Need for high-quality child care

Quality child care is essential to support the health and well-being of young children and is vital to enable a thriving economy. The National Center for Education Statistics (Cui & Natzke, 2021) estimated that in 2019, 59% of children under the age of 5 and not in kindergarten were in at least one weekly non-parental care arrangement, with some being in multiple care arrangements. The following breaks down these care arrangements in greater detail:

12,603,580 children in at least one or more forms of non-parental care

- 62% attend center-based care
- 38% cared for by relative
- 20% in home-based, non-relative care

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, long-standing issues facing the child care workforce have been exacerbated, and many programs are struggling to find qualified early care and education (ECE) professionals to care for children of all ages. High-quality, research-informed, accessible, and affordable education support is fundamental in equipping ECE professionals to provide the highest quality of care to support children’s growth and development.

“High quality programs produce high quality outcomes.”
(Elango et al., 2016, para. 4)

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2021), there are nearly 5,000,000 ECE professionals in the United States. Often referred to as “the workforce behind the workforce,” ECE professionals face numerous challenges including low wages and long hours which make it extremely difficult to find time for educational opportunities that support quality care practices. This has a ripple effect throughout communities, as without access to affordable quality care for children, families are struggling to work out care options. This is especially true among economically disadvantaged families who have limited access to educational resources and often live in communities without affordable care options.

“Every dollar spent on high quality, birth to five programs for disadvantaged children delivers a 13% per annum return on investment.”
(Garcia et al., 2016, para. 5)
BKC statistics
Fiscal year 2023 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023):

141,610 learners
442,555 courses completed
1,275,906 hours of training provided

BKC partners
• Berks County Intermediate Unit (PA Key)
• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
• Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
• National Association of City and County Health Officials
• Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation
• Tuscarora Intermediate Unit
• University of Nebraska–Lincoln
• University of Texas, School of Public Health
• Virginia Department of Education
• Vitamix Foundation
• William Penn Foundation

What BKC offers
• Online, self-directed professional development courses for early care and education and out-of-school time professionals
• More than 320 online courses
• Prepayment code option*
• Monthly E-newsletter
• CDA credential course, resources, and support
• Mentoring and technical assistance phone line
• Resource-rich website
• Social media
• Professional development credit approved in 49 states
• CEUs available on request

*Access to online courses is available at no cost by setting up a password-protected account in the BKC system. For a certificate of completion, there is a nominal fee (typically $5 for 2 hours of credit).

Who uses On Demand?

Primary role
- Director: 10%
- Lead Teacher: 29%
- Asst. Teacher: 33%
- All others: 28%

Race/ethnicity
- White: 62%
- African American/Black: 22%
- Hispanic: 12%

CACFP
- 46% Receive subsidies for limited-resource families

Program type
- 66% Center-based
- 7% Home-based
- 15% Preschool/Public pre-K
- 9% School age

Education
- 52% High school/GED
- 21% Bachelor’s degree
- 14% Associate degree
- 6% Master’s degree

Years in profession
- 46% 5+ years in this profession

5,058,897 children cared for
(represents approximately 40% of all children in child care)

References


This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research and extension programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Where trade names appear, no discrimination is intended, and no endorsement by Penn State Extension is implied. Penn State is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or protected veteran status. This resource is for educational purposes. You may not use this material for commercial purpose or economic gain.

© 2023 The Pennsylvania State University