



early care and education

montgomery county, maryland

trends and key factors

affordability & availability

Child care is expensive, taking a huge bite out of household budgets for low- and middle-income families. For most, the cost greatly exceeds the 10% of household income recommended by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. According to Montgomery County's Office of Legislative Oversight, median **full-time child care for two children exceeds 20% of income for the majority of families in the county.**

Cost of Child Care in Montgomery County

Annual median cost for 1 child (0-23 months)

Child Care Center: \$17,420
Family Child Care Home: \$13,000
2 children (infant & 3- or 4-year-old)
Child Care Center: \$30,000
Family Child Care Home: \$23,400

Nearly 18% of families with children in the county earn less than \$50,000 per year.



A single mother making \$58,000 would spend 50% of her income on care for an infant and 4-year-old.



Many families pay more for child care than housing. A 2-bedroom apartment averages \$17,496 per year.



A year of child care for a young child costs more than in-state tuition at a public university.

Low wages and high turnover plague the early care and education workforce.

The mean wage for child care workers in the Montgomery County Workforce Region is \$29,318. The median entry wage is \$19,841. Even those with advanced training and degrees are underpaid. Preschool teachers in Maryland earn a median wage of \$27,980 (compared to \$55,900 for kindergarten teachers) and Head Start teachers earn \$34,074. Not surprisingly, turnover is very high, at around 30% nationwide.

One of the central challenges in creating an equitable, high-quality system of early care and education is making child care affordable while also providing fair compensation, training, and viable career paths for the caregivers and teachers who nurture young minds.



Child care is also in limited supply, with many parents scrambling to piece together reliable care – especially during the early years when children require more individualized care.



There are 2.3 children age 2-4 and 5.5 children age 0-23 months for each available slot offered by regulated child care providers in the county.



In some locations, child care is even harder to find. For instance, in Silver Spring and Wheaton, there are 8 children age 0-23 months per available slot.



Work schedules are often incompatible with the hours when child care providers operate. Parents pursuing degrees or career training face the same challenge.

short-term impact on workers & employers

When parents don't have access to affordable child care, it directly affects their ability to participate in the workforce, and that, in turn, affects employers. Some parents who would like to work are simply unable to do so. The desire to pursue career paths and higher education can be curtailed because child care is too expensive and/or not available. The quality and availability of early care also impact workplace productivity and absenteeism.

Americans who work reduced hours or can't work due to a lack of affordable child care experience **\$8.3 billion** in lost wages each year.

Absenteeism and lost productivity due to parents dealing with child care crises cost U.S. businesses about **\$4 billion** each year.

Especially for **working women**, child care difficulties can be an obstacle to working full time and the ability to earn higher wages.

The *quality* of early care matters, too – to allow parents to stay focused when they are on the job, and because today's children are tomorrow's workforce.

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quality of care & school readiness

A 15-year-long study by the National Institutes of Health rated the quality of fewer than 10 percent of child care arrangements in the U.S. as "very high." Most were rated "fair." Yet a recent poll conducted by NPR (in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Harvard School of Public Health) found that 88% of parents rate their child care as "very good" or "excellent." Clearly there is a disconnect about what quality really means. **School readiness is one way to shine a light on the educational quality of early care.**

Achievement gaps start early, and children who enter kindergarten behind their peers are unlikely to catch up.

51% of children entering public kindergarten in Montgomery County in 2015 were **NOT** kindergarten ready.

40% of MCPS kindergarteners were from low-income families. Only 29% of this group were kindergarten ready.

34% of kindergartners were English Language Learners (ELL). Only 25% of this group were kindergarten ready.

Unregulated care of unknown quality represents a large portion of child care supply in the county. According to IRS tax filings, there were 2,595 non-employer establishments in the child care services industry in 2013. That's nearly triple the number of regulated Family Child Care Homes (947).

Only 23% of Child Care Centers and 5% of Family Child Care Homes in Montgomery County are accredited by a state or national organization.



Young children's brains form 700 to 1,000 new synapses every second.

The first few years of life are a critical time for brain development. By age 3, the brain has produced twice as many neural connections, and at a faster rate, than at any other time in life, and has reached 85% of its adult weight.

According to Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, "the basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood. Early experiences affect the quality of that architecture by establishing either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the learning, health and behavior that follow."

long-term impact for our community

Today's infants, toddlers and preschoolers are tomorrow's workers, taxpayers, and parents. A growing body of research, including rigorously studied early education programs, points to significant personal, social, and economic benefits over time when children experience high quality early learning. The potential ROI for investing in early childhood education is threefold: decreased costs to government; increased educational achievement (and therefore greater earning power); and increased productivity in adulthood.



▶▶ Childhood development programs are estimated to save between \$2.88 and \$17.07 per dollar invested, depending on the program and length of follow-up.

▶▶ When at-risk children in three high-quality early learning programs were followed into adulthood, outcomes included higher graduation rates (by as much as 44%) and increased median earnings (by as much as 36%).

▶▶ High-quality pre-K education, especially for disadvantaged children, has been shown to decrease special education placement by 49%, reduce grade retention by 50%, reduce juvenile arrests by 33%, increase high school graduation by 31%, and increase college attendance by more than 80%.

▶▶ One study found that a per-child investment of \$6,692 in quality pre-K for disadvantaged children yielded a lifetime societal return of up to \$67,937 – an ROI of greater than 10:1.

There are 67,000 children under age 5 in Montgomery County. Early care and education experiences influence our children's potential, in school and beyond, and directly impact the county's future.

“ A good early care and learning system should support the healthy development of children, particularly at a time when their brains are rapidly growing and laying the foundation for future learning. A functioning system should sustain the financial stability and health of families, promote opportunity and equity, support and sustain businesses, and help the economy thrive. And an effective system should be built on three pillars: affordable cost, high quality, and easy availability. This is not happening in the current fragmented, patchwork system.

