

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

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.¹

Early and ongoing 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

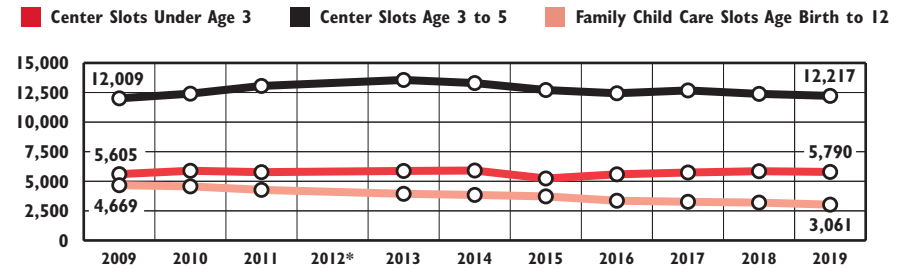
(children ages three to five) are enrolled in a center. Children with disabilities can have difficulty accessing child care and early learning programs despite a federal law requiring that community-based child care and preschool settings include children with disabilities.²

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.³ Between 2013 and 2017, 72% of Rhode Island children under age six had all parents in the workforce, higher than the U.S. rate of 65%.⁴

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 high turnover and low compensation levels that do not reward education or training of staff. Early care and education teachers are among the lowest-paid U.S. workers, with almost half relying on public income supports to make ends meet (e.g., the Earned Income Tax Credit, Medicaid, TANF, and SNAP).⁵

The availability of well-designed and maintained buildings that meet the needs of young children is also essential to the supply of quality early learning programs.⁶

Early Learning Program Capacity, Rhode Island, 2009-2019



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, slots in licensed child care centers and family child care homes, 2009-2015. Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, number of licensed child care center slots and number of licensed family child care homes and slots, from RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), 2016-2019. *In the 2013 Factbook, data was collected as of January 2013, instead of December 2012.

- ◆ In January 2019, there were 61 fewer slots for infants and toddlers (children under age three) and 169 fewer slots for preschoolers (children ages three to five) in licensed centers than in 2018.⁷
- ◆ In January 2019, there were 138 fewer slots in licensed family child care homes than in the previous year. The number of family child care slots is down 34% since 2009.⁸
- ◆ In Rhode Island, family child care providers (88%) are more likely than centers (74%) to accept children participating in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which covers all or part of the cost of child care for low-income working families.⁹
- ◆ In addition to licensed programs operated by community-based agencies 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 have preschool classrooms.¹⁰

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.¹¹

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Table 35.

Capacity of Licensed Early Learning Programs, Rhode Island, January 2019

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	9	140	328	4	24	492
Bristol	5	67	108	5	32	207
Burrillville	3	38	54	1	6	98
Central Falls	3	96	166	16	101	363
Charlestown	4	14	92	3	20	126
Coventry	7	131	233	4	28	392
Cranston	31	534	1,060	47	324	1,918
Cumberland	7	112	332	7	57	501
East Greenwich	11	225	428	0	0	653
East Providence	15	170	459	2	14	643
Exeter	2	24	52	1	8	84
Foster	1	19	18	0	0	37
Glocester	2	40	59	1	11	110
Hopkinton	3	12	60	2	14	86
Jamestown	1	30	34	1	8	72
Johnston	20	392	447	10	74	913
Lincoln	6	148	275	5	30	453
Little Compton	1	0	20	0	0	20
Middletown	10	185	410	0	0	595
Narragansett	2	12	20	0	0	32
New Shoreham	1	12	26	0	0	38
Newport	4	64	183	1	8	255
North Kingstown	7	103	316	3	17	436
North Providence	9	122	238	7	49	409
North Smithfield	1	77	91	4	36	204
Pawtucket	18	309	855	33	215	1,379
Portsmouth	5	104	163	0	0	267
Providence	46	714	1,921	272	1,777	4,412
Richmond	0	0	0	2	20	20
Scituate	1	11	36	1	6	53
Smithfield	9	298	501	0	0	799
South Kingstown	12	235	402	6	40	677
Tiverton	3	24	124	1	8	156
Warren	5	80	190	0	0	270
Warwick	26	831	1,303	7	56	2,190
West Greenwich	3	34	60	0	0	94
West Warwick	5	169	318	3	20	507
Westerly	8	88	296	2	12	396
Woonsocket	9	126	539	6	46	711
Four Core Cities	76	1,245	3,481	327	2,139	6,865
Remainder of State	239	4,545	8,736	130	922	14,203
Rhode Island	315	5,790	12,217	457	3,061	21,068

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 2019.

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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