

Early Care and Education: Child Care



This document provides an update to information in the Community Action Network Early Care and Education Community Assessment report released in November 1999 and the April 2002 FAQ data update. All data included are the most current available.

Highlights

High Quality Child Care Increases Our Economic Stability

Early child care and education is a public issue that affects society at every level, including the quality of our community's workforce. Recent studies on the economic impact of child care have shown that

for each dollar invested in 3 or 4-year olds, the long-term gain is between \$7 and \$8. Graduates of high quality preschool programs have better high school graduation rates, lower incarceration rates, better employment records, fewer teenage pregnancies and higher literacy levels.

http://www.azchildren.org/caa/mainpages/Fact_Sheets_&_Links/preschoolrocks.pdf

Education Levels of Staff Affect Quality of Care

Studies on child care quality indicate that staff college education levels have been the most strongly correlated factor to quality care. Unfortunately, a recent study of full-time child care staff in Travis County revealed that 63% of child care center directors, 60% of teachers and 71% of assistants do not have college-level training in early childhood education or child development. Only 26% of all full-time teachers and 15% of all full-time assistants hold a bachelor's degree.

Source: City of Austin Child Care Council Study, January 2004.

Suzanne W. Helburn, ed. (1995). Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers, Technical Report. Denver Department of Economics, Center for Research in Economic and Social Policy, University of Colorado at Denver.

More Training is Required of Hairdressers Than Child Care Workers

Thirty-nine states require more training and educational requirements for child care workers than Texas. In fact, Texas requires only eight hours of specialized training compared with hairdressers who are required to have 1,500 hours of specialized training. Research studies show that high teacher education levels are the most closely correlated factor to child care quality.

<http://nccic.org/pubs/licensingtables/t-graphs.pdf>

Childcare Resource and Research Unit, The Great Child Care Debate: The Long-Term Effects of Non-Parental Child Care.

Online. Available: <http://www.childcarecanada.org/resources/CRRUpubs/op7/Top7.html#top>. Accessed: November 9, 2002. Suzanne W. Helburn, ed. (1995). Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers, Technical Report. Denver Department of Economics, Center for Research in Economic and Social Policy, University of Colorado at Denver.

http://www.beautytech.com/reciprocity/recipe_rst.htm

Overview

Texas has the fastest growing child population in the United States and the second largest child population overall. Of every 12 children in the United States, one is a Texas child. In Travis County alone, there are approximately 69,602 children under the age of five. In addition, it is estimated that 52% of children under six years of age, approximately 40,000, have parents in the workforce. Eighty eight percent of families with children under the age of five indicate they need full time care, at least part of the year. Yet, Travis County has less than 6,420 children attending programs at accredited child care facilities. This leaves the vast majority of children in care that is not rated as quality, including unregulated child care in informal settings.

Frequently Asked Questions About Early Care and Education

The January 2004 Assessment of Child Care in Travis County conducted by the City of Austin Child Care Council revealed that Travis County suffers from the well-identified child care “trilemma”: poor quality programs, low teacher compensation and high costs to families.

<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/Single/2003/ACS/Tabular/050/05000US484533.htm>

http://www.texanscareforchildren.org/files/cc_report2005final.pdf

Frequently Asked Questions about Early Care and Education

Q: Do Travis County families need child care?

Openings and waiting lists are two related measures of demand for child care. Openings for slots in child care centers in Travis County are relatively high (approximately 38%), indicating that the total number of spaces exceeds current demand. However, of those responding to a recent survey (2004), some 56% of National Association for the Education of the Young Child (NAEYC)-accredited centers and 42% of unaccredited centers had waiting lists for infants, while 42% of accredited centers and 29% of unaccredited centers had waiting lists for toddlers. This suggests that the demand for infant and toddler care and accredited child care programs exceeds demand.

In addition, of those families surveyed with children under the age of five, approximately eighty eight percent reported needing some form of child care, while a majority of parents responding to a recent study indicated that they need full time care, at least part of the year.

Sources: CTSIP Survey, 2004; City of Austin Child Care Council Survey, January 2004.

Q: How much child care does Travis County have?

Travis County has approximately 696 child care facilities, of which approximately 13% are accredited by the NAEYC and/or meet Texas Rising Star criteria. The capacity of accredited child care centers has steadily declined from approximately 9,200 slots in 2001 to approximately 6,400 in 2004 — a more than 30% drop in three years.

Sources: CTSIP Survey, 2004; City of Austin Child Care Council Survey, January 2004, FamilyConnections 6/2005

Q: How much does child care cost in Travis County?

Child care costs in licensed centers presently average about \$632 per month for an infant under 18 months, or about \$7,584 per year. Monthly child care costs for children between the ages of 18 months and five years average \$534, and full-time summer school child care averages between \$541- and \$671. These figures represent an increase of more than 20% since 2000 in child care costs.

The average annual cost of center-based child care for children 0-5 years of age in Travis County is \$6,798 – more than the annual tuition and fees at the University of Texas of \$5,735!

<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/twcinfo/ccstateplan07.pdf>

According to a recent study, in an average household, payment for early child care and education can equal anywhere between 7% and 24% or more of annual income. Families earning too much to qualify for child care subsidies, but still making under the state median income, could spend almost 30% of their annual income on child care.

Sources: FamilyConnections; CTSIP Survey 2004.

Q: How well are child care workers paid?

In 2004, Travis County Child Day Care Service workers earned approximately \$7.90/hour, compared to approximately \$19.40/hour for all Service Providing occupations. According to HUD Fair Market Rents and principles for affordability for Travis County, a single room apartment would require a wage of almost \$13.00/hour, indicating that child care workers are hard-pressed to survive on such low salaries. Similarly, the average annual income reported by home-based providers was \$11,262. (\$5.41/hour for a 40 hour week) and these providers reported an average 49-hour per week workload. Only 60% of centers responding to a recent survey were providing health insurance for full-time employees, and other benefits, such as retirement, are provided even less frequently.

Sources: CTSIP Survey, 2004; City of Austin Child Care Council Survey, January 2004.

Additional Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, HUD

Frequently Asked Questions about Early Care and Education

Q: What is the impact of the turnover rate in the profession?

High staff turnover is another factor that negatively impacts the quality of child care because it undermines the ability of children to develop responsive, interpersonal relationships with teachers. The number of employees who stopped working in centers during the past 12 months averaged three or a 25% turnover rate., according to a recent survey. Approximately one-quarter of reporting centers indicated a staff turnover rate of more than 40%.

Sources: CTSIP Survey, 2004; City of Austin Child Care Council Survey, January 2004.

Q: How many Travis County children receive early care and education subsidies?

Program	Number of Children (avg. enrolled)	Ages Served	Number of Facilities
Head Start	854	0 – 5 years	19
Pre-Kindergarten	4,049	4 – 5 years	65
WorkSource - Child Care Solutions	2,794	0 – 12 years	271

*Sources: AISD, Child Inc., WorkSource – Child Care Solutions

Q: If child care costs in Travis County are so high, aren't the child care centers benefiting financially?

From 2001 to 2004 more than 12 NAEYC-accredited centers have closed in Travis County. Obviously, child care centers in our community are struggling financially, not benefiting. A 2004 study found that 35% of the child care centers lost money, 35% "broke even" and only 22% were making a profit.

Moreover, NAEYC accreditation and quality programs are no guarantee of a center's survival.

In theory, child care programs providing high quality services would be able to charge more than child care programs of lesser quality. However, research suggests that even though parents state quality child care is important to them, few parents are able to identify what quality child care is. The inability of parents to identify quality accurately makes it difficult for them to understand the value of paying more for "better" child care if they cannot see how the child care is in fact "better" – or worse. This means child care programs offering high quality services compete with non-quality and even unregulated child care for customers, setting child care tuition at a rate that does not sustain quality practice. Although this system allows families with lower income to more readily access quality care, it can – and does at times -- drive quality care out of business.

Source: City of Austin Child Care Council Study, January 2004.

W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, *Employment Research Spring 1998, Jean Kimmel, Child Care and Federal Policy*. Online. Available: <http://www.upjohninst.org/publications/newsletter/jk598.pdf>. Accessed: November 10, 2002.

Q: What does quality child care look like?

- Teachers and directors have college-level training in child development and on going professional development
- Adequate teacher compensation
- Smaller group size along with low adult-child ratios
- Responsive interpersonal relationships with teachers
- Planned, appropriate curriculum
- Adequate physical space
- Parent and family involvement

Childcare Resource and Research Unit, *The Great Child Care Debate: The Long-Term Effects of Non-Parental Child Care*. Online. Available: <http://www.childcarecanada.org/resources/CRRUpubs/op7/Top7.html#top>.

Q: What are current child care concerns expressed by Travis County families?

Travis County families have expressed problems finding weekend and evening childcare as well as affordable child care. Approximately 50% of all parents responding to a recent study indicated they would prefer to take care of their children themselves, but nearly 65% indicated that they had to utilize alternative child care arrangements (mostly family members or friends and neighbors). Of the parents who requested child care referrals from FamilyConnections, 61% requested information about subsidies.

Source: CTSIP Study, 2004. FamilyConnections, annual information and referral report for 2003.

Frequently Asked Questions about Early Care and Education

Q. What are the policy implications?

Following are considerations for policy makers to address the issues identified in this report:

- Ensure that pre-K programs meet quality standards
- Increase the numbers of Early Care and Education directors as well as teachers who have college degrees
- Focus resources on quality improvement programs (e.g., staff training, curriculum development)
- Provide education to parents about what constitutes quality care
- Ensure that a system of Early Care and Education includes strategies to support children's social and emotional health

Q: What can I do to help?

- Support child care centers that meet quality standards by donating dollars, books or educational equipment.
- Advocate for and encourage the pursuit of statewide quality standards, such as the Texas Rising Star Program and NAEYC Accreditation.
- Volunteer at your local child care center.
- Watch for "Born Learning" advertisements and other Success By 6 activities.

Additional Information

To access the *Early Care and Education: Child Care* report, refer to www.caction.org. To obtain a copy of the 1999 CAN *Early Care and Education* report or any other CAN report, please visit the CAN website, email Brenda Ahrens at bahrns@austinisd.org, call 512-414-8203, or write to the CAN offices at 1111 W. 6th Street, Suite B220, Austin, Texas 78703-1749.

For information on child care assistance, contact WorkSource-Child Care Solutions at 512-597-7191.

For information on Head Start, contact Child, Inc. at 512-451-7361.

For child care resource and referral, contact FamilyConnections at 512-512-327-7660 or toll free 1-877-433-2057, 9:00a-4:00p, Monday-Friday. If you have a question, you may also reach a Referral Specialist via e-mail at search@FamilyConnectionsOnline.org. If you are an employer interested in learning more about employer-sponsored child care benefits, refer to the Austin Area Employers' Collaborative link. The FamilyConnections web site is: www.familyconnectionsonline.org

For information about Success By 6 at United Way, contact Adrian Smith at 512-225-0378, or see the web site at: www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org/sb6/index.cfm

If you are interested in volunteering in child care planning, please contact Ron Hubbard at 512-972-5028 to learn how you can participate in the Austin Child Care Council's Committee work and the CAN Early Care and Education Planning group.

For information on child care data collected from the Central Texas Indicators Annual Report on the Economic, Environmental, and Social Health of the Central Texas Region, contact Jim Walker at 512-223-774 or email at jhwalker@austincc.edu

This FAQ was created by members of the following organizations:

Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department

Central Texas Indicators Project

Child Care Council

Child, Inc.

FamilyConnections

Success By 6 – United Way Capital Area

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

WorkSource-Child Care Solutions.



For information about this document, please contact Ron Hubbard at the City of Austin, 512-972-5028 or email at ron.hubbard@ci.austin.tx.us.

CAN Partners: Austin Area Research Organization ~Austin Independent School District ~Austin Area Human Services Association
Austin Area Interreligious Ministries ~ Austin Travis County MHMR Center ~ Capital Metro ~ City of Austin
Community Justice Council ~ Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce ~ Health Partnerships 2010 ~ Higher Education Coalition
Travis County ~ United Way Capital Area ~ WorkSource- Greater Austin Area Workforce Board