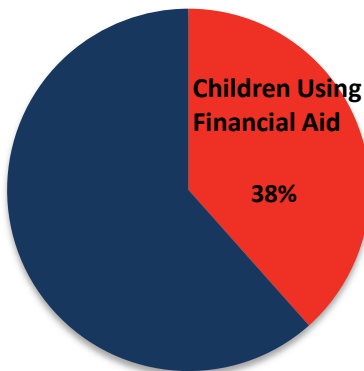
% of children under 18 living in poverty ³	11.5%
% of children under 6 w/ all parents working ⁴	68.9 to 76%
Median Household Income ¹	\$91,255
Unemployment Rate ⁵	4.6%

Helping Families Find Child Care in 2024

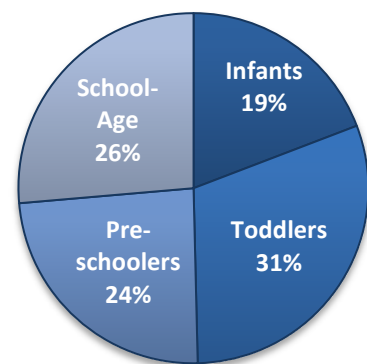
In 2024 so far, Child Care Aware of Washington programs have helped 7,065 families find child care providers matching their unique needs.

In Washington State, we helped 7,065 families with 9,225 children in need of child care to search for matching providers 9,629 times.

Children Using Subsidies



Referral Demand by Child Age



Compensation in 2022

Comparison of Average Annual Salary/Income ⁶	
Child Care Center Teacher	\$33,193
Child Care Center Director	\$36,515
Family Child Care Provider	\$40,328
K-12 Teacher ⁷	\$91,982

Monthly Cost of Child Care in 2024

Centers	Median Cost	75th Percentile Cost	State Subsidy	Median Cost as a % of Median Income
Infant	\$1,750	\$2,158	Varies by Region	23%
Toddler	\$1,533	\$1,914		20%
Preschool	\$1,365	\$1,689		18%
School Age	\$433	\$625		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	18%
Toddler	\$1,250	\$1,625		16%
Preschool	\$1,100	\$1,500		14%
School Age	\$450	\$628		6%

Contact Child Care Aware of Washington

1001 Pacific Avenue Suite 400
Tacoma, WA 98402
253.383.1735

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. (2023). Small area demographic estimates.

² Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2023-2024). Report card enrollment 2023-2024 school year.

³ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). Small area income and poverty estimates.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). American community survey.

⁵ Washington State Employment Security Department, & U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024). Local area unemployment statistics (not seasonally adjusted).

⁶ Prenatal to Five Fiscal Strategies. (2022). Cost of Quality Survey.

⁷ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2023-2024). Historical comparison of statewide school district personnel.

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