

CHILD CARE BASICS

Children's Defense Fund Issue Basics: April 2005

High quality child care and early education are critical to the success of two national priorities: helping families work and ensuring that every child enters school ready to succeed.

The current funding level for child care assistance does not come close to meeting the needs of low-income working families.

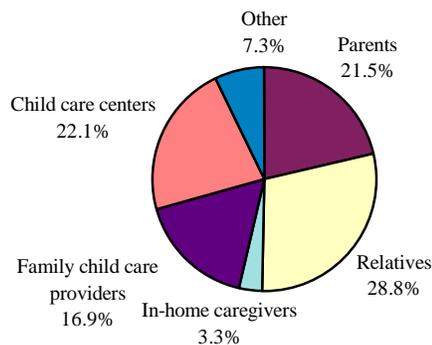
- Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) – This major federal child care program is the primary source of support for helping low-income families afford quality child care critical to finding and keeping a job and preparing their children to succeed in school.
- The federal government provided \$4.8 billion for CCDBG in 2004—the same level of funding since 2002. The Administration's proposed budget does not account for inflation and does not ask for one more dime for child care funding for 2005 or 2006.
- It is estimated that 2.5 million children received child care assistance from the various funding sources in 2003. These additional sources were states, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). The Administration projects that the number of children receiving help will decline by 200,000 million in 2004 and by 500,000 in 2010.
- Only one in seven children eligible for child care assistance actually receives it.
- In almost two-fifths of the states, a family earning just \$25,000 a year would not qualify for assistance.¹
- At least one-third of states place eligible families who apply for help on waiting lists or turn them away without even taking their names because there are not enough funds to provide services.²

The need for child care has become a daily fact of life for many parents.

- Sixty-five percent of mothers with children under age six and 79 percent of mothers with children ages six to 13 are in the labor force.³
- In 2001, only one-quarter of all families with children younger than six—and only one-third of married-couple families with young children—had one parent working and one parent who stayed at home.⁴ Working women earn about half or more of their families' earnings in the majority of U.S. households.⁵
- The proportion of single mothers with jobs, after remaining steady at around 58 percent from 1986 to 1993, increased sharply to 71.5 percent in 1999.⁶

Every day, 12 million preschoolers—including 6 million infants and toddlers—are in child care.

- *This is only about half of all eligible preschool children.*⁷ Millions more school-age children and youth are in after-school activities while their parents work. Yet more than six million children are left home alone on a regular basis.⁸
- Children enter care as early as six weeks of age and can be in care for as many as 40 hours a week until they reach school-age.
- Child care arrangements of children younger than five with working mothers in 1999:⁹



Definitions of Child Care Settings:

Child Care Centers: care provided in nonresidential facilities, usually for 13 or more children.

Family Child Care Providers: care provided in a private residence other than the child's home.

In-Home Caregivers: care provided in the child's home, by a person other than a parent or relative.

Relative Care: care provided by an individual related to the child.

Child care helps shape children's futures and is key to school readiness.

- The research is clear that the quality of child care has a lasting impact on children's well-being and ability to learn.¹⁰ Children in poor quality child care have been found to be delayed in language and reading skills, and display more aggression toward other children and adults.¹¹
- A study released in 1999 found that children in high quality child care demonstrated greater mathematical ability, greater thinking and attention skills, and fewer behavioral problems than children in lower quality care. These differences held true for children from a range of family backgrounds, with particularly significant effects for children at risk.¹²
- School-age children's academic performance is enhanced by attending formal child care programs of at least adequate quality, according to several studies. Children attending such programs have been found to have better work habits and relationships with peers, and to be better adjusted and less anti-social than children who spend their out-of-school hours alone, in front of the television or informally supervised by other adults.¹³

Yet families struggle to find and afford quality child care environments.

- Full-day child care can easily cost between \$4,000 and \$10,000 per year—at least as much as college tuition at a public university.¹⁴ Yet one quarter of America's families with young children earn less than \$25,000 a year,¹⁵ and a family with both parents working full-time at the minimum wage earns only \$21,400 a year.

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- Most low-income families cannot get help paying for child care. Nationally, only one out of seven children eligible under federal law receives child care assistance.¹⁶ In over one-third of the states, a family earning just \$25,000 a year would not qualify for assistance.¹⁷
- Despite 40 years of investment in Head Start, the program still serves only about half of all eligible preschool-age children and serves less than three percent of eligible infants and toddlers in Early Head Start.¹⁸
- Currently, 38 states and the District of Columbia have pre-kindergarten initiatives. Yet most serve only a small percentage of children at risk, and a number of them lack adequate quality standards. Many initiatives support only part-day programs that fail to meet the needs of parents working full-time.¹⁹
- Good care is hard to find. Studies have found that much of the child care in the United States is poor to mediocre. A Philadelphia study found that only two out of ten centers were rated as good, with the rest minimally adequate or inadequate. Only four percent of family child care programs were rated as good. Low-income children are often less likely to receive good care.²⁰
- Another national study found equally alarming patterns in family child care programs. This study discovered that over one-third of the programs were rated as inadequate, which means that quality was poor enough to harm children's development.²¹
- Cosmetologists must attend as much as 2,000 hours of training before they can get a license,²² yet, 37 states allow teachers in child care centers to begin working with children without receiving any training in early childhood development.²³
- Professional, quality child care is hard to find in a marketplace where child care workers earn an average of only \$17,610 per year.²⁴ In addition, child care workers tend to receive no benefits or paid leave.²⁵

Scarcity of after-school programs leaves school-age children home alone.

- More than six million children are left home alone on a regular basis,²⁶ often during the afternoon hours when juvenile crime peaks and children are vulnerable to risky behavior like smoking, drug and alcohol use, and sexual activity.²⁷
- Good after-school activities can be particularly difficult to find for children in low-income families. Children living in families with a monthly income of under \$1,500 are less than half as likely to participate in enrichment activities such as sports, lessons, or clubs as children living in families with a monthly income of \$4,500 or more.²⁸

Endnotes:

¹ Karen Schulman and Helen Blank. (September 2004). *Child Care Assistance Policies 2001-2004: Families Struggling to Move Forward, States Going Backward*. (Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center).

² *Ibid.*

³ *In the labor force* includes mothers who are employed as well as mothers who are looking for work. Unpublished data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics on marital and family characteristics from the March 2001 Current Population Survey.

⁴ Children's Defense Fund calculations based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Annual Demographic Supplement, Detailed Income Tables, "Table FINC-03. Presence of Related Children Under 18 Years Old—All Families, by Total Money Income in 2001, Type of Family Work Experience in 2001, Race and Hispanic Origin of Reference Person" and "Table FINC-04. Presence of Related Children Under 18 Years Old—Married Couple Families, by Total Money Income in 2001, Work Experience in 2001, Race and Hispanic Origin of Reference Person." Retrieved from the Internet at <http://ferret.bls.census.gov/macro/032002/faminc/toc.htm> on April 19, 2005.

⁵ AFL-CIO, *Ask a Working Woman* Survey Report (2004) (Washington, DC: AFL-CIO).

⁶ Robert Pear. (November 5, 2000). "Far More Single Mothers Are Taking Jobs," *The New York Times*.

⁷ Data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, as cited in "Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2004" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet at <http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/> on April 19, 2005.

⁸ K. Smith. (2003). *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 1999*, Current Population Reports, Detailed Tables PPL Table 4. (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Retrieved from the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/child/ppl-168.html> on April 2, 2005.

⁹ *Ibid* (Historical Table).

¹⁰ Carnegie Corporation of New York. (August 1994). *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children* (New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation).

¹¹ Testimony by Deborah Phillips before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, March 1, 1995.

¹² E. S. Peisner-Feinberg, et al. (1999). *The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go To School: Executive Summary*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina.

¹³ B. M. Miller, S. O'Connor, S. W. Sirignano, and P. Joshi. (1996). "I Wish the Kids Didn't Watch So Much TV": *Out-of-School Time in Three Low Income Communities* (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College, Center for Research on Women, School-Age Child Care Project).

¹⁴ Karen Schulman. Issue Brief: The High Cost of Child Care Puts Quality Care Out of Reach for Many Families (Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund, 2000).

¹⁵ Children's Defense Fund calculations based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Annual Demographic Supplement, Detailed Income Tables, *Table FINC-03. Presence of Related Children Under 18 Years Old—All Families, by Total Money Income in 2001, Type of Family Work Experience in 2001, Race and Hispanic Origin of Reference Person*. Retrieved from the Internet at <http://ferret.bls.census.gov/macro/032002/faminc/toc.htm> on April 19, 2005.

¹⁶ Children's Defense Fund calculations using data on the number of children served from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, FY 2005 Budget in Brief, February 2002, and data on the number of children eligible from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, as presented by Julie B. Isaacs at the State Administrators Meeting in Washington, DC, August 13, 2001.

¹⁷ Karen Schulman and Helen Blank. (September 2004). *Child Care Assistance Policies 2001-2004: Families Struggling to Move Forward, States Going Backward*. (Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center).

¹⁸ Children's Defense Fund calculations based on data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Bureau, *Head Start Program Fact Sheet*. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004). Retrieved from the Internet at <http://www2.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/2004.htm> on March 2, 2005; and data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2004 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, *POV34: Single Year of Age -- Poverty Status: 2003*. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet at http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032004/pov/new34_100_01.htm on April, 19 2005.

¹⁹ National Institute for Early Education Research. (2004). *The State of Preschool: 2004 State Preschool Yearbook*. (Washington, DC: National Institute for Early Education Research).

²⁰ Improving School Readiness Project, "Early to Rise: Improving the School Readiness of Philadelphia's Young Children" (Philadelphia, PA: United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania and School District of Philadelphia, November 2001).

²¹ E. Galinsky et al. (1994). *The Study of Children in Family Care and Relative Care: Highlights of Findings* (New York, NY: Families & Work Institute).

²² Conversation with Norma Lee, Executive Director, Cosmetology Advancement Foundation, December 18, 2001.

²³ Children's Defense Fund analysis of data compiled by Sarah LeMoine of the National Child Care Information Center, Center Child Care Licensing Requirements: Minimum Early Childhood Education (ECE), Preservice Qualifications and Annual Ongoing Training Hours for Teachers and Master Teachers (August 2004). Retrieved from the Internet at <http://nccic.org/pubs/cclicensingreq/cclr-teachers.html> on April 2, 2005.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2003). November 2003 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor). Retrieved from the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.t01.htm> on March 28, 2005.

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²⁵ Marcy Whitebook, Carolee Howes, and Deborah Phillips. "Worthy Work, Unlivable Wages: The National Child Care Staffing Study," 1988-1997 (Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce, 1998); and Suzanne Helburn, et al., "Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study" (Denver, CO: University of Colorado, 1995).

²⁶ K. Smith. *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 1999*. Current Population Reports, Detailed Tables PPL Table 4. (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Retrieved from the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/child/ppl-168.html> on April 2, 2005.

²⁷ Howard Snyder and Melissa Sickmund, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs, 1999); and Kathleen M. Dwyer, et al., *Characteristics of Eighth-Grade Students Who Initiate Self-Care in Elementary and Junior High School*, Pediatrics, Vol. 86, No. 3, 2000.

²⁸ K. Smith. (2000). *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Fall 1995*. Current Population Reports P70-70 (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau).