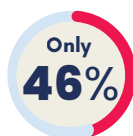


NJ CHILD CARE ACCESS: WHAT THE DATA SHOWS AND WHAT STATE LEADERS CAN DO

Child care is a shared responsibility. When families are left to shoulder the cost on their own, the strain reaches entire communities. Affordable, reliable child care supports children's development, helps parents work, and strengthens businesses and New Jersey's economy.

FOR MANY FAMILIES, CHILD CARE IS...



UNAVAILABLE
of licensed centers serve infants and toddlers under 2.5 years old.

\$20,000/yr
for infant/toddler care
UNAFFORDABLE



HARD TO FIND
OUTSIDE A
9-TO-5
SCHEDULE



NOT INCLUSIVE
of centers report serving children with special needs.

MANY FAMILIES EARN TOO MUCH TO QUALIFY FOR THE STATE'S CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CCAP)* BUT TOO LITTLE TO AFFORD QUALITY CARE.

*The CCAP cutoff is \$66,000 for a family of four in 2026.

LICENSED SPACE DOES NOT GUARANTEE A SEAT.

A licensed child care space does not reflect availability.
Classrooms must be open, staffed, accepting children, and affordable for families.



LOCAL SHORTAGES ARE EASY TO MISS

Statewide totals hide local gaps. **In nine zipcodes, more than 4,100 children under 6 compete for just 316 child care slots.**

CENTERS ARE UNABLE TO PAY THEIR TEACHERS WHAT THEY'RE WORTH AT A PRICE FAMILIES CAN AFFORD. THIS IMPACTS STABILITY.

MEDIAN INCOME OF FULL-TIME CHILD CARE WORKER

\$37,114



More than **40%**

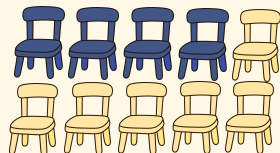
OF CENTERS REPORTED DIFFICULTY HIRING STAFF OR AFFORDING THEIR WAGES.

PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND COMMUNITY CHILD CARE CENTERS STRENGTHEN PUBLIC PRESCHOOL

WHILE PRESERVING INFANT, TODDLER, AND BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL CARE.



This *mixed delivery* approach builds on existing programs and trusted relationships with families. When preschool enrollment shifts away from community providers, revenue losses can put their infant, toddler, and wraparound care at risk. Coordinated planning is essential to expanding public preschool while protecting the full range of care families need.



ONLY 4 IN 10 PUBLIC PRE-K SEATS ARE IN LOCAL CHILD CARE OR HEAD START CLASSROOMS.

45%

294 SCHOOL DISTRICTS PROVIDE FULL-DAY, PUBLIC PRE-K.

ONLY 131 PARTNER WITH A COMMUNITY PROVIDER.

52%

OF CENTERS CITE LOSING CHILDREN TO PUBLIC PRESCHOOL AS A REASON FOR UNDER-ENROLLMENT.

WHAT STATE LEADERS AND LAWMAKERS SHOULD DO:

INVEST IN DATA SYSTEMS & TRANSPARENCY

Create integrated, cross-agency data systems to track ages, vacancies, hours, prices, assistance, transportation, language and inclusion, and publish regular public reports.

FUND THE FOUNDATION

Invest in competitive compensation, benefits, facilities and stable operating support. Increase funding and expand eligibility so more families can access child care.

COORDINATE ACROSS SECTORS

Bring families, providers, employers, advocates, communities and state agencies together to identify solutions.

BUILD INCLUSION

Connect child care, early intervention and preschool special education. Fund inclusion supports and family navigation, and require reporting on children with disabilities served in child care settings.

NJ Child Care Access: What the Data Shows and What State Leaders Can Do

Data Points and Sources

UNAVAILABLE — 46% of licensed centers serve infants and toddlers under 2.5 years old.
Source: NJ DCF Office of Licensing, licensed centers list as of Sept. 1, 2026 (1,875 of 4,083).

UNAFFORDABLE — About \$20,000 per year for infant/toddler care.
Source: Blueprint, p. 9 (infant, \$20,213) and p. 22 (2024: infant \$20,213; toddler \$19,448).

HARD TO FIND OUTSIDE A 9-TO-5 SCHEDULE — 36% of centers offer early-morning care; 35% offer late-afternoon care. Weekend and overnight care are more often available through family child care providers (about 20% and 17%).
Source: Market Rate Survey 2023, Chart 11 and Section VIII, p. 27.

NOT INCLUSIVE — 14% of centers report serving children with special needs.
Source: Market Rate Survey 2023, Chart 1, pp. 8-9.

CCAP ELIGIBILITY — \$66,000 income cutoff for a family of four in 2026.
Source: Blueprint, pp. 9-10.

LOCAL SHORTAGES — In nine ZIP codes, 4,122 children under age 6 and 316 child care slots.
Source: Market Rate Survey 2023, "Areas with a Potential Supply Gap," Tables 31-32, p. 34. Child counts are from the 2020 Census; slots are from 2023.

WORKFORCE — Median income of a full-time child care worker: \$37,114.
Source: Blueprint, p. 12.

— 1 in 4 lead teachers rely on government assistance.
Source: NIEER lead-teacher report, p. 2.

— 40.17% of centers reported difficulty hiring staff or affording their wages.
Source: Market Rate Survey 2023, Chart 2, pp. 9-10.

MIXED DELIVERY — 4 in 10 public pre-K seats are in local child care or Head Start classrooms.
Source: Fiscal Year 2026 Report to the New Jersey State Legislature on Preschool Expansion and Mixed Delivery, p. 4.

— 294 school districts provide full-day public pre-K (45%); 131 partner with a community provider.
Source: Fiscal Year 2026 Report to the New Jersey State Legislature on Preschool Expansion and Mixed Delivery, p. 3.

— 52% of centers cite losing children to public preschool as a reason for under-enrollment.
Source: Market Rate Survey 2023, p. 11.