



FACT SHEET

The State of Early Childhood in Ohio

April 10, 2015

Ohio established the Public Preschool Program in 2001 after implementing it as a pilot initiative for four years.¹ The statewide program targets services to families with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Unfortunately, the program lacks quality standards and leaves out 3-year-olds. Ohio's early childhood programs would improve with greater investment to raise quality and expand access to the benefit of Ohio's children and families. The program currently serves 2 percent of the age-eligible population in all settings, including public schools, child care centers, and family child care homes.²

Ohio children would benefit from more investment to expand access and increase quality

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. Ohio meets just four of them. The state has the opportunity to improve quality by requiring teachers to have a B.A. degree and assistant teachers to have C.D.A. degrees or the equivalent and providing at least 15 hours of in-service per year. Additionally, the program should maintain class sizes of 20 students or fewer or a staff-child ratio of 1-to-10 or better and provide at least one meal per day.³ Ohio's program would be more likely to meet all 10 benchmarks with a substantial increase in funding that is more in line with higher-quality, more accessible programs around the country.

- In 2013, Ohio ranked 21 out of 41 states in per-student funding.⁴
- Ohio currently spends \$3,927 per student, less than the spending rates in states with programs meeting almost all of the benchmarks, including Oklahoma and Georgia, and below the national average of \$4,026.⁵

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Early childhood education can support Ohio's most vulnerable populations

Many Ohio 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.⁶

- 50 percent of Ohio children under age 6 live in low-income families.⁷
- 14 percent of Ohio children live in areas of concentrated poverty, putting them at a greater risk of starting kindergarten behind.⁸

Child care is out of reach for many Ohio families

In Ohio, where 69 percent of children under age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, child care is not a luxury—it is a necessity.⁹

- For a family with children in Ohio, the median income is \$58,300.¹⁰
- The average annual cost of a child care center in Ohio is \$7,771 for an infant and \$6,487 for a 4-year-old.¹¹

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 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>.

7 National Center for Children in Poverty, "Ohio: Demographics of Young, Low-Income Children," available at http://www.nccp.org/profiles/OH_profile_8.html.

8 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](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).

9 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/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force#detailed/2/2-52/false/36,868,867,133,38/any/11472,11473>.

10 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>.

11 Child Care Aware of America, "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care."

12 Authors' calculations based on Child Care Aware of America, "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care."

69%

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 Ohio, the average cost of child care at a center amounts to

1/4

of annual income¹²