



Missouri Children's Leadership Council

Making Child Care Assistance a Priority for Missouri's Working Families

Child care is a crucial support for parents in Missouri's work force. Employees in every sector of the state economy include parents with young children. Employers consistently report that the availability of quality child care improves productivity and reduces absenteeism. It is parents' child care arrangements that allow them to be on the job and productive.

304,287 Missouri children under the age of 6 live in households where all available parents are in the workforce (U.S. Census).

- 22% are in the care of one of their parents
- 27% are cared for by other relatives
- 38% receive care from non-relatives
- 13% use other or multiple arrangements

These Census data estimate that 115,629 Missouri children under age 6 are in some type of organized child care facility.

40,500 children are from low-income families and have their child care fees paid in part by the state's Child Care Assistance program as part of the federal Child Care Development Block Grant.

A family of three in Missouri qualifies for Child Care Assistance subsidies if their income is \$24,036 or less. Only two states have a lower qualification threshold.

Missouri's reimbursement rates for child care providers serving low-income families are significantly below the federally recommended level and well below the market rates paid by families who don't qualify for assistance. In fact Missouri's reimbursement rate ranks among the bottom three states.

Last year the General Assembly made it a priority to improve Missouri's investment in young children by including funds to raise the child care assistance reimbursement rate by 3%. Governor Nixon withheld and has not released these funds (\$10.345M), keeping Missouri at the bottom.

Child care consumes a significant portion of a family budget, particularly when that care is for an infant. The average annual cost of infant care in Missouri is \$8,736, (39.3% of the income of a typical single mother). For two-parent families, the cost of care as a percentage of income is 11.5%. By way of comparison, the average cost of tuition and fees at a public Missouri college is \$8,093.