

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Report
to the
127th
Maine
Legislature

Maine Child Care
Advisory Council
January 2016



Child Care Matters

The first 12 years of life have everything to do with how the next 70 turn out.



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Maine Quick Facts

CHILDREN	Number
Children under 13 years of age	175,000
Children with all parents in workforce (estimated) ²	120,750
Children under 13 living in poverty (18.2%)	21,975
Children with child care subsidy (CCDF, TANF/ASPIRE, Child Welfare)	10,273

CHILD CARE PAYERS	# of children	% of all child care
TANF/ASPIRE	4,708	4%
Child Care Development Fund	4,324	4%
Children under 13 living in poverty (18.2%)	1,241	1%
Private Pay	110,477	91%

CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT FUND (CCDF) (10/1/14-9/30/15)		
	Allocation	Actual Expenditures
Federal	\$16,048,669	\$15,923,622
State	\$ 5,320,491	\$ 1,749,818
Total	\$21,729,160	\$17,673,440
CCDF funds the Licensing and Regulatory Division's 24 child care licensors, as well as quality initiatives that improve early care and education environments that serve all children (subsidized and private pay) cared for in licensed and license exempt settings.		

TANF/ASPIRE (10/1/14-9/30/15)	
	Actual Expenditures
Federal	\$10,525,008
State	\$ 1,955,136
Total	\$12,480,144

CHILD WELFARE (10/1/14-9/30/15)	
	Actual Expenditures
State and Federal Funds	\$ 3,915,203

CHILD CARE WORKFORCE	
Annual Mean Wage	\$21,290
Annual Mean Hourly Wage	\$10.23

CHILD CARE LICENSING		
	Number of Licenses	Service Capacity Numbers
Center Based	738	33,530
Family Child Care	1,145	12,380
Nursery School	58	943
Total Licensed Providers	1,941	46,884

QUALITY RATING AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM (QRIS)		
Percent of Licensed Providers Enrolled in QRIS (951 total)		49%
% of Providers Enrolled in QRIS with open authorization for children with CCDF subsidy (9/2015) (489 Providers)		51%
Step Level By Provider Type (49% of licensed providers enrolled)	Center Based	Family Child Care
Step 1	41%	71%
Step 2	19%	13%
Step 3	10%	12%
Step 4	30%	4%

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK		
	Number	% Change 2014/15
Core Knowledge Training - # of contact hours with providers	26,939	+25%
Core Knowledge Training - # of Participants	1,224	+30%
Technical Assistance - # of TA requests	2,650	NA
Communities of Practice – # of Participants	557	NA

The Child Care Advisory Council (CCAC) wishes to express its thanks to the many staff members of the Department of Health and Human Services who graciously responded to the various requests from the CCAC for information related to Maine's child care subsidy systems. Your responsiveness and cooperation is very much appreciated.

Kathryn Colfer
CCAC Chairperson

Testimonial

My name is Jennifer Merrill. I am a child care professional at the Auburn-Lewiston YMCA. I have an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education. If you are reading this, you already have an interest in Maine's child care system. I am sharing my story because I hope it will help you understand the important role of child care subsidies related to workforce support and access to quality child care for children.

I am now a single Mother of two wonderful boys, ages three and nine. On Thanksgiving Day 2014, my husband passed away. Shortly before his death, my youngest son was diagnosed with cancer and had to undergo a bone marrow transplant in Boston. We had just purchased a home. Supporting my children through their grief, while struggling under the financial pressure, has been very difficult to say the least.

Working with children has always been my passion. I worked hard to earn my degree. Yet, due to the low wages of child care professionals (I was making \$9.50 per hour), there was no way that I could make ends meet. Being a sole supporter and facing child care payments of over \$210 per week for my children's care made it impossible to cover other household expenses. When our family had two incomes child care payments were manageable; but when you are down to one income, it becomes impossible. The ability to access a child care subsidy not only allowed me to work, but also ensured my sons could attend a safe, quality program.

I can honestly tell you that without a Child Care Development Fund child care subsidy, I would not be able to work, particularly at this job I love. My sons would not have access to wonderful learning environments while I work. My children get to learn, have fun, make friends and have something solid they can count on. I can teach and be with other supportive adults. The child care subsidy significantly and positively impacted my family.

During 2015, the Child Care Advisory Council (CCAC) focused on understanding the distinct features of each state administered child care subsidy resource in Maine. The review included examination of the benefits and barriers of each system for children, parents and early care and education providers. This exploration informed the following recommendations.

Recommendations

Develop a unified child care subsidy system. Coordination of multiple early childhood policies and procedures is an essential first step in the development of an integrated, efficient, accessible child care subsidy system. Advisory groups, comprised of all key stakeholders (parents, providers, systems), should be utilized to inform system development.

The system should, at minimum, incorporate a continuum of key quality components contained within Maine's 2016 CCDF State Plan to address: family engagement and consumer education, stable assistance to families to support continuity of care for children and workforce/continuing education, access to high quality child care for low-income children, standards and monitoring to ensure health and safety of all child care settings, recruitment and retention of a qualified and effective child care workforce, and continuous quality improvements in child care settings.

It is further recommended that system components prioritize development of quality learning environments for all children and incorporates open and meaningful lines of communication between Maine's subsidy system and parents and providers.

Establish a baseline of information that will be captured for license exempt caregivers receiving child care subsidies. Providers, at minimum, should comply with key health and safety components and background check requirements contained within Maine's CCDF plan.

Research and address access barriers and other reasons for under-utilization of the child care subsidy system. It is estimated that Maine's child care subsidy systems are serving less than one-half of eligible families, yet there are no child care subsidy wait lists.

Develop common definitions across child care subsidies. Currently, there are no common definitions that describe various service attributes across child care subsidy systems. The variances make it difficult to form a comprehensive picture of the child care funding and services.

Develop coordinated data systems. Data should be coordinated, collated and reportable across various child care subsidies, licensing, and quality rating systems and structures, and state and federal funding that supports those systems.

Establish and maintain quality and accountability practices and monitoring systems (providers, licensors and child care subsidy workers) through enhanced training and communication systems.

Develop active consumer education campaigns that ensure eligible families are aware of the subsidy resources and have knowledge about the quality components of child care that are known to positively impact child development.

Develop and implement an online application that is easy to locate and navigate. Consumer education should be included in the implementation plan. Navigating child care systems, both at the eligibility and community levels, can be a complicated experience for low and moderate income families. Currently, parents often report visiting state offices where there are long wait times due to child care eligibility being embedded in larger subsidy systems. There is lack of knowledge about online processes and how to find appropriate websites.

Reduce paperwork burden by lengthening the recertification period. The process of frequent “spot checks” is repetitive and inefficient, particularly for parents with stable employment and family circumstances.

Strengthen child care subsidy payment practices and policies to ensure equal access to quality learning environments for children with a child care subsidy and the recruitment and retention of a qualified child care workforce. Specifically:

- Payment rates and policies for licensed providers should be at least equal to those in the private market. To achieve this goal, Maine should explore alternative rate setting methodologies to determine child care reimbursement rates that capture the cost of providing quality care.
- Streamline billing processes and notification systems. Receipt of timely information related to change in subsidy status, or parent obligation, is critical to provider financial sustainability. Currently, communication often lags and providers are not aware when a subsidy has lapsed, or the parent fee has changed. Most often this results in a loss of revenue for providers.
- Payment rates should be based upon child enrollment, not attendance. When a child is absent for part or all day, provider costs do not decrease. Sustainability of quality services is difficult to achieve when provider payments are reduced due to child or family circumstances.

Minimize wait times for subsidy authorization (from application with all necessary documentation). Applicants should not wait more than five (5) business days to receive notification of authorization/denial of a child care subsidy.

CCAC Council Membership, and associated appointment processes, need revisions to be reflective of market changes. During 2015, the CCAC examined membership and have identified two areas where changes and improvements are necessary to ensure a strong and effective Council. First, the CCAC has identified that Council membership should be revised to ensure inclusion of all market segments and recommendations for changes in Council membership outlined in 22 MRSA 3739, Sub-2, will be proposed. Secondly, more efficient and timely recruitment, nomination and appointment processes are necessary to ensure a fully seated Council.

Child Care Matters



*The first 12 years of life have everything to do with how the next 70 turn out.
Maine Child Care Advisory Council, Report to the 127th Maine State Legislature*

INTRODUCTION

This report contains information about child care in Maine. There are multiple federal, state and local child care subsidy sources in Maine. Each source serves only a fraction of the eligible population and are not integrated into a coordinated, quality child care system. This report focuses mainly on federal and state subsidy systems; however, it is important to recognize that approximately 90% of the child care market fee for service comes directly from parents (see page 13 for details). For example, in the Northeast, a family with two young children has an annual household cost for child care of \$22,415; almost double the average family cost of a public college education (\$11,622) because 77% of the cost is subsidized by state and federal resources.¹

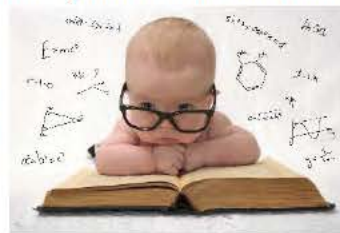


There is more than one door in which children and parents enter Maine's subsidized child care system. In an effort to understand the "doors", this report includes information on the following funding sources: Child Care Development Block Grant Act (which includes the Child Care Development Fund – hereinafter referred to as CCDF), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (hereinafter TANF) which also includes ASPIRE, and Child Welfare. While only CCDF funds are designated to specifically support access to and quality in licensed and license exempt child care, both TANF/ASPIRE and Child Welfare also provide child care funding for all types of child care (see page 15 for definitions.)

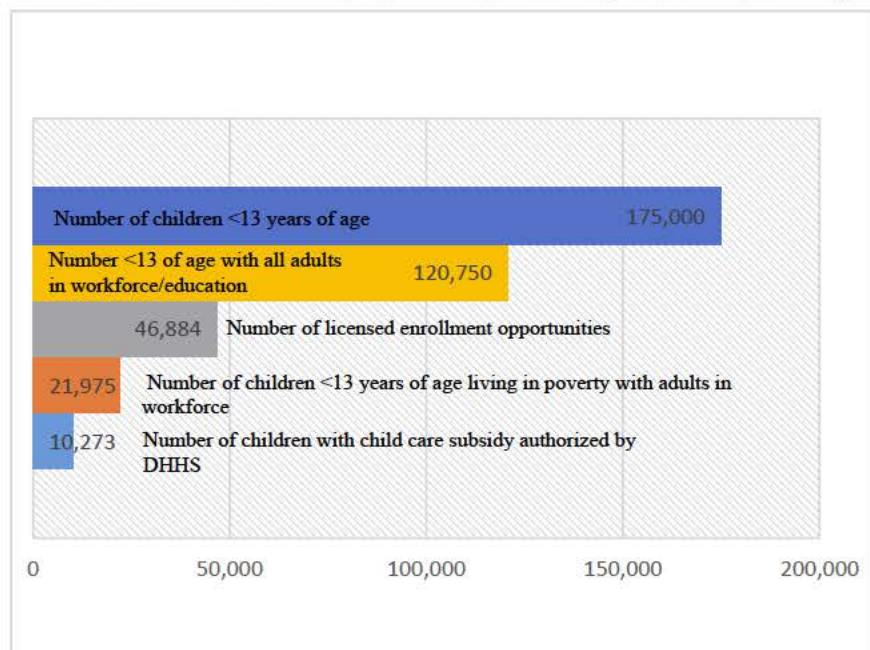
The lack of consistent definitions and data make it difficult for the Child Care Advisory Council to "see" a clear picture of the field. Due to varied and dissimilar definitions and financial reporting systems across child care funding sources, there is not the ability for all segments of the system to report in a consistent manner. The CCDF subsidy system has well-defined definitions and structures that allows for more in-depth analysis than can be accomplished in other systems.

ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE IS IMPORTANT TO MAINE'S FUTURE

Numerous research studies have found that high quality child care is an important element in achieving school readiness and continues to positively predict children's performance well into their school careers. During the first few years of life, the brain is busy forming the foundation that will support all future learning throughout its lifespan. Child development specialists and researchers have produced decades of research showing that environments and experiences in a child's earliest years have profound effects on the developing brain, and those effects last a lifetime.



This is particularly relevant to children who are at risk for not doing well in school. It is estimated that there are 175,000 children under the age of thirteen in Maine². Of these children, 69%³ have all adults in the household working and/or continuing their education; resulting in



120,750 children most likely needing child care. Of these 120,750 children, it is estimated that 21,975 (18.2%⁴) children live in poverty and need access to high quality care, yet only 8,980⁵ children accessed Maine's child care subsidy system (CCDF, TANF/ASPIRE, and Child Welfare). There is a wide disparity between the number of children who qualify for child care subsidy so that adult(s) can work and/or

participate in continuing education activities and those who access the system. However, according to DHHS records, *there is not a wait list for child care subsidies*.

FUNDING SOURCES

Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)

The overarching purpose of CCDF is to increase the availability, affordability and quality of child care services. CCDF is the primary federal funding source for child care which is devoted to providing low-income families (who are working and/or participating in education or training activities) with help paying for child care and improving the quality of care for

children. Early care and education providers must be licensed or license exempt to care for children receiving this type of child care subsidy.

CCDF is the United States' premiere federal child care subsidy program. The Child Care Development Block Grant Act (houses CCDF), reauthorized in 2014, recognizes that child care is a two-generation support. It recognizes the significant body of research that demonstrates the importance of early childhood development and how stable, high quality early experiences can positively influence that development and significantly contribute to children's future success. In particular, low-income children stand to benefit the most from high quality early childhood experiences. Research has also shown the important role of child care financial assistance in helping parents afford reliable child care in order to get and keep stable employment or pursue education. The reauthorized law recognizes CCDF as an integral program to promote both the healthy development of children and parents' pathways to economic stability.



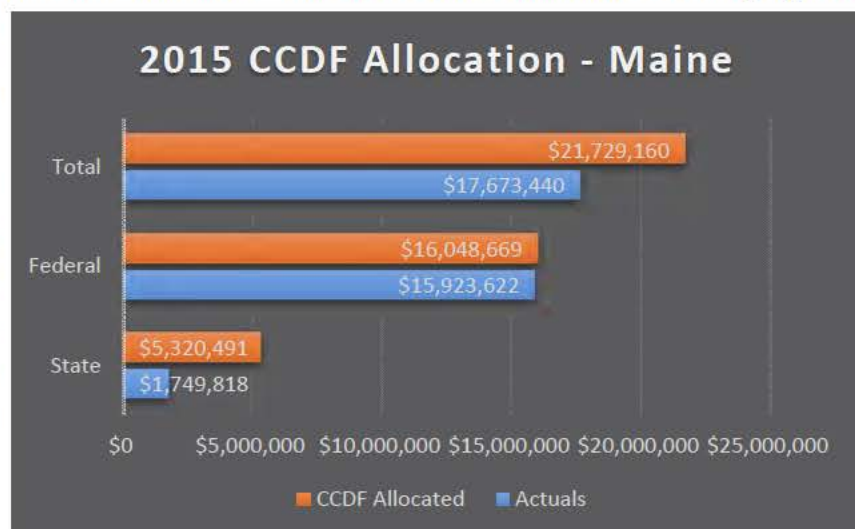
The provisions contained within the reauthorization were focused on ensuring that: (1) all children have access to quality child care; and (2) parents seeking help to pay for child care can work or continue educational pursuits with fewer barriers. The Proposed Rules can be found at <http://federalregister.gov/a/2015-31883>. Reauthorization strengthened provisions in the following areas.

<i>Goals</i>	<i>Provisions</i>
Equal access to stable, high quality child care for low-income children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set base provider payment rates at least at a level sufficient to cover costs to providers of health, safety and quality requirements and provide equal access to child care to families with incomes above 85% of state median income.
Families can easily access child care assistance that supports stable and continuous care and that can be coordinated with other programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages states to take steps to meet the needs of underserved populations. • Expands consumer education and outreach requirements to: (1) help parents better understand child development so parents can make informed consumer choices, and (2) engage parents in the development of their children in child care settings. • Establishes a minimum 12-month eligibility period for all families. • Allows for continued assistance as families' income increases (as long as it remains below the federal eligibility limit). • Requires redetermination processes that do not unduly disrupt parents' employment or educational success.

Protect the health and safety of children in care through more consistent standards and monitoring of standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes minimum health and safety standards, including pre-service or orientation training and ongoing training for providers on specific topic areas. • Requires comprehensive criminal background checks and on-site inspections for all providers, including those who are license exempt. • Requires training for licensing inspectors and appropriate inspector-to-provider ratios. • Requires that states establish group size limits and appropriate provider-to-child ratios.
Enhance the quality of child care and the early childhood workforce to improve the quality of care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases the quality set-aside over five years and authorizes a set-aside to increase the supply and quality of infant-toddler care. • Requires states to mandate ongoing training that provides for a progression of professional development to improve the skills of providers. • Requires states to implement early learning and development guidelines. • Promotes building the supply of high quality care for underserved populations.

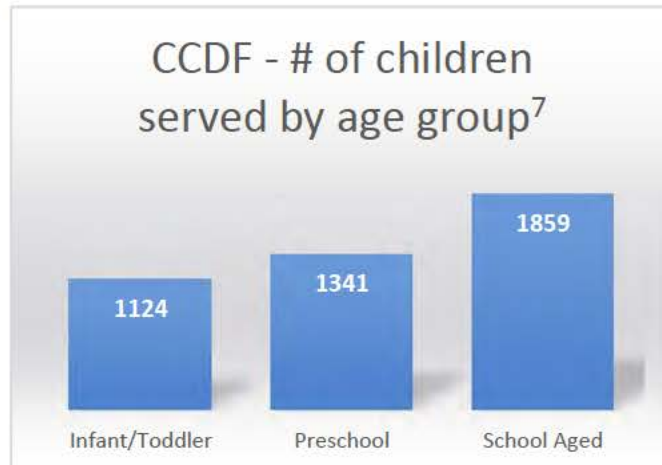
CCDF supports child care for children (ages 6 weeks to 12 years of age, or up to 19 years for children with a disability) when the parents are working and/or continuing education and have an annual household income at or below 250% of federal poverty level or lower than 85% of the state's median income. Providers caring for children with a CCDF subsidy must register with Quality for ME, Maine's Quality Rating and Improvement System for Child Care (see pages 17-18).

CCDF is an aggregate of several funding sources that is distributed in block grants by the federal government to the states and territories. The 2015 CCDF Allocation Chart displays the 2015 federal CCDF and state allocations. The numbers coincide with CCDF's fiscal year (10/1/14-9/30/15)¹¹. The actual expenditures are for the same period. The majority of the funds are used to provide child care services to families who meet certain income and other program criteria.



A portion of funding (at least 4% of the block grant amount) is to be used for activities to improve the quality of child care. Another portion (not to exceed 5% of the block grant amount) can be used to pay for costs of CCDF administration. Every two years, states and territories receiving CCDF funds must prepare and submit to the federal government a plan detailing how these funds will be allocated and expended.

A total of 4,324⁶ children were served through a CCDF child care subsidy (10/14-9/15). Ninety percent⁷ (90%) of those children had parent(s) in the workforce. Approximately 15% of all families are involved in continuing education and workforce activities.⁶ Eighty-five percent⁶ (85%) were cared for by licensed providers, the remaining 15%⁶ were cared for in license exempt settings. The average monthly amount paid to providers per family was \$388⁶.



The table below shows a snapshot of what this actually looks like for Maine families accessing CCDF subsidies. This table represents annual income as a percent of federal poverty level, an example of maximum weekly income level for a family of four, the percent of annual income used to determine parent copayments, and a sample of associated parent copayments for full time care.

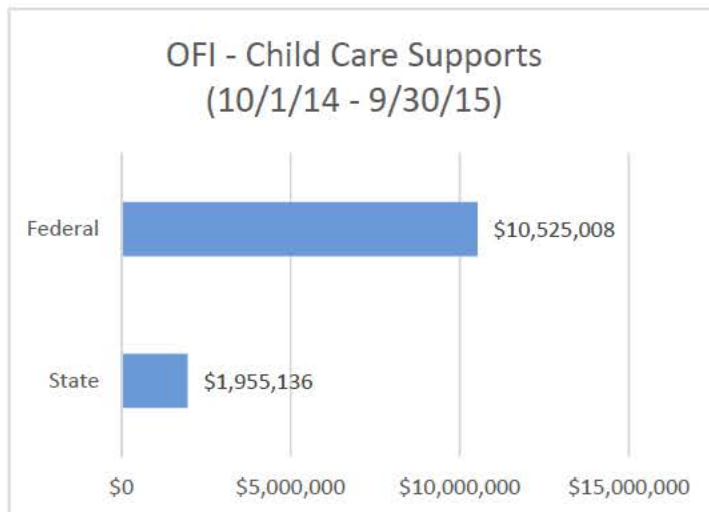
% of Federal Poverty Level	Maximum weekly income for family of <u>four</u>	Family co-payment as percent of income	Weekly parent payment
Up to 25%	\$108.29	2%	\$2.17
26-50%	\$216.58	4%	\$8.66
51-75%	\$324.87	5%	\$16.25
76-100%	\$433.16	6%	\$25.99
101-125%	\$541.45	8%	\$43.32
126-150%	\$649.74	9%	\$58.48
151-200%	\$866.32	10%	\$86.63
201-250%	\$1,082.85	10%	\$108.29

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

As of September 2015, 4,708⁷ children in child care were supported by TANF/ASPIRE child care subsidies, which is administered by the Office of Family Independence (OFI). These subsidies are designed to help needy families achieve self-sufficiency. When a family with young children qualifies for benefits and need care so that recipients can participate in required activities, child care funds are authorized. Of the 2,518 providers that cared for children with a TANF/ASPIRE child care subsidy, 66%⁷ occurred in licensed settings, and 34% in licensed exempt settings (includes family, friend and neighbor care).

The amount of funds expended (10/1/14-9/30/15) in OFI on child care services was \$12,408,145.¹² There are different programs under which families are eligible for child care.

One is *Parents as Scholars* that is designed to support parents involved in a two or four year postsecondary program. Child care for eligible participants equals approximately 3% of OFI expenses for child care. Another support is for families who have transitioned off TANF because they are working and their income is over the TANF income thresholds. This support is called *transitional child care* and it helps parents with the cost of child care. This type of child care



assistance represents 67% of all OFI supports for child care. The third category is **ASPIRE** (Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment), which is a collaborative effort between TANF/ASPIRE and the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services. This program is designed to develop employability skills and help participants transition to employment. Child care for ASPIRE participants totals 30% of all child care spending in OFI.

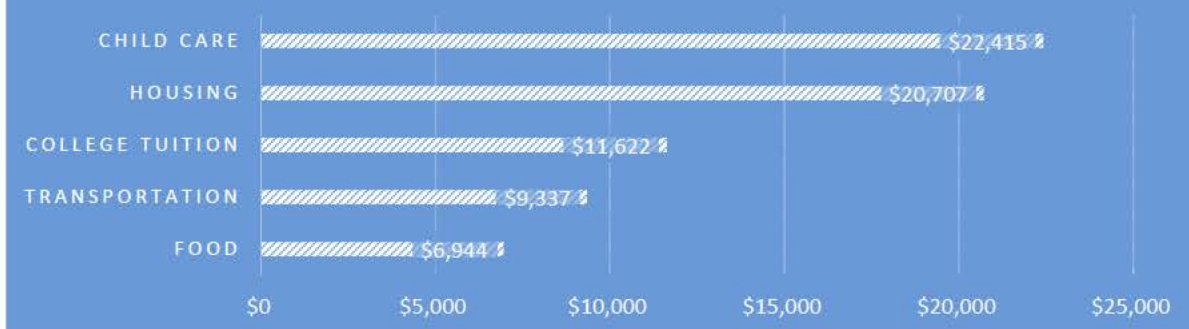
Child Welfare

Between October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015, 1,241 children in State custody had their child care supported by the State⁶. There are instances when children need to be separated from dangerous environments and placed in a different caregiving environment. Often the caregivers in a new environment need child care supports for a variety of reasons, and/or the Department of Health and Human Services determines it is in the best interest of the child to be in an out-of-home caregiving environment. When these instances occur, a child care subsidy is authorized. Child care in these instances is supported through a combination of state and federal funds. Expenses totaled \$3,915,203⁶. Due to the way Child Welfare child care is authorized, data based upon the age of the child is unavailable.

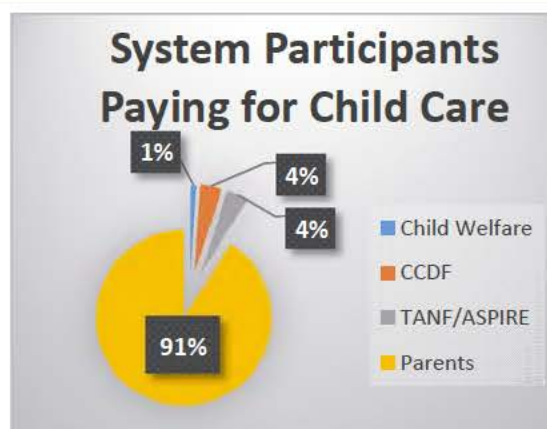
Private Pay Child Care

It is estimated that approximately 90% of all child care in Maine is paid fully by parents (private pay) who do not access subsidy supports⁸. The annual cost of center based care for infants and toddlers ranges from \$9,000-\$11,999⁹. When a parent has two young children in care, the cost of child care becomes a top household expense, as shown in the graph below.

COSTS FOR TWO CHILDREN IN CENTER BASED CARE COMPARED WITH OTHER MAJOR HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES - NORTHEAST REGION



When compiling all types of payers of child care for the estimated 120,750 children with parents in the workforce and/or involved in educational pursuit, it is evident that the subsidized child care system in Maine is a small, but important, slice of the pie. Parents clearly are the highest contributors to child care industry.



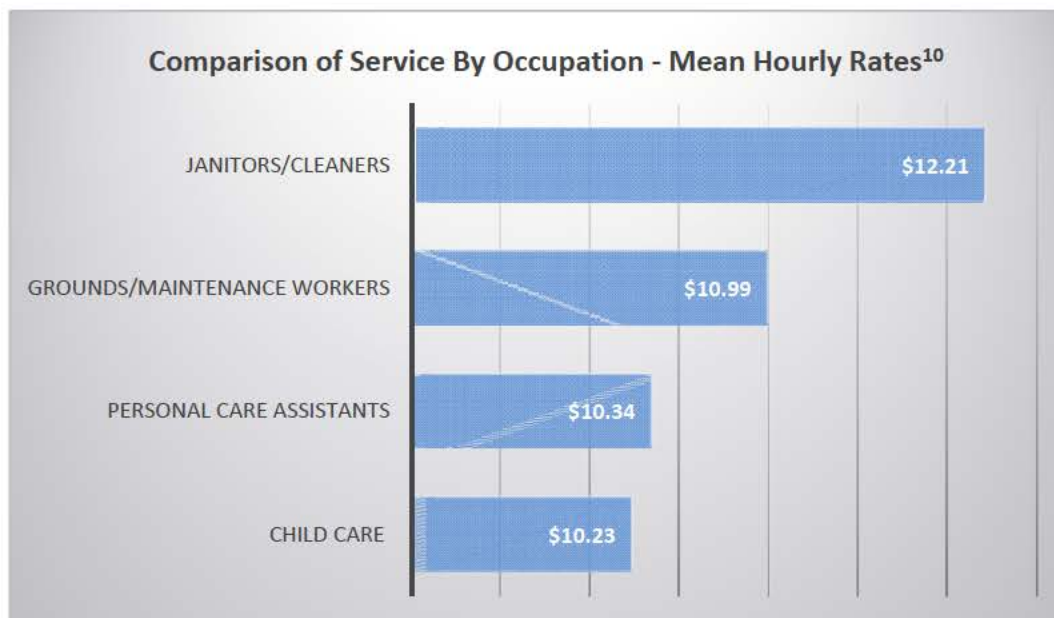
THE WORKFORCE

Efforts to maintain child care affordability for parents often make it difficult for child care programs to pay employees a livable wage. This dilemma is compounded when subsidized child care payments do not keep pace with the private pay market practices and fee for service rates. Providers often face challenges related to financial viability, adherence to regulations and professional development standards, meeting the needs of children with challenging behaviors or other special needs (such as homelessness or involvement in the child welfare system), and providing quality learning environments that support the school readiness of children. The cost of comprehensive, high quality care requires qualified staff, compliance with best practices and state regulations regarding staff to child ratios, group sizes, well-resourced learning environments, facilities, assessments, and good health, safety and nutrition practices.

A different lens through which to look at the annual cost of child care for a family with two young children (\$22,415 as shown previously) is from the perspective of the child care provider. Safe and quality care of young children (appropriate group size and staff to child

ratio) limits the opportunity for economies of scale. The number of care hours needed by parents working full time is approximately 50 hours per week. This equates to \$4.32 per hour per child (\$22,425 divided by two children, divided by 2,600 hours of care per child annually). In a classroom of infants and toddlers where the maximum group size is eight (8) and the staff to child ratio is one to four (1:4), the total income per hour is \$34.56. At 50 hours per week, weekly provider revenue is \$1,728. The weekly revenue of \$1,728 has to support a minimum of 100 weekly hours of provider/staff time, taxes and insurance, facility costs including heat/lights/water/sewer etc., professional development, and materials and supplies for quality learning environments. Additionally, when subsidized child care market rates and payment policies do not keep pace with the private market, children with a child care subsidy have less access to quality child care because provider profit margins are so thin they cannot afford to provide service for less than paid by the private market.

The mean hourly wage in Maine for the child care occupation is \$10.23¹⁰. The example above demonstrates why the mean hourly rate of pay for child care providers is low. And, more often than not, health benefits are not available. The compensation of early educators lags behind other service occupations, even as professional development expectations and regulatory requirements of early educators increase based upon research about the impact of high quality learning environments and teacher credentials on the school readiness of young children.



CHILD CARE LICENSING

While called by various names, there are really only four distinct labels for child care in Maine. Understanding the difference between care settings is important when examining specific attributes of programs.

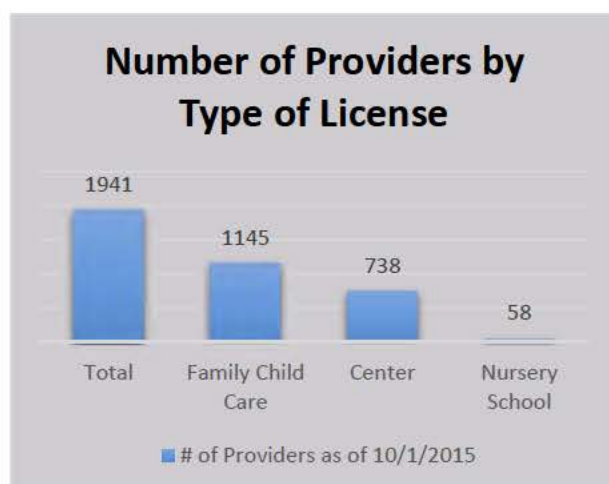
Licensed Center or Family Child Care means that the State of Maine, Department of Health and Human Services Division of Licensing and Regulatory Services (hereinafter Division of Licensing), as well as the State Fire Marshall, have conducted inspections and associated background checks, and authorized a provisional, temporary, conditional or full license to legally provide child care. These providers must adhere to specific rules, regulations, and quality standards as set forth by the State of Maine (<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/ec/occhs/licensing.htm>). They are subject to annual visits by the Division of Licensing, are mandated reporters regarding child abuse and neglect, and are required to adhere to many health and safety standards. These providers care for children of private pay families, as well as children with state authorized child care subsidies, except that CCDF is not authorized for providers with a conditional license.



License Exempt Child Care (*also referred to as Family Friend and Neighbor Care {FFN}*) means an individual who is not licensed or certified but can legally provide child care services if they care for no more than two unrelated (to the provider) children. Background checks are required.

Nursery Schools are licensed and regulated, but have specific regulations not applicable to other child care providers. Nursery Schools can care for three (3) or more children from 33 months through 7 years of age provided that: (1) sessions are not longer than three and one half (3-1/2) hours; (2) no more than two (2) sessions are conducted per day; (3) each child can only attend one session per day; and (4) no hot meals are served.

Illegally Operating Child Care are child care providers who are not licensed and/or are not adhering to the license exempt guidelines described above.

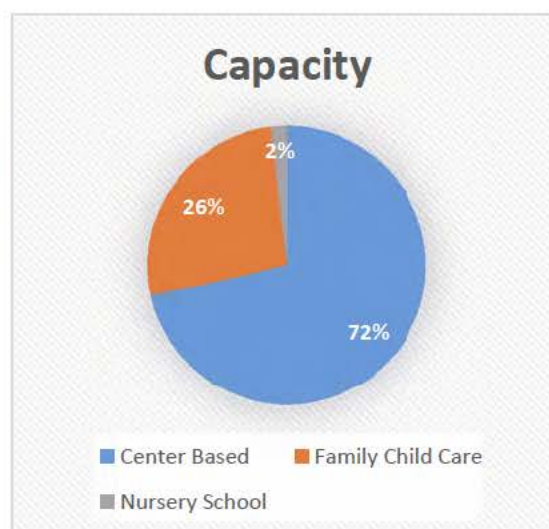


According to the Division of Licensing, on October 1, 2015, there were 1,941 licensed child care establishments in Maine. Information about license exempt providers is not noted here because there is no consistency in definitions between the CCDF and TANF/ASPIRE systems so accurate data is not available. The breakdown by type of license is shown on the chart.

There was a 4.5% increase in center based licenses, 3.3% increase in family child care licenses, and 1.7% decrease in nursery school licenses. The overall number of licensed child care programs increased by 3.6% since January 2015.

The service capacity of these 1,941 providers hovers around 46,880 (10/1/2015). Since January 2015, this represents a 6.9% increase in center based capacity, 4.3% increase in family child care capacity, and a 2% decrease in nursery school capacity. Overall child care capacity increased by 6%.

Center Based Capacity	33,530
Family Child Care	12,380
Nursery School	924
Total Capacity	46,884



CCDF funds the 24 child care licensors in the Division of Licensing. The average caseload per licensor is 81. From January through October 31, 2015, the aggregate number of licensing visits to providers totaled 3,339, which includes initial applications, renewals, follow-up visits after inspections, and courtesy visits in response to provider requests.

Of 1,941 licensed providers, 245 complaints were received by the Division of Licensing. (1/1/15-10/31/15). Allegations were for violations regarding child care rules and is not inclusive of allegations of abuse/neglect.

The Division of Licensing also has responsibility for enforcing compliance with regulations through licensing actions. The approximate number of actions taken (1/1/15-12/23/15) is 241. The type of actions taken are: Issuance of formal statement of deficiency, 213; issuance of conditional license, 21; denial of initial or renewal application, 6; and void an existing license, 1.

There were 254 licensed child care providers that closed in 2015 and 273 new licenses issued for the same period, resulting in a net increase of 19 in the number of licensed providers.

Reports of illegal operations from the field continue to be received. Between January and June of 2015, there were 45 complaints regarding people operating child care programs without a license or not adhering to the license exempt regulations. Of these complaints, 45% were verified as illegal operations.

CONSUMER EDUCATION

Child Care Choices¹³

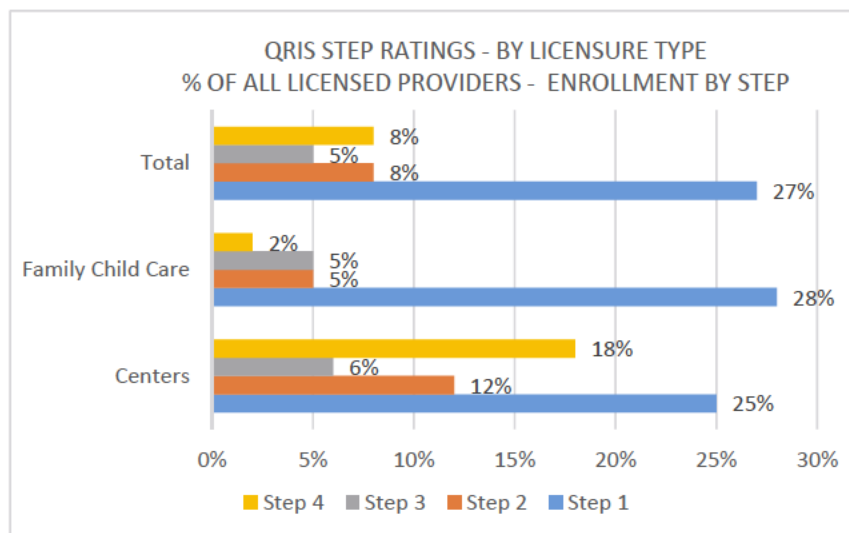
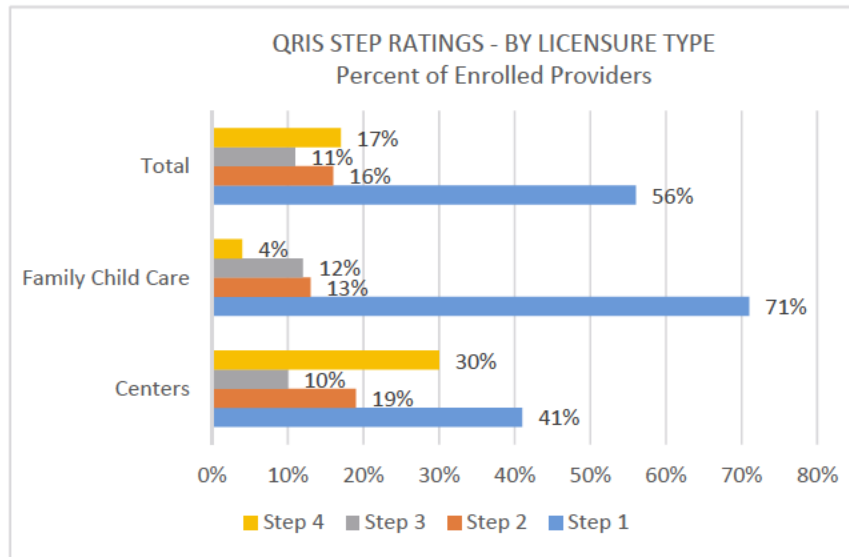
Child Care Choices is a website designed to assist families in finding suitable child care arrangements for their children, as well as a tool that helps parents identify high quality early care and education programs. In calendar year 2015, over 29,000 individuals (unduplicated IP addresses) visited the website, which is a 135% increase over 2014 levels. About half of that 2015 traffic happened in January, because of a traffic spike when there was significant press coverage when the Commissioner announced the website's linkage to information from child care licensing. However, even considering just February through December 2015, over almost 15,000 individuals visited the website, which is a 39% increase over the same period in 2014. The number of visitors in that 11-month period in 2014 was in turn a 24% increase over the same period in 2013.

QUALITY FOR ME – Maine's Quality Rating and Improvement System¹⁴

Maine introduced its quality rating and improvement system, called *Quality for ME*, in 2008. *Quality for ME* is a voluntary system with three distinct goals: (1) Recognize programs that provide quality care; (2) Encourage programs to increase their level of quality; and (3) Give parents identifiable standards of quality. *Quality for ME* consists of four steps and addresses eight standard areas, including: Licensing compliance, learning environment and developmentally appropriate practices, program evaluation, staff and professional development, administrative policies and procedures, parent and family engagement, family resources and authentic assessment. The *Quality for ME* system is currently under revision with the goal of incorporating current research findings and best practices that support school readiness and success.

Currently, 49% of all licensed programs participate in *Quality for ME*. Of these programs, 56% have achieved Step 1; 16% are at Step 2; 11% have achieved Step 3; and, 17% are at Step 4.

When looking at the percent of all licensed programs (enrolled and not enrolled in *Quality for ME*) 61% of all licensed center based programs are enrolled in *Quality for ME* as compared to 40% of family child care programs. The percent at each Step is highlighted on the graph.



Professional Development Network¹⁵

Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network (MRTQ PDN) was founded in 1999 and is housed at the University of Southern Maine, Muskie School of Public Service. Its purpose is to promote and support professionalism in the field of early childhood education and to improve quality through the provision of a statewide system of professional development. MRTQ PDN's services include the Maine Roads to Quality Registry, the Core Knowledge Training Program, the Scholarship Program, Maine Credentials (Infant Toddler 1, Youth Development, Inclusion, and Director), Child Care Leadership Institutes I, II, and III, On-Site Technical Assistance, and the Statewide Training Calendar.

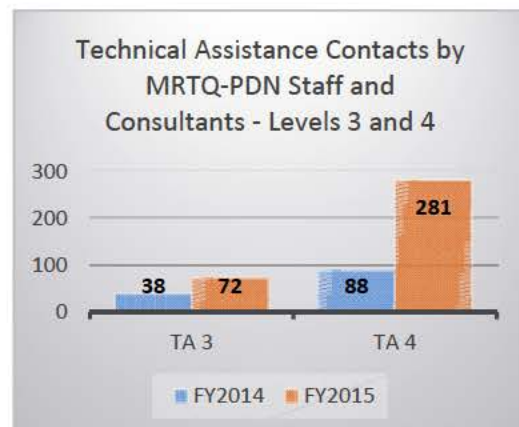
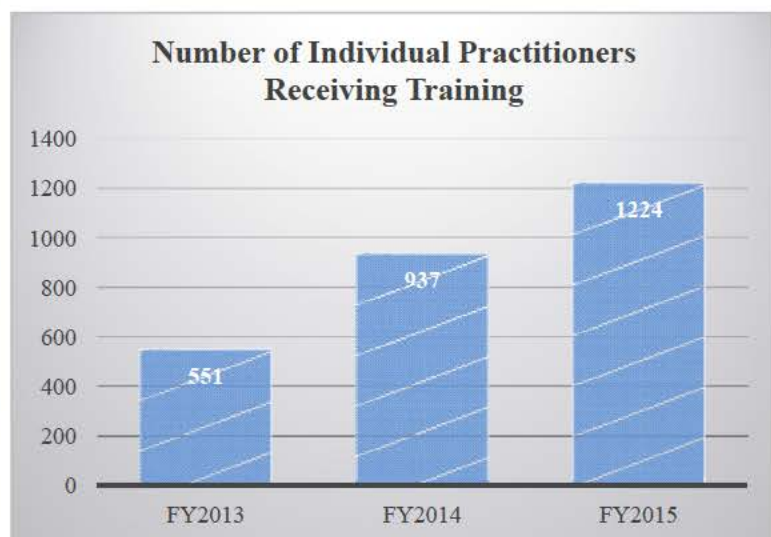
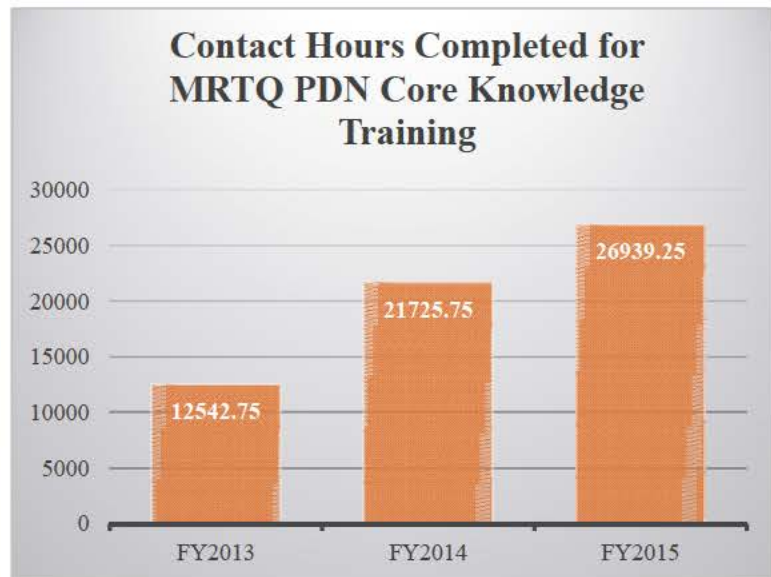
Core Knowledge Training

Core Knowledge Training offers a consistent body of knowledge regarding best practices in early childhood education for both new and experienced practitioners. Core Knowledge Training denotes a standardized set of curricula covering the following eight core knowledge areas: (1) healthy, safe environments, (2) child development, (3) developmentally appropriate practice, (4) observation and assessment, (5) guidance, (6) relationships with families, (7) individual and cultural diversity, and (8) business and professional development. The instructor is required to have a Master's Degree in early childhood education (or closely related field) who have taken additional training regarding teaching adult learners.

In 2015, the number of individual practitioners (1,224) participating increased by 30% since 2014 and by 122% since 2013. The increase in provider participation rates has resulted in a 25% increase in the number of contact hours completed in 2015 as compared to 2014 and a 115% increase over 2013.

Technical Assistance

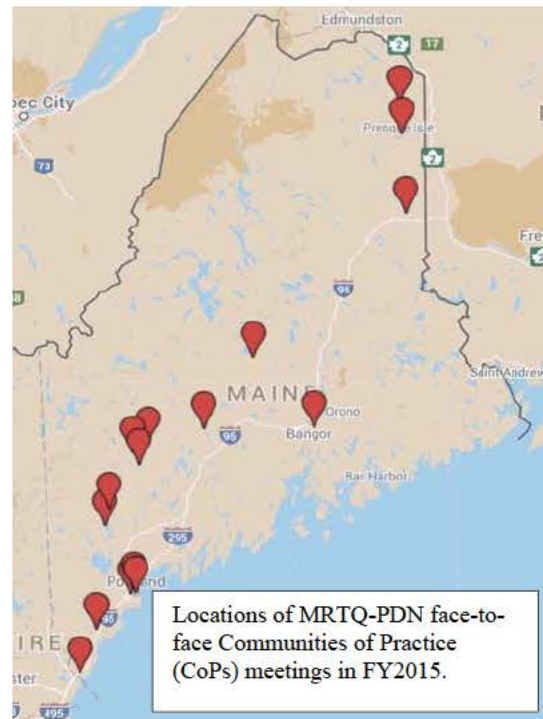
Technical assistance is another support offered by MRTQ PDN. Technical assistance is tracked by type provided. Levels 1 and 2 were provided via the phone or email and involved answering questions and/or sending resources. Levels 3 is one time, on-site technical assistance and Level 4 is ongoing, on-site technical assistance involving the creation of a mutually agreed upon TA plan. In 2015, MRTQ PDN completed 353 on-site technical assistance visits



(Levels 3 and 4) and 1,303 phone and email contacts (Levels 1 and 2). On-site technical assistance has increased significantly in 2015 as compared to 2014, in part due to additional consultants trained to deliver technical assistance, increased marketing efforts, and the intentional linking of technical assistance to both accreditation support and training participation.

Communities of Practice

MRTQ PDN facilitates communities of practice (CoPs) throughout the state. Most CoPs meet monthly for approximately two hours. Practitioners are invited to join at any time. During the meetings, the professionals in the group share ideas and skills with their peers, gain support from a trained facilitator, and brainstorm together about their professional learning needs. This year there were 72 community of practice meetings with 557 attendees in 11 different locations throughout the state.



¹ Child Care Aware, Parents and the Cost of Child Care, 2015 Report

² Based on 2010 Census Data for Maine: Number of children under 18 year of age, less children under six years of age; result divided by 12 years, multiplied by 7 years; add results of first and second step to estimate number of children in Maine under 13 years of age

³ 2015 Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force?loc=21&loct=2#detailed/2/21/false/869,36,868,867,133/any/11472,11473>

⁴ Maine Kids Counts Data Book, 2015

⁵ Child Care subsidy counts reported by Maine DHHS – Office of Family Independence, Child Welfare and CCDF

⁶ Report from DHHS, OCFS – MACWIS Information Services, December 17, 2015

⁷ Report to Child Care Advisory Council, Office of Family independence, Sept. 2015

⁸ Estimated number of children under 13 years of age, less enrollment in state subsidized child care

⁹ Pew Research Center (FactTank 4/18/14)

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, website, Occupational Data, May 2014

¹¹ Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Finance Division, Report to Child Care Advisory Council, December 2015

¹² Office of Family Independence, Department of Health and Human Resources, 1/8/16

¹³ Child Care Choices Traffic Data, University of Maine, 1/11/16

¹⁴ Quality for Me, University of Maine, Muskie School of Public Service, 1/2016

¹⁵ Professional Development Network, University of Maine, Muskie School of Public Service, 1/2016