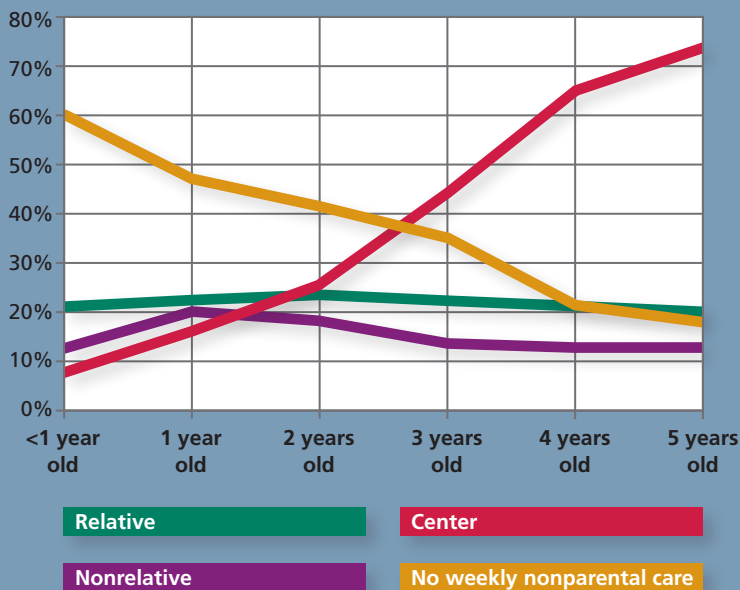


# Early Childhood Care & Education

## The Data

- **Care arrangements vary.** In 2001, 60% of children under the age of 6 who had yet to enter kindergarten (12.2 million children) were cared for each week by someone other than their parents. Of these children, 33% were cared for in centers (e.g., day care centers, nursery schools, preschools, Head Start), 22% by relatives other

Children Under Age 6 with Weekly Nonparental Care Arrangements, by Age and Type of Care (2001)



than parents, and 16% by non-relatives in their own or someone else's home (e.g., babysitters, nannies, family child care providers). As children grow older, they are more likely to be cared for by someone other than their parents, and in a center rather than a home (See Figure<sup>1</sup>).

- **High-quality early childhood programs produce long-term benefits for children and society.** According to Nobel Prize economist James Heckman, "The best evidence supports the policy prescription: invest in the very young...."<sup>2</sup>

- ◆ By age 21, participants in the Abecedarian program (high-quality, full-day center-based early childhood education from birth to age 5) had higher reading, math, and cognitive scores; were more likely to attend a 4-year college, and waited longer to have their first child than a control group.<sup>3</sup> The program returned \$3.23 for every dollar invested.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ By age 40, participants in the High/Scope Perry Preschool program (high-quality center-based part-day services when children were 3 and/or 4 years of age; plus weekly home visits) were more likely than a control group to have graduated from high school, be employed, have higher incomes, own their own homes and a car, and have savings accounts, and were less likely to have been involved with crime or use drugs.<sup>5</sup> The economic return was \$17.07 per every dollar invested.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ Preschool programs for low-income 3 and 4 year-olds return \$2.36 on the dollar.<sup>4</sup>

## The Issues

- **Rates of enrollment and types of arrangements vary by family income level.** About half of children from households with incomes of \$10,000 or less annually have a regular nonparental child care arrangement, while close to three-quarters of children from households earning more than \$75,000 annually do. Only 24% of poor children are cared for in centers, while 48% of wealthier children are.<sup>1</sup>
- **Quality is not high enough to produce desired long-term benefits.** Most care provided in

communities is poor to mediocre in quality. Infant care is typically of worse quality than care for preschoolers. Center-based care is usually higher quality than care provided in family child care homes, which is typically higher quality than care provided by license-exempt providers or friends and relatives.<sup>6-9</sup> This means that children from low and middle-income families are often in child care programs whose quality is too low to prepare them for school.

*continued*

- **Quality of care is closely related to the skills and educational levels of teaching staff**, but many teachers in child care programs do not have bachelor's degrees, may not have specialized training in child development, and often are paid wages so low (average of \$8.32/hour for child care teachers and \$10.45/hour for preschool teachers in 2004) that turnover rates hover between 25-40% per year nationally.<sup>10</sup> Initiatives such as North Carolina's TEACH program help promote professional development (<http://ncteach.ga.unc.edu/>).
- **Action is mounting in many states to offer**

**voluntary preschool programs (typically half-day, school-year programs) for all 4-year-olds, regardless of family income.** Preschool effectiveness is backed by research, but some advocates worry that the funding spent on preschool for all will decrease funding for younger children, for low-income children who may benefit from services more, and for the full-day, full-year child care that working parents need. Implementation challenges include finding sufficient trained staff without displacing a community's existing child care workforce and securing facilities for the new programs.

## Options for Philanthropy

- **Support efforts to increase availability of services**, including policy analysis and advocacy to maintain or expand public funding for child care and early childhood programs.
- **Support efforts to improve quality of services:**
  - ◆ Efforts to establish quality standards across all types of early care programs.
  - ◆ Efforts to promote the professional development of early childhood teachers (e.g., provide financial incentives to child care workers who undertake college courses and stay in the early childhood field), especially bilingual and bicultural staff, because increasing numbers of young children come from homes where English is not the primary language.
  - ◆ Efforts to implement curricula in early childhood programs that will promote

children's development and early reading and math skills.

- ◆ Efforts to improve the quality of care in family child care homes and, especially, in the homes of relatives and neighbors (e.g., programs to bring books, learning materials and curricular resources into the homes of the providers, to link them with community resources including libraries, and to provide them with training).
- **Support efforts to organize disparate settings into a coherent system at community or state levels.** States (e.g., Ohio, North Carolina) and local communities have undertaken such efforts. Results should be consistent early learning standards for programs, higher quality services, more efficient use of resources, more transparency for parents, and better outcomes for children.

## Resources

### Federal child care policy and budget issues:

Center for Law and Social Policy:  
[www.clasp.org/about.php](http://www.clasp.org/about.php)

Institute for Women's Policy Research: [www.iwpr.org](http://www.iwpr.org)

### Child care workforce and professional development initiatives:

Center for the Childcare Workforce: [www.ccw.org](http://www.ccw.org)

National Center for Early Development and Learning:  
[www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/index.cfm](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/index.cfm)

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at UC Berkeley: [www.iir.berkeley.edu/cscce/index.html](http://www.iir.berkeley.edu/cscce/index.html)

### Preschool (center-based programs for 3–5 year-olds):

National Institute for Early Education Research:  
<http://nieer.org>

PreKNow: [www.preknow.org](http://www.preknow.org)

### Coordinating systems and general child care information:

Quality in Linking Together Early Education Partnerships: [www.nccic.org/quilt/index.html](http://www.nccic.org/quilt/index.html)

National Child Care Information Center: [www.nccic.org](http://www.nccic.org)

### Reaching family, friend, and neighbor caregivers:

Families and Work Institute:  
[www.familiesandwork.org/sparking/resources.htm](http://www.familiesandwork.org/sparking/resources.htm)

*Endnotes appear in separate document.*

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