

Most Delaware Families Can't Access Publicly Funded Child Care

Updated October 2024

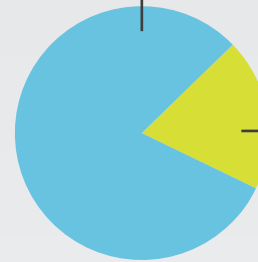
Nearly **51,000** children 5 and under **lack access** to publicly funded care.

Only **1 out of 5** children **have access** to publicly funded care.

*This analysis overstates number of children that can be served due to calculation based on square footage only rather than actual capacity, and most centers are not at full capacity due to underfunding and related staff shortages. For more, visit bit.ly/DEchildcaresupply.

80% of children are **without access to publicly funded early care and education programs**

nearly 50,000 children



19% of children **have access to publicly funded care**

only 11,241 children

60,000 total children age 0-5 in Delaware

What's Preventing Access?

Access includes enrollment in a part-time or full-time program for the entire year or part of the year.

The State of Delaware only funds child early care and education for a **small percentage** of children since **eligibility is limited** to low-income families earning 150-215% of the Federal Poverty Level and those with special needs.

Today, a Delaware household of 4 would need to earn no more than \$60,000 annually or have a child with a diagnosed disability to qualify for care that would cost 0-10% of their income.

Other barriers to access include:

- ▶ Different, burdensome **paperwork processes** for 5 publicly funded programs.
- ▶ Thanks to **low state investment** levels, child care centers struggle to **hire and retain workers**, who typically make **minimum wage**.
- ▶ **Waiting lists** at child care centers are as long as 1,500 families and often years long.
- ▶ Shortage of centers especially in **child care deserts**, where **29 %** of Delawareans live.

Learn more at
www.firststateprek.com

Despite persistent challenges with access, state enrollment in public programs increased since 2021 due to state investments.

In the last 8 years, Delaware has added funding for Purchase of Care and pre-K totaling more than \$60 million, leading to 2,600+ more children served.

Public programs	Statewide
Purchase of Care (children not enrolled in another program) **	8,421
State-Funded Pre-K (ECAP and Redding)	1,703
Early Head Start and Head Start	1,248
Special Education Pre-K	1,076
Public Program enrollment	11,241 (19%)
Unserved	48,542
Unduplicated count*	11,241

** Purchase of Care can be used for full day, part day, and or summer programming. Estimates were made, based on income and services offered, about how many POC children are also enrolled in the other programs above and removed to avoid duplication in the count.

Notes: Assumptions were made for children enrolled in multiple programs to avoid duplicating children. It is assumed that 50 percent of children in ECAP are also receiving Purchase of Care, and 100 percent of children in Redding Pre-K are receiving Purchase of Care. These programs have varied funding amounts and quality standards ranging from basic health and safety standards to high-quality programs with certified teachers. Data sources can be found at bit.ly/4eUtkSY.

Quality Matters!

Research proves that early learning opportunities support lifelong success. And developmentally appropriate high-quality child care programs—for example, those with educational curricula, full-day, special education inclusion, and trained teachers—have the greatest impact on young children’s development and success.

Quality standards vary across programs, ranging from basic health and safety standards for Purchase of Care to educational program and teacher certification requirements in other programs.