

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 Human Services 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

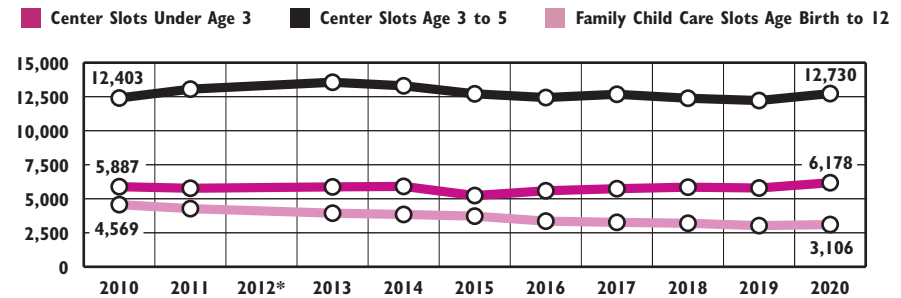
Access to stable, affordable, quality child care is a basic need for many working families and is critical for Rhode Island's economy. When parents have difficulty finding and keeping child care, they are more likely to be absent from work and to leave their jobs.³ Between 2014 and 2018, 73% of Rhode Island children under age six had all parents in the workforce, higher than the U.S. rate of 66%.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, 2010-2020



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, 2010-2019 and Rhode Island Department of Human Services, 2020. RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), 2016-2020. *In the 2013 Factbook, data was collected as of January 2013, instead of December 2012.

- ◆ In January 2020, there were 388 more slots for infants and toddlers (children under age three) and 513 more slots for preschoolers (children ages three to five) in licensed centers than in 2019. The number of infant/toddler slots is up 5% and the number of preschool slots is up 3% since 2010.⁷
- ◆ In January 2020, there were 45 more slots in licensed family child care homes than in the previous year. The number of family child care slots is down 32% since 2010.⁸
- ◆ In Rhode Island, family child care providers (87%) are more likely than centers (73%) 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 56 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 2020

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	104	300	4	26	430
Bristol	4	64	83	5	32	179
Burrillville	3	27	54	1	6	87
Central Falls	3	96	167	18	117	380
Charlestown	4	14	92	3	20	126
Coventry	7	131	233	5	34	398
Cranston	31	559	1,085	46	320	1,964
Cumberland	6	112	303	7	58	473
East Greenwich	15	363	609	0	0	972
East Providence	20	180	603	2	14	797
Exeter	2	24	52	1	8	84
Foster	1	19	18	0	0	37
Glocester	3	55	87	2	15	157
Hopkinton	3	8	60	2	14	82
Jamestown	1	30	34	1	8	72
Johnston	19	404	468	10	76	948
Lincoln	6	148	275	5	30	453
Little Compton	1	0	20	0	0	20
Middletown	11	228	383	0	0	611
Narragansett	1	0	20	1	6	26
New Shoreham	1	12	26	0	0	38
Newport	4	64	183	1	8	255
North Kingstown	7	104	315	4	19	438
North Providence	9	122	238	7	47	407
North Smithfield	2	85	121	4	38	244
Pawtucket	16	309	772	29	189	1,270
Portsmouth	4	92	133	0	0	225
Providence	51	777	2,164	276	1,831	4,772
Richmond	0	0	0	2	20	20
Scituate	1	11	36	1	5	52
Smithfield	9	323	501	0	0	824
South Kingstown	13	273	392	5	36	701
Tiverton	3	24	124	1	8	156
Warren	5	80	190	1	6	276
Warwick	26	903	1,304	7	49	2,256
West Greenwich	3	46	77	0	0	123
West Warwick	6	173	309	2	14	496
Westerly	9	88	314	1	6	408
Woonsocket	11	126	585	6	46	757
Four Core Cities	81	1,308	3,688	329	2,183	7,179
Remainder of State	248	4,870	9,042	131	923	14,835
Rhode Island	329	6,178	12,730	460	3,106	22,014

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Human Services, 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 2020.

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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