



FACT SHEET

# The State of Early Childhood in Iowa

April 10, 2015

Iowa launched the Shared Visions Preschool programs, or SV, in 1989 to provide the most vulnerable three- and four-year-olds with early education opportunities.<sup>1</sup> Of the current participating students, 80 percent must qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.<sup>2</sup> In order to increase access to quality early education for more three- and four-year-olds, the Iowa Legislature passed the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program, or SVPP, in 2007.<sup>3</sup> As a result of these programs, Iowa currently serves 4 percent of three-year-olds and 60 percent of four-year-olds in all settings, including public schools, child care centers, and family child care homes.<sup>4</sup>

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Iowa children need more investment to expand access and increase programs to full day

One of the leading research intuitions on state preschool programs, the National Institute for Early Education Research, or NIEER, has established 10 benchmarks of quality. Iowa's SV programs meet six of these benchmarks, and the SVPP meets seven. The state has the opportunity to improve quality by ensuring that teachers have B.A. degrees and assistant teachers have a C.D.A. degree or equivalent, holding 15 hours of yearly teacher in-service training, and conducting site visits. Additionally, the SVPP should provide at least one meal per day.<sup>5</sup> Also, Iowa's programs only operate for 10 hours per week, which is proven to be less effective than full-day preschool programs.<sup>6</sup> Iowa can change this limited operation by increasing the funding of the program.

- In 2013, Iowa ranked 32 out of 41 states in per-student funding.<sup>7</sup>
- Iowa currently spends \$2,674 per student, one-third less than the spending rates in states with programs meeting almost all the benchmarks, including Oklahoma and Georgia, and well below the national average of \$4,026.<sup>8</sup>

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## Early childhood education helps support Iowa's most vulnerable populations

Many Iowa children live in families feeling severe financial strain. Growing up in such an environment affects young children's ability to thrive, putting them behind their wealthier peers on a number of developmental, educational, and social measures. The stress that often comes with living in poverty can also adversely affect brain development in children's early years. High-quality early education has been proven to alleviate these risk factors and help close the school-readiness gap.<sup>9</sup>

- 41 percent of Iowa children under age 6 live in low-income families.<sup>10</sup>
- 4 percent of Iowa children live in areas of concentrated poverty, putting them at a greater risk of starting kindergarten behind.<sup>11</sup>

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## Child care is out of reach for many Iowa families

Iowa is one of 31 states where the cost of child care is higher than that of in-state tuition and fees at a public college.<sup>12</sup> In Iowa, where 77 percent of children under age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, child care is not a luxury—it is a necessity.<sup>13</sup>

- For a family with children in Iowa, the median income is \$65,300 per year.<sup>14</sup>
- The average annual cost of a child care center in Iowa is \$9,185 for an infant and \$7,904 for a 4-year-old.<sup>15</sup>

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## Endnotes

- 1 W. Steven Barnett and others, "The State of Preschool 2013: State Preschool Yearbook" (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2013), available at <http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2013.pdf>.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Kenneth B. Robin, Ellen C. Frede, and W. Steven Barnett, "Is More Better? The Effects of Full-Day vs. Half-Day Preschool on Early School Achievement" (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2006), available at <http://nieer.org/resources/research/IsMoreBetter.pdf>.
- 7 Barnett and others, "The State of Preschool 2013."
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Jack P. Shonkoff and others, "The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress," *Pediatrics* 129 (1) (2012): e232–e246, available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/1/e232.short>.
- 10 National Center for Children in Poverty, "Iowa: Demographics of Young, Low-Income Children," available at [http://www.nccp.org/profiles/IA\\_profile\\_8.html](http://www.nccp.org/profiles/IA_profile_8.html) (last accessed March 2015).
- 11 Kids Count Data Center, "Children Living in Areas of Concentrated Poverty" (Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013), available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6795-children-living-in-areas-of-concentrated-poverty#detailed/2/2-52/false/1376,1201,1074,880,11/any/13891,13892>.
- 12 Child Care Aware of America, "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care" (2013), available at [http://usa.childcareaware.org/sites/default/files/cost\\_of\\_care\\_2013\\_103113\\_0.pdf](http://usa.childcareaware.org/sites/default/files/cost_of_care_2013_103113_0.pdf).
- 13 Kids Count Data Center, "Children Under Age 6 with All Available Parents in the Labor Force" (Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013), available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/Map/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force?loc=12&loct=2#2/any/true/36/any/11473/Orange/-9279803.574082,3854392.8887598,4,396,528>.
- 14 Kids Count Data Center, "Median Family Income Among Households With Children" (Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013), available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/65-median-family-income-among-households-with-children#detailed/2/2-52/false/36,868,867,133,38/any/365>.
- 15 Child Care Aware of America, "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care."
- 16 Authors' calculations based on Child Care Aware of America, "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care."

# 77%

of children under age 6 have all available parents in the workforce

For a typical family with an infant and a 4-year-old in Iowa, the average cost of child care at a center amounts to

# 1/4

of annual income<sup>16</sup>