

Issue Brief

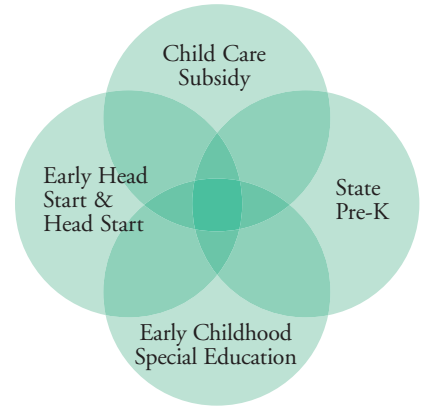
IMPROVING ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN RHODE ISLAND

Consistent participation in high-quality early learning programs builds a strong foundation that helps children succeed in school and become productive adults. Expanding access to high-quality early learning programs, particularly for children from poor and low-income families, will help to level the playing field at school entry and produce long-term positive outcomes for children and society.^{1,2}

Experiences during the first five years of life establish the foundation for future development and learning. Science shows that children’s brains are constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood. Early experiences actually shape the basic architecture of the brain – creating the foundation for the development of language, cognition, behavior and social-emotional skills that are essential to success in school and life. A strong foundation established during the early childhood years leads children to thrive, while a weak foundation increases the odds of future difficulties.³

Because early learning programs are not universally available, children’s access varies with family income, maternal education and maternal employment. Children in families with higher incomes and with educated and employed mothers are more likely to be enrolled in an early learning program.^{4,5} There are four major public funding streams that enable a variety of families to enroll their children in an early learning program:

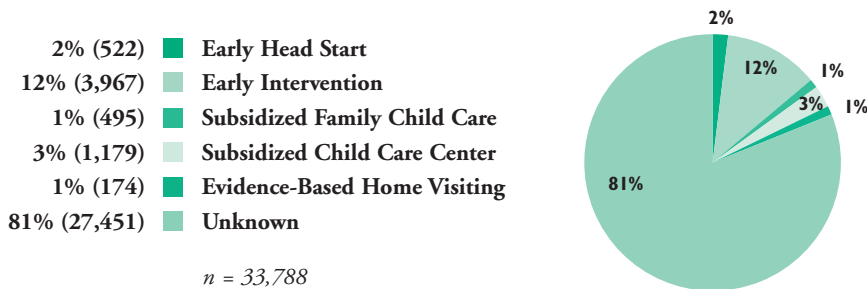
- ◆ **Child care subsidies** serve low-income, working families with children from infancy through age 12.
- ◆ **Early Head Start and Head Start** programs serve children from very low-income families from infancy through preschool.
- ◆ **State Pre-K** programs serve preschool-age children in a wide variety of settings in the one or two years before they enter kindergarten.
- ◆ **Early childhood special education** programs under the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, include Early Intervention for children from birth to age three and preschool special education for children ages three to kindergarten entry.



EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS FOR INFANTS & TODDLERS

◆ The basic architecture of the human brain develops during the infant and toddler years. By age three, a child's brain has grown to 90% of its adult size and the foundation of many cognitive structures and systems are in place. Strong, positive relationships with parents and caregivers are the building blocks for healthy development in the infant and toddler years.^{6,7} Foundational language and literacy skills are established during the first three years of life.⁸

CHILDREN UNDER AGE 3 BY ENROLLMENT IN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS, RHODE ISLAND, 2012



Note: Children may be enrolled in more than one program. Data is not currently available on the number of children enrolled in early learning programs when tuition is paid directly by families.

Sources: Population data is from Census 2010, Summary File 1. Early Head Start data is from Rhode Island Early Head Start Programs, children enrolled as of October 2012. Early Intervention data is from the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Center for Child and Family Health, Early Intervention enrollment, calendar year 2012. Child care subsidy data is from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes database, December 2012. Evidence-based home visiting data is from the Rhode Island Department of Health, calendar year 2012. Note: there were an additional 19 children under age three receiving a child care subsidy in license-exempt child care; these children are not included in this pie chart.

EARLY HEAD START

◆ Early Head Start is a comprehensive early childhood program serving very low-income children birth to age three, pregnant women and their families. The program is designed to address the comprehensive needs of low-income infants, toddlers and pregnant women.⁹

◆ Children who participate in Early Head Start have better vocabulary and improved cognitive and social development than other low-income children who do not receive Early Head Start services. Early Head Start parents are more likely to have positive, supportive interactions with their child and to provide more opportunities for learning and language development.^{10,11}

◆ Early Head Start services are delivered through both center-based and home visiting program options. In 2012 in Rhode Island, 33% of Early Head Start slots were center-based and 67% were home-based.¹²

◆ In 2012 in Rhode Island, Early Head Start programs served 522 children, 6% of the estimated 8,650 income-eligible children ages birth to three and 2% of all children under age three in Rhode Island. In addition, 17 pregnant women received services designed to improve maternal health and birth outcomes and to support positive parenting.¹³

◆ Of the total population served by Early Head Start in Rhode Island in 2012, 3% were pregnant women, 19% were infants under age one, 34% were one-year-olds, 43% were two-year-olds, and 1% were three-year-olds.¹⁴

◆ Early Head Start programs prioritize enrollment for children with special needs and are required to screen all enrolled children to identify developmental delays and disabilities. In 2012 in Rhode Island, 25% of the children enrolled in Early Head Start programs also were receiving Early Intervention services because they had a developmental delay or disability.¹⁵



EARLY INTERVENTION

- ◆ The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* requires states to identify and provide appropriate Early Intervention services to children under age three who are developmentally delayed or have a diagnosed condition that is associated with a developmental delay. States also may choose to serve children who are at risk of experiencing a delay if early intervention services are not provided.¹⁶ In Rhode Island, children who are at significant risk for delayed development because of early life experiences are eligible for Early Intervention.¹⁷
- ◆ In Rhode Island, the Early Intervention programs serves more infants and toddlers than any other publicly-funded early learning program with 3,967 children receiving services in 2012 (12% of the total population of children under age three). Children in the four core cities, where the majority of children living in poverty reside, participate at a slightly higher rate (12%) than children in the remainder of the state (11%).¹⁸
- ◆ Federal legislation requires states to refer children who have been maltreated to Early Intervention for an eligibility assessment.¹⁹ Infants and toddlers who have experienced child abuse or neglect are six times more likely to have a developmental delay than the general population.²⁰
- ◆ In 2012, two-thirds (68%) of children in Early Intervention transitioned to preschool special education at age three, while 20% were determined not eligible for continued special education services, 9% had eligibility determination pending, and 3% did not participate in eligibility determination because they completed their service plan, moved out of state, were unreachable or were withdrawn by a parent or guardian.²¹



CHILD CARE FOR INFANTS & TODDLERS

- ◆ The Rhode Island Child Care Assistance Program helps low-income, working families enroll their children in child care programs. Currently, working families with incomes up to 180% of the federal poverty guidelines (\$35,154 for a family of 3 in 2013) are eligible for a child care subsidy. Child care enables families to work and provides early education experiences to prepare children for school.^{22,23}
- ◆ In 2011 in Rhode Island, the average annual cost for full-time, year-round child care for an infant in a licensed center was \$11,651.²⁴ Using the federal affordability guideline that families should spend no more than 10% of their gross income on child care, a Rhode Island family would need to earn at least \$110,000 per year for infant care in a center to be affordable.²⁵
- ◆ In December 2012, there were 1,693 infants and toddlers receiving a subsidy through the Child Care Assistance Program. Twenty-nine percent (495) were in a family child care home, 70% (1,179) were in a center, and 1% (19) were receiving care from a license-exempt family, friend or neighbor.²⁶



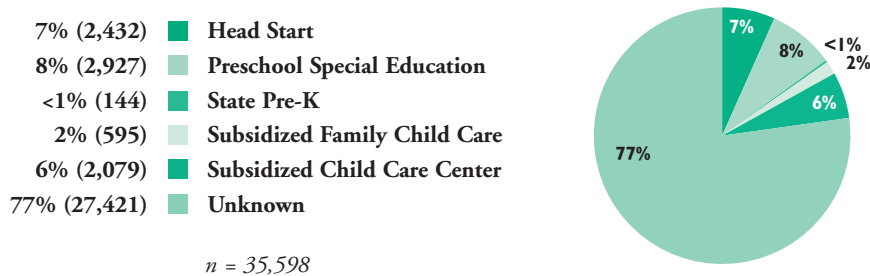
EVIDENCE-BASED HOME VISITING PROGRAMS

- ◆ Evidence-based home visiting programs for vulnerable families that begin during pregnancy (or as early as possible) and continue through infancy and toddlerhood improve outcomes for children with multiple risk factors.²⁷ Rhode Island offers three evidence-based home visiting programs – Nurse-Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, and Parents as Teachers.²⁸ In 2012 in Rhode Island, 174 families were enrolled in an evidence-based home visiting program.²⁹

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS FOR PRESCHOOLERS

- ◆ Preschool programs improve children's school readiness and narrow the gap in skills and knowledge that children from low-income families exhibit at kindergarten entry when compared to children from moderate- and high-income families.³⁰ Between 2009-2011 in Rhode Island, 47% of children ages three and four were enrolled in preschool, approximately the same rate as the U.S. (46%).³¹ Low-income children benefit the most from participation in preschool.³²
- ◆ Family income is strongly correlated with children's cognitive, language, and literacy skills at school entry. Children with incomes below the federal poverty threshold are typically 18 months behind their peers at age four.³³

CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 5 BY ENROLLMENT IN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS, RHODE ISLAND, 2012



Note: Children may be enrolled in more than one program. Children in kindergarten are not included in this chart. Children are eligible for public school kindergarten if they are age 5 by September 1. Data is not currently available on the number of children enrolled in early learning programs when tuition is paid directly by families.

Sources: Population data is from Census 2010, Summary File 1. Head Start data is from Rhode Island Head Start Programs, children enrolled as of October 2012. Preschool special education data is from the Rhode Island Department of Education, June 2012 Special Education Census. Child care subsidy data is from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes database, December 2012. Note: there were an additional 12 children ages 3 to 5 receiving a child care subsidy in license-exempt child care; these children are not included in this pie chart.

HEAD START

- ◆ Head Start is a comprehensive early childhood program designed to address a wide variety of needs during the two years before kindergarten so that children from low-income families can begin school on a more equal footing with children from higher income families.³⁴
- ◆ On average, Head Start centers are higher quality than most other early care and education programs available to low-income parents.³⁵ Head Start also has been found to be more effective than many other early learning programs.³⁶
- ◆ Children who participate in Head Start show improvements in language and literacy skills. Over the long-term, they are less likely to repeat a grade or be placed in special education and are more likely to graduate from high school than similar children who do not participate in Head Start.^{37,38}
- ◆ In 2012 in Rhode Island, Head Start programs served 2,432 children, 40% of the estimated 6,056 income-eligible children ages three to four in the state and 7% of all children ages three to five in the state. In October 2012, 31% of children enrolled in Head Start were age three, 62% were age four, and 6% were age five.³⁹
- ◆ Twelve percent of children enrolled in Head Start also received preschool special education services. Head Start programs are required to prioritize enrollment for children with developmental delays and disabilities.⁴⁰
- ◆ Rhode Island provides state funding to reduce waiting lists for Head Start, enabling 130 children to attend Head Start programs in 2012-2013.⁴¹



PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION

- ◆ Under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, children with developmental delays and disabilities are eligible for special education through their local school district at age three.⁴² As of June 2012, there were 2,927 children ages three to five receiving special education services in Rhode Island, 8% of preschool-age children in the state.⁴³
- ◆ Children in the four core cities, where the majority of children living in poverty reside, are less likely to be enrolled in preschool special education (8%) than children in the remainder of the state (9%).⁴⁴
- ◆ In the 2011-2012 school year, 52% of preschool-age children received special education services in an inclusive early childhood program along with their typically developing peers (in public schools, Head Start, child care, or preschool); 23% were enrolled in a separate special education class, school or residential facility; and 25% received services through walk-in visits to a service provider or at home. Children in the four core cities are less likely to receive special education services in an inclusive early childhood setting and more likely to receive services through walk-in visits than children in the remainder of the state.⁴⁵
- ◆ Inclusion in high-quality early learning programs can benefit children with and without disabilities. However, it is challenging to ensure that all young children with disabilities have access to high-quality, inclusive early childhood programs.⁴⁶



STATE PRE-K

- ◆ Rhode Island funds a State Pre-K program that served 144 children in eight classrooms in the 2012-2013 school year. Classrooms are operated by a diverse group of providers, including child care centers, Head Start programs, and public schools. Children are selected to participate through a state-supervised lottery.⁴⁷
- ◆ A two-year evaluation of Rhode Island's State Pre-K program found that it improves children's language and literacy skills and it closes the achievement gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers by three-quarters.⁴⁸
- ◆ A ten-year expansion of the State Pre-K program is included in the state's education funding formula. Rhode Island's Pre-K program is one of only four State Pre-K programs in the nation that meet all recommended quality benchmarks.⁴⁹



CHILD CARE FOR PRESCHOOLERS

- ◆ The Rhode Island Child Care Assistance Program helps low-income, working families enroll their children in child care programs. Currently, working families with incomes up to 180% of the federal poverty guidelines (\$35,154 for a family of three in 2013) are eligible for a child care subsidy. Child care enables families to work and provides early education experiences to prepare children for school.^{50,51}
- ◆ In 2011 in Rhode Island, the average annual cost for full-time, year-round child care for a preschooler in a licensed center was \$9,491.⁵² Using the federal affordability guideline that families should spend no more than 10% of their gross income on child care, a Rhode Island family would need to earn at least \$95,000 per year for care in a center to be affordable.⁵³
- ◆ In December 2012, there were 2,686 children ages three to five receiving a subsidy through the Child Care Assistance Program. Twenty-two percent (595) were in a family child care home, 77% (2,079) were in a center, and less than 1% (12) were receiving care from a license-exempt family, friend or neighbor.⁵⁴



CHILDREN ENROLLED IN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS, RHODE ISLAND, 2012

CHILDREN UNDER AGE 3

SCHOOL DISTRICT	CHILDREN UNDER AGE 3	EARLY INTERVENTION ENROLLMENT	EARLY HEAD START ENROLLMENT	SUBSIDIZED FAMILY CHILD CARE ENROLLMENT	SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE CENTER ENROLLMENT
Barrington	366	41	2	0	1
Bristol Warren	803	116	15	2	13
Burrillville	460	56	8	0	3
Central Falls	1,028	129	26	19	45
Chariho	679	60	0	0	9
Coventry	940	101	18	1	21
Cranston	2,318	250	21	40	82
Cumberland	970	123	0	4	19
East Greenwich	299	40	2	1	2
East Providence	1,560	157	17	8	52
Exeter-W. Greenwich	344	31	0	0	7
Foster	113	11	0	0	0
Glocester	247	24	2	0	3
Jamestown	85	7	0	0	0
Johnston	816	73	23	1	37
Lincoln	587	58	0	1	21
Little Compton	68	3	1	0	1
Middletown	502	69	8	2	21
Narragansett	271	23	0	1	7
New Shoreham	21	2	0	0	0
Newport	820	107	58	9	75
North Kingstown	728	103	0	0	21
North Providence	851	89	18	5	27
North Smithfield	290	28	0	0	7
Pawtucket	2,959	328	34	31	129
Portsmouth	429	41	3	0	8
Providence	7,609	895	163	352	345
Scituate	193	28	1	0	3
Smithfield	402	44	2	0	7
South Kingstown	640	75	0	0	8
Tiverton	398	53	4	1	11
Warwick	2,322	297	40	2	47
West Warwick	1,044	133	55	3	40
Westerly	726	75	0	1	14
Woonsocket	1,900	297	1	11	93
Four Core Cities	13,496	1,649	224	413	612
Remainder of State	20,292	2,318	298	82	567
Rhode Island	33,788	3,967	522	495	1,179

Sources: Population data is from Census 2010, Summary File 1. Early Intervention data is from the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Center for Child and Family Health, Early Intervention enrollment, calendar year 2012. Early Head Start data is from Rhode Island Early Head Start Programs, children enrolled as of October 2012. Child care subsidy data is from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes database, December 2012. Note: there were an additional 19 children under age three receiving a child care subsidy in license-exempt child care; these children are not included in this table. Children may be enrolled in more than one program.



CHILDREN ENROLLED IN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS, RHODE ISLAND, 2012

CHILDREN AGES 3-5

SCHOOL DISTRICT	CHILDREN AGES 3-5	PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT	HEAD START ENROLLMENT	STATE PRE-K ENROLLMENT	SUBSIDIZED FAMILY CHILD CARE ENROLLMENT	SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE CENTER ENROLLMENT
Barrington	595	58	6	0	0	4
Bristol Warren	919	65	57	0	4	27
Burrillville	527	55	18	0	0	14
Central Falls	1,034	44	107	18	29	78
Chariho	769	73	33	0	2	15
Coventry	1,139	86	33	0	2	49
Cranston	2,597	138	206	0	48	140
Cumberland	1,206	79	7	0	4	38
East Greenwich	452	37	3	0	1	13
East Providence	1,483	132	120	0	4	90
Exeter-W. Greenwich	346	28	14	0	0	9
Foster	147	14	1	0	0	5
Glocester	291	33	3	0	1	2
Jamestown	149	3	1	0	0	1
Johnston	831	85	51	0	6	54
Lincoln	657	86	2	0	1	33
Little Compton	91	3	2	0	0	2
Middletown	631	46	33	0	2	28
Narragansett	341	33	9	0	1	12
New Shoreham	22	3	0	0	0	0
Newport	769	87	123	0	4	87
North Kingstown	891	69	32	0	2	40
North Providence	886	96	52	0	8	45
North Smithfield	338	45	4	0	2	4
Pawtucket	2,998	203	196	0	44	269
Portsmouth	564	46	8	0	0	8
Providence	7,028	486	768	54	405	590
Scituate	300	23	1	0	0	12
Smithfield	512	46	6	0	0	12
South Kingstown	773	72	25	0	3	18
Tiverton	452	31	16	0	0	9
Warwick	2,348	197	140	36	6	89
West Warwick	1,008	111	117	18	4	76
Westerly	737	62	48	0	1	35
Woonsocket	1,767	238	190	18	11	171
Four Core Cities	12,827	971	1,261	90	489	1,108
Remainder of State	22,771	1,942	1,171	54	106	971
Rhode Island	35,598	2,913	2,432	144	595	2,079

Sources: Population data is from Census 2010, Summary File 1. Preschool special education data is from the Rhode Island Department of Education, June 2012 Special Education Census. Head Start data is from Rhode Island Head Start Programs, children enrolled as of October 2012. Child care subsidy data is from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes database, December 2012. Note: there were an additional 12 children ages three to five receiving a child care subsidy in license-exempt child care and an additional 14 children ages three to five receiving special education services in public charter schools or at the RI School for the Deaf; these children are not included in this table. Children may be enrolled in more than one program.

PROGRAM QUALITY

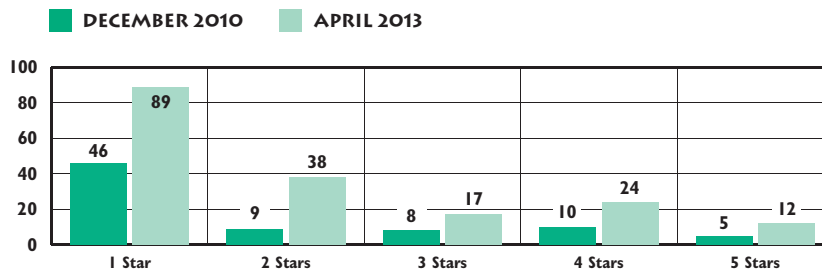
◆ The quality of early learning programs that children have access to is very important. There is a strong relationship between program quality and children’s developing skills and well-being. Children who attend high-quality programs score higher on tests of language and cognitive skills and demonstrate stronger social and emotional development than children who attend low-quality programs.^{55,56,57} Programs across the U.S. and in Rhode Island vary markedly in quality and can range from mediocre, custodial care to rich, learning experiences.^{58,59,60}

BRIGHTSTARS

◆ BrightStars, Rhode Island’s research-based Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning programs, was developed in consultation with national experts and launched in 2009.^{61,62}

◆ Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) are used by states to measure, improve, and incentivize the quality of early learning programs. QRIS incorporate five components: 1) quality standards with incremental steps for programs, 2) a process to assess program quality, 3) focused strategies to support quality improvement, 4) financial incentives for programs to improve quality, and 5) a system to share program quality information with parents and the public.⁶³

QUALITY RATINGS OF EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS PARTICIPATING IN BRIGHTSTARS, RHODE ISLAND, 2010 AND 2013



Source: Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children, 2010 and 2013.

◆ As of April 2013, there were 180 early learning programs actively participating in BrightStars, including 51 centers (16% of licensed centers) and 129 family child care homes (22% of licensed family child care homes). Fifty-nine percent of the centers in BrightStars had met the benchmarks for a high-quality rating of four or five stars, while 5% of family child care homes had received a high-quality rating of four or five stars.⁶⁴

◆ Centers with funding for State Pre-K or Head Start classrooms were more likely to achieve a high-quality rating. Fifty percent of centers at the four or five star level had State Pre-K and/or Head Start funding while only 18% of centers at the one or two star level received this funding.⁶⁵

◆ Centers serving infants under age 18 months were less likely to achieve a high-quality rating. Seventy-three percent of the centers at the one or two star level served infants while only 37% of centers at the four or five star level served infants.⁶⁶

◆ Programs participating in BrightStars have a track record of making measurable program quality improvements. Each year between 2010 and 2012, a significant portion of eligible programs achieved a star rating increase, 25% in 2010, 35% in 2011, and 19% in 2012.⁶⁷



LICENSING

- ◆ Licensing regulations for child care and early learning programs ensure programs meet a basic threshold of quality. Consistent enforcement of regulations is critical to ensure basic health and safety standards are in place as a foundation for quality. Programs that are inspected more frequently are more likely to meet regulations.⁶⁸ Rhode Island conducts two unannounced inspections per year for centers and one unannounced inspection per year for family child care homes.⁶⁹
- ◆ Posting licensing inspection reports online in a user-friendly format improves the quality of child care received by low-income children.⁷⁰ As of 2013, there are 31 states that post licensing inspection and 28 states that post complaint reports online.⁷¹ Currently, Rhode Island does not post licensing reports online, but the Department of Children, Youth and Families is working toward that goal through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant.⁷²



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PRESCHOOL APPROVAL

- ◆ The Rhode Island Department of Education awards approval to preschool classrooms run by licensed centers and public schools that meet state-defined quality benchmarks. As of April 2013, nine preschool classrooms operated by seven centers had been fully approved as a comprehensive early childhood education program. In addition, there were 18 classrooms operated by 16 centers that had been provisionally approved.⁷³

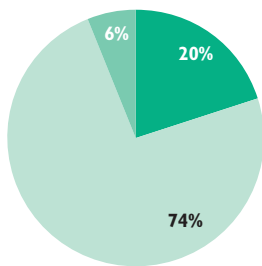
BASELINE STUDIES OF QUALITY IN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS

- ◆ In 2009 in Rhode Island, researchers conducted observations in a random sample of 50 preschool classrooms and 50 infant-toddler classrooms using valid and reliable tools designed to measure the quality of the learning environment.⁷⁴ In 2010, a similar study of 50 licensed family child care homes was conducted.⁷⁵

QUALITY OF LICENSED EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS, RHODE ISLAND, 2009 - 2010

Infant/Toddler Classrooms

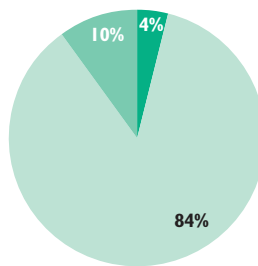
20% ■ Low-Quality
74% ■ Medium-Quality
6% ■ High-Quality



n = 50 classrooms

Preschool Classrooms

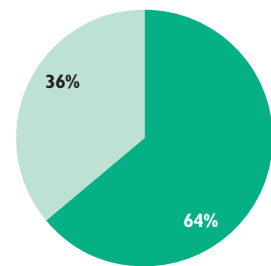
4% ■ Low-Quality
86% ■ Medium-Quality
10% ■ High-Quality



n = 50 classrooms

Family Child Care Homes

64% ■ Low-Quality
36% ■ Medium-Quality
0% ■ High-Quality



n = 50 homes

- ◆ The majority of classrooms in centers met medium-quality benchmarks. Classrooms serving infants and toddlers were more likely to be low-quality than classrooms serving preschoolers.⁷⁶
- ◆ The majority of family child care homes fell in the low-quality range. Although no family child care homes in the study were in the high-quality range, there are family child care providers in Rhode Island that have met the high-quality benchmarks on the same tool through the BrightStars rating process.⁷⁷

PROGRAM FINANCING & QUALITY

- ◆ Because standards for high-quality learning environments are often costly to implement, achieving higher quality standards is dependent on financial resources available to an early learning program.⁷⁸ Early learning programs have very different resources depending on the children and families they serve, their financing sources, and program structure.
- ◆ Programs relying primarily on revenue from the state's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and/or revenue from private pay tuition families who are paying average or below average child care tuition payments may struggle to achieve and maintain higher quality standards because of inadequate and unstable funding.

ESTIMATED FINANCIAL RESOURCES PER CHILD, EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN RHODE ISLAND, 2013

Funding Source	Per Child	Per Child/Per Day	Per Child/Per Hour
Rhode Island CCAP Payments for Centers - Infant	Up to \$188/week*	\$37.60*	\$3.76 (10 hour day)*
Rhode Island CCAP Payments for Centers - Preschool	Up to \$157/week*	\$31.40*	\$3.14 (10 hour day)*
Rhode Island CCAP Payments for Family Child Care - Infant	Up to \$155/week*	\$31.00*	\$3.10 (10 hour day)*
Average Private Pay for Infant in Center	\$224.06/week	\$44.81	\$4.48 (10 hour day)
Average Private Pay for Preschooler in Center	\$182.51/week	\$36.50	\$3.65 (10 hour day)
Average Private Pay for Infant in Family Child Care	\$171.37/week	\$34.27	\$3.43 (10 hour day)
Rhode Island State Pre-K	\$9,300/school year	\$51.67	\$8.61 (6 hour day)
Federal Head Start Funding for Rhode Island	\$8,188/school year**	\$45.49**	\$11.37 (4 hour day)**
K-12 Public School	\$17,432/school year	\$96.84	\$16.14 (6 hour day)

Sources: CCAP payment rates are from the RI Department of Human Services. Private pay child care average tuition rates are from Bodah, M. M. (2011). *Statewide survey of childcare rates in Rhode Island*. Kingston, RI: University of Rhode Island. State Pre-K funding per child is from the RI Department of Education. Head Start and K-12 public school funding is from Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Fitzgerald, J., & Squires, J. H. (2013). *The state of preschool 2012: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers Graduate School of Education.

* CCAP payments to early learning programs are reduced for children in families with incomes above 100% FPL as families are required to make co-payments directly to programs. CCAP payments cannot exceed the rate charged to private-pay families so some providers cannot collect the full CCAP rate if they charge private-pay families a rate lower than the CCAP reimbursement rate.

** The length of the Head Start program day varies from agency to agency, but a 4 hour classroom day is fairly typical (3.5 hour day is minimum required). Head Start programs also provide comprehensive services, requiring additional staffing, to children and families including health, parenting, family support, and nutrition services.

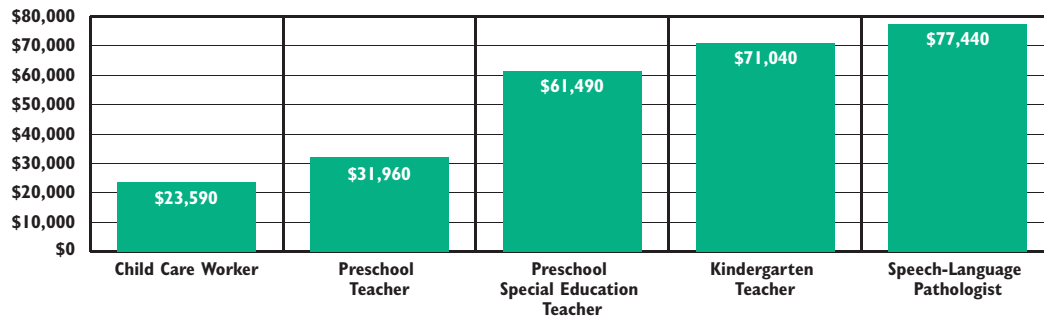
RHODE ISLAND'S CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CCAP)

- ◆ In 2007, funding for CCAP was cut, eliminating eligibility for thousands of families with incomes above 180% of the FPL and removing the legislative requirement to adjust rates regularly. In December 2012, there were 7,849 children receiving child care subsidies, down from 14,333 in December 2003.⁷⁹ Reimbursement rates for CCAP were last adjusted in 2008. Current rates paid to child care providers are below both the mean and the 50th percentile of the 2011 market rate survey.^{80,81}
- ◆ There are 32 states that provide higher reimbursement rates to child care programs meeting higher quality standards.⁸² Rhode Island does not connect rates to program quality.

EDUCATOR QUALIFICATIONS & COMPENSATION

◆ National data indicate that most individuals working in early learning programs have relatively low levels of education and income. Seventy-two percent of people working in early care and education programs have less than a two-year college degree. Very few educators who have a bachelor's degree have a degree specifically in early childhood education.⁸³

WAGE ESTIMATES FOR EDUCATORS IN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS, RHODE ISLAND, 2012



Source: *May 2012 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, Rhode Island*. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Occupational Employment Statistics.

- ◆ Child care workers in Rhode Island have lower average annual wages than any other educational professional and most human service professionals. They also earn less than manicurists, maids and housekeepers, and landscaping workers.⁸⁴
- ◆ Preschool teachers in Rhode Island earn less money than almost every other educational profession tracked by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, earning just \$3,000 more per year than substitute teachers.⁸⁵

IMPROVING EDUCATOR QUALIFICATIONS & COMPENSATION

- ◆ Many research studies have been conducted to understand how the qualifications of educators are related to the quality of early learning programs. Although research is not conclusive, several studies indicate that teachers with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field tend to have higher quality classrooms.^{86,87}
- ◆ Educators in early childhood programs increasingly are being encouraged or required to earn a degree with specialized coursework in child development and early childhood education as a way to improve the educational experiences of young children. However, most face challenges in pursuing higher education, including difficulty returning to school while working full-time, academic insecurity, language and cultural barriers, and inability to pay tuition and fees. Many educators also have difficulty finding relevant, high-quality coursework and connecting college credits completed at different institutions over many years. In addition, the low salaries available in the field make it difficult to justify returning to school.^{88,89}
- ◆ Rhode Island's \$50 million Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant is designed to increase the quality of early learning programs and strengthen the workforce, with a focus on programs and staff serving low-income and disadvantaged children.⁹⁰
- ◆ At least 19 states invest resources to supplement wages for staff working in early learning programs. Offering wage supplements can incentivize educators to complete college coursework and earn degrees, while also reducing turnover in early learning programs.⁹¹



YOUNG CHILDREN WITH HIGH NEEDS

Enrollment in high-quality early learning programs helps all children learn and grow, but vulnerable children with risk factors for poor educational outcomes benefit the most.⁹²

CHILDREN IN POVERTY AND FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES:

◆ During 2007-2011 in Rhode Island, there were 14,280 children under age six in families with incomes below the federal poverty guidelines and an additional 13,829 children lived in families with incomes between 100% and 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.⁹³

◆ Forty-one percent of all children under age six in Rhode Island live in poor or low-income families.⁹⁴

HOMELESS YOUNG CHILDREN:

◆ In 2012 in Rhode Island, there were 655 children under age six who stayed at an emergency homeless shelter, domestic violence shelter, and/or transitional housing with their family.⁹⁵

◆ Homeless children receive priority enrollment for Head Start and Early Head Start.⁹⁶

YOUNG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS:

◆ Poverty and family educational background have a much stronger influence on school readiness than home language. Nationally, young Spanish-speaking children are the most likely of all preschool children to live in poverty and have a mother or guardian without a high school education.⁹⁷

◆ As of September 1, 2012 there were 4,544 children under age five who had been born in Rhode Island to a mother who did not speak English, approximately 9% of all children under age five. Eighty-one percent of the non-English-speaking mothers, were Spanish speaking.⁹⁸

◆ In the 2011-2012 school year in Rhode Island there were 61 preschool children and 1,006 kindergartners who received English as a Second Language or bilingual education services through the public schools.⁹⁹

◆ Latino families value early childhood education, but their children are less likely to attend early learning programs than other preschool children due to access and affordability issues.¹⁰⁰

YOUNG CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN MALTREATED:

◆ Infants under age one are the largest group of children to enter the foster care system each year. Young children involved with the child welfare system are less likely to receive needed services because they often lack the most fundamental resource to ensure their healthy development—a consistent relationship with a committed, caring adult who can monitor their development, access services, and advocate on their behalf.¹⁰¹

◆ In 2012 in Rhode Island, there were 843 children under age three and 689 children ages three to five who were victims of child abuse or neglect.¹⁰²

◆ According to federal law, children under age three who have been victims of maltreatment must be referred to Early Intervention for an eligibility assessment.¹⁰³ Children in foster care are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start.¹⁰⁴

◆ Children who are in need of “protective services,” are categorically eligible for Child Care subsidy.¹⁰⁵ As of December 2012, there were 591 children ages six weeks to 12 years in the care of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families who were enrolled in a child care program through the Child Care Assistance Program.¹⁰⁶

CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS OR DISABILITIES:

◆ In 2012 in Rhode Island, there were 3,967 children under age three and 2,927 children ages three to five who received special education services under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*.^{107,108} Children with developmental delays and disabilities are entitled to receive free educational services.

THE RHODE ISLAND EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL

◆ Federal legislation enacted in 2007 required states to identify or establish a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care to lead the development and enhancement of a high-quality, comprehensive early care and education system. Councils work to ensure statewide coordination and collaboration among the wide range of early childhood programs and services in the state, including child care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, and early childhood special education programs. Councils are designated by the Governor and charged with:

- ◆ Conducting periodic statewide needs assessments on quality and the availability of high quality care;
 - ◆ Identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among federally-funded and state-funded early childhood programs and services;
 - ◆ Increasing participation of children in high-quality early care and education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations; and
 - ◆ Advising the Governor on the development of comprehensive early learning standards, a unified early learning data system, and a statewide professional development and higher education system for early childhood educators.
- ◆ The Rhode Island Early Learning Council was established in June 2010 and is co-chaired by Deborah Gist, Commissioner of the Rhode Island Department of Education, and Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. In 2011, the Rhode Island Early Learning Council provided leadership for the development of a \$50 million Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge application, incorporating many of the recommendations developed by the Council in 2010-2011.

Source: *Early childhood state advisory councils: Status report April 2013*. (2013). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE

In December 2011, Rhode Island was one of only nine states to win a four-year, \$50 million Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant to improve the quality of early learning and development programs and close the achievement gap for children with high needs. The overarching goal of the grant is to increase the number of children with high needs who are enrolled in high-quality early learning programs. Key components of the grant include:

- ◆ Establishing *Successful State Systems* by building on existing strengths, and coordinating programs across agencies to ensure consistency and sustainability beyond the grant;
- ◆ Defining *High-Quality, Accountable Programs* with a common tiered quality rating and improvement system to evaluate and improve program performance and to inform families about program quality;
- ◆ *Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children* by developing common standards and assessments that measure child outcomes;
- ◆ Supporting *A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce* by providing professional development, career advancement opportunities, appropriate compensation, and a common set of standards for workforce knowledge and competencies; and
- ◆ *Measuring Outcomes and Progress* so that data can be used to inform early learning instruction and services and to assess whether children are entering kindergarten ready to succeed in elementary school.

CHILDREN ENROLLED IN FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN, RHODE ISLAND, 2012-2013

SCHOOL DISTRICT	% OF CHILDREN IN FULL-DAY K
Barrington	0%
Bristol Warren	100%
Burrillville	100%
Central Falls	100%
Chariho	100%
Coventry	0%
Cranston	<1%
Cumberland	100%
East Greenwich	16%
East Providence	100%
Exeter-West Greenwich	0%
Foster	100%
Glocester	0%
Jamestown	100%
Johnston	0%
Lincoln	100%
Little Compton	100%
Middletown	100%
Narragansett	100%
New Shoreham	100%
Newport	100%
North Kingstown	29%
North Providence	100%
North Smithfield	100%
Pawtucket	100%
Portsmouth	0%
Providence	100%
Scituate	0%
Smithfield	11%
South Kingstown	100%
Tiverton	0%
Warwick	11%
West Warwick	100%
Westerly	100%
Woonsocket	3%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>86%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>56%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>68%</i>

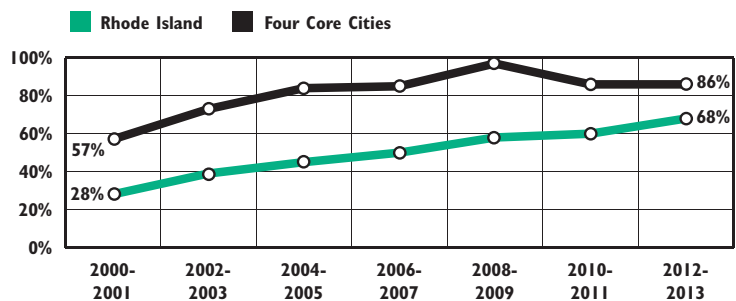
ACCESS TO FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

◆ Kindergarten marks a transition point for many children who leave community-based early learning programs and enter public school.

◆ Nationally, enrollment in full-day kindergarten has been increasing steadily over the past 30 years. In 1979, 25% of U.S. kindergartners were in full-day programs, compared with 77% in 2011.^{109,110}

◆ In Rhode Island in the 2012-2013 school year, 68% of children who attend public kindergarten were in a full-day program, 86% of students in the four core cities and 56% of students in the remainder of the state.¹¹¹

Children in Full-Day Public Kindergarten Programs, Rhode Island, 2000-2001 through 2012-2013 School Years



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, kindergarten enrollment October 1, 2000 – October 1, 2012.

◆ Children benefit academically from participating in full-day kindergarten, making more substantial gains in early reading, math, and social skills compared with children in half-day programs.¹¹²

◆ Full-day kindergarten reduces grade retention and remediation rates and is especially beneficial for English Language Learners.¹¹³

◆ Sixty-eight percent of full-day kindergarten classrooms spend more than one hour per day on reading instruction compared to 37% of half-day classes. Full-day kindergarten classes are more likely to spend time every day on math, social studies, and science.¹¹⁴

◆ Rhode Island's current rate of children enrolled in full-day kindergarten (68%) is lower than the U.S. rate of 77%.¹¹⁵

◆ Ten states require school districts to provide full-day kindergarten through state statute.¹¹⁶



RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPROVE ACCESS TO EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS

- ◆ **Home Visiting:** Expand access to evidence-based home visiting programs for families of young children facing multiple risks for poor educational outcomes.
- ◆ **Head Start and Early Head Start:** Expand state and federal investments in Head Start and Early Head Start, programs that provide high-quality learning opportunities for Rhode Island's poorest children.
- ◆ **State Pre-K:** Continue the planned expansion of the State Pre-K program as part of the education funding formula and encourage district investment of Title I funds. Focus expansion in communities with high concentrations of low-income children. Ensure children from low-income families participate in the lottery and are prioritized for enrollment. Consider developing a brand name for the State Pre-K program to expand awareness of the free, high-quality, publicly-funded program among families and the community.
- ◆ **High-Quality Child Care:** Expand access to high-quality child care for children from infancy through age 12. Implement the "cliff effect" policy included in the Governor's FY14 budget. Restore income eligibility for the Child Care Assistance Program to 225% FPL, so more low-income, working families have access to licensed child care and early learning programs. Educate families participating in the CCAP program about BrightStars. Work to help families with CCAP certificates use high-quality child care (e.g., waive co-payments for higher quality programs).
- ◆ **Early Intervention:** Ensure that infants and toddlers with one or more significant family risk factors for developmental delay can continue to be served by the Early Intervention program. Strengthen systems to ensure all children under age three who have experienced substantiated child abuse or neglect have an opportunity to receive an evaluation to determine eligibility for the Early Intervention program.
- ◆ **Preschool Special Education:** Work to increase the percentage of children receiving preschool special education services that are enrolled in inclusive, high-quality preschool settings that meet the needs of their families.
- ◆ **Full-Day Kindergarten:** Restore full-day kindergarten in Woonsocket and expand access to full-day kindergarten statewide.

SUPPORT PROGRAM QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

- ◆ **BrightStars:** Maximize participation in BrightStars, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System. As specified in the state's Biennial Child Care Plan, require programs that receive CCAP funds to participate in BrightStars. Use BrightStars as a hub for the state's early childhood system to support program quality improvement, link programs to resources, and help families enroll children in high-quality early learning programs.
- ◆ **Tiered Reimbursement:** Develop and implement a tiered reimbursement policy for CCAP with high-quality programs receiving reimbursement at or above the 75th percentile of the current market rate survey. Work to ensure child care programs used by low-income families have adequate resources to meet and maintain high-quality early learning standards.
- ◆ **Build Capacity of Programs to Meet Higher Quality Standards:** Engage program leaders, provide technical assistance to strengthen program quality, and improve facilities. Develop and maintain high-quality professional development. Expand efforts to improve the quality of family child care homes and infant/toddler classrooms.
- ◆ **Licensing:** Use state licensing as a lever to improve program quality by posting licensing inspection reports on-line.
- ◆ **Support Educators:** Use the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood program to help early childhood educators earn Associate's and Bachelor's degrees and complete relevant coursework. Help them navigate the higher education system and expand efforts to connect increased education to improved compensation.
- ◆ **Early Childhood Special Education:** Ensure educators in the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education programs have sufficient training to appropriately determine eligibility and deliver effective special education services for children who are at substantial risk for poor educational outcomes (e.g., children who have experienced maltreatment, children in families who do not speak English).

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