

# Licensed Capacity of Early Learning Programs

## DEFINITION

*Licensed capacity of early learning programs* is the number of child care and early learning programs and slots licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families for children under age six. Licensed centers include child care programs, preschools, nursery schools, and center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Research indicates that high-quality child care and early learning programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers can have long-lasting positive effects on how children learn and develop.<sup>1</sup>

Early and on-going enrollment in child care and early learning programs is common in the United States. Across the U.S., 42% of infants under the age of one and 73% of preschoolers between ages three and five regularly participate in a non-parental early care and education arrangement. Participation in early care and education varies by family income, with 63% of children ages birth to five living in households with incomes above poverty enrolled in child care or early learning programs, compared with 49% of those below poverty. Enrollment in center-based programs increases as children get older, with 28% of infants under age one participating in a center-based program while 78% of preschoolers

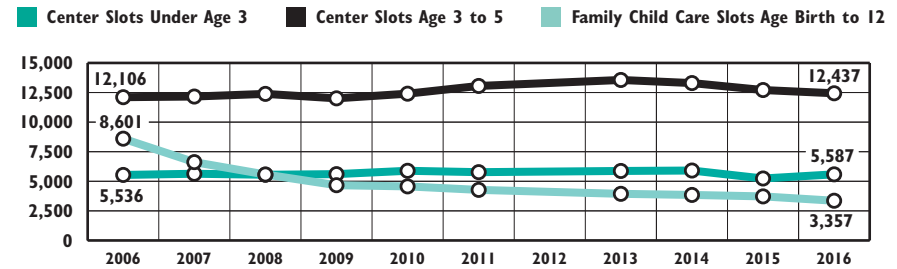
(children ages three to five) are enrolled in a center. Children with disabilities can have difficulty accessing child care and early learning programs despite a federal law requiring that community-based child care and preschool settings include children with disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

Access to stable, affordable, quality child care is a basic need for many working families and is critical for Rhode Island's economy. When parents have difficulty finding and keeping child care, they are more likely to be absent from work and to leave their jobs.<sup>3</sup> Between 2010 and 2014, 72% of Rhode Island children under age six had all parents in the workforce, higher than the U.S. rate of 65%.<sup>4</sup>

The availability of high-quality child care and early learning programs depends on the stability of a skilled teaching workforce. However, there are systemic workforce challenges including low compensation, inadequate professional development opportunities, and high turnover.<sup>5</sup> In addition, high-quality early care and education programs require well-designed, safe buildings that meet the needs of young children.<sup>6</sup>

Rhode Island's \$50 million Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant, awarded in December 2011, is designed to increase the quality of early learning programs and strengthen the workforce statewide, with a focus on programs and staff serving low-income and disadvantaged children.<sup>7</sup>

## Early Learning Program Capacity, Rhode Island, 2006-2016



Source: Options for Working Parents, slots in licensed child care centers and certified family child care homes, 2006. Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, slots in licensed child care centers and family child care homes, 2007-2016. 2016 data are from the RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS). Starting with the 2013 Factbook, data are collected as of January, instead of December.

- ◆ In January 2016, there were 351 more slots for infants and toddlers (children under age three) in licensed centers than in 2015, making up some of the loss in the previous year. There were 274 fewer slots for preschoolers (children ages three to five) in centers in 2016 than in 2015, continuing the downward trend since the 2013 peak.<sup>8</sup>
- ◆ In January 2016, there were 366 fewer slots in licensed family child care homes than in the previous year. The number of family child care slots is down 61% from a peak high of 8,601 in 2006 to 3,357 in 2016.<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ The majority of licensed child care programs in Rhode Island accept children participating in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Seventy-four percent of licensed centers and 85% of licensed family child care homes accept CCAP certificates, which cover all or part of the cost of child care for low-income working families.<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ In addition to licensed programs operated by community-based agencies, businesses, and family child care providers, there are 53 traditional public schools in Rhode Island, one public charter school (Highlander), and one state-operated school (the RI School for the Deaf) that offer early learning programs for preschoolers.<sup>11</sup>

## Quality Child Care for Infants and Toddlers

- ◆ Infants and toddlers benefit from low child-to-provider ratios and small group sizes where they can form nurturing, responsive, and continuous relationships with adults.<sup>12</sup>

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Table 33.

Capacity of Licensed Early Learning Programs, Rhode Island, January 2016

CITY/TOWN	# OF LICENSED CENTERS	# OF CENTER SLOTS FOR CHILDREN <AGE 3	# OF CENTER SLOTS FOR CHILDREN AGES 3-5	# OF LICENSED FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES	# OF LICENSED FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME SLOTS*	TOTAL LICENSED EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM SLOTS
Barrington	8	129	296	5	34	459
Bristol	5	59	108	4	24	191
Burrillville	3	19	87	2	14	120
Central Falls	4	78	187	20	127	392
Charlestown	4	14	72	1	6	92
Coventry	7	156	179	2	16	351
Cranston	31	454	1,171	47	324	1,949
Cumberland	7	124	315	8	67	506
East Greenwich	12	344	652	0	0	996
East Providence	16	144	536	6	40	720
Exeter	2	34	38	1	8	80
Foster	1	17	25	0	0	42
Glocester	3	55	82	0	0	137
Hopkinton	2	0	44	3	24	68
Jamestown	1	31	33	1	8	72
Johnston	19	374	447	10	65	886
Lincoln	5	102	160	3	20	282
Little Compton	1	0	18	0	0	18
Middletown	9	143	389	3	18	550
Narragansett	2	12	20	0	0	32
New Shoreham	1	13	26	0	0	39
Newport	4	63	195	1	8	266
North Kingstown	7	107	307	3	28	442
North Providence	10	146	194	9	63	403
North Smithfield	1	67	91	4	36	194
Pawtucket	19	330	818	37	237	1,385
Portsmouth	5	93	134	1	6	233
Providence	48	762	1,944	291	1,917	4,587
Richmond	0	0	0	4	35	35
Scituate	1	11	36	5	40	87
Smithfield	9	291	563	0	0	854
South Kingstown	12	185	371	5	38	564
Tiverton	3	24	113	1	6	143
Warren	5	74	224	1	8	306
Warwick	27	740	1,360	10	75	2,175
West Greenwich	2	6	48	0	0	54
West Warwick	5	168	316	2	14	498
Westerly	7	124	329	1	5	458
Woonsocket	9	94	509	6	46	649
Four Core Cities	80	1,264	3,458	354	2,327	7,013
Remainder of State	237	4,323	8,979	143	1,030	14,302
Rhode Island	317	5,587	12,437	497	3,357	21,315

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, number of licensed child care center slots and programs for children under age six and number of licensed family child care homes and slots, from RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), January 2016. Only full-day and morning slots are counted for center-based care.

Licensed centers include child care programs, preschools, nursery schools, and center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

\*Family child care slots are for children ages birth to 12 years old.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

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(continued on page 182)