

Denver Early Childhood Fact Sheet

The vision of the Office of Children's Affairs is to deliver a world class City where all children, youth, and their families have the opportunity to succeed. A child's learning begins before birth and research shows that the most critical period in a child's development occurs within the first five years of life. The quality of learning experiences at home and school during this period often has a life-long impact on later school success, behavior, and health.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 64 percent of Denver children under the age five and younger have all available parents in the labor force. This means that at least 33,000 young children need some kind of care during the day while their parents work.¹



There are approximately 18,500 licensed child care slots in centers and family care homes for children age five and younger in Denver.² These are enough slots to serve 56 percent of the children we know need care during the day. Furthermore, the cost of child care for Denver families is one of the highest in Colorado.³ Care for an infant is approximately \$12,621 annually and \$9,239 annually for a four-year-old in a center.⁴

Ensuring that quality child care and preschool is affordable and accessible for all families and children who need it is essential to preparing Denver children for kindergarten and future success.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *Selected Economic Characteristics: Table CP03*. Retrieved September 2013, from American Community Survey:

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_12_1YR_CP03&prodType=table.

² Qualistar Colorado. (July 3, 2013). *Denver Licensed Capacity*. Qualistar Colorado. Children in age groups 0-1, 1-2, 2-5, and 5-6 as defined by Qualistar were included in this count.

³ Colorado Center on Law and Policy. (2011). *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2011*.

⁴ Child Care Aware. (2012). *Parents and the High Cost of Child Care*.

High Cost of Child Care/Preschool

The cost of child care varies across Colorado. Compared to other counties, Denver has one of the highest child care costs with 34 percent of a family's monthly expenses (a two-parent family with an infant and a preschooler) spent on child care. The child care expense for a family in this situation is more than food and housing combined.⁵

According to the recent report, *Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2012 Report* by Child Care Aware of America, Colorado was the fourth least affordable state for center-based infant care and sixth least affordable for four-year-old care in 2011 based on state median income for a two-parent family.⁶

	Infant Care in a Center	Four-Year-Old Care in a Center
Average Annual Cost of Care	\$12,621	\$9,239
State Median Income for Single Mother Family	\$26,366	\$26,366
Cost of Care as a Percentage of Median Income for a Single Mother Family	47.9%	35%
State Median Income for a Two-Parent Family	\$83,063	\$83,063
Cost of Care as a Percentage of State Median Income for a Two-Parent Family	15.2%	11.1%

Child Care Capacity in Denver

It's difficult to pinpoint the number of available child care slots by age group and the number of children participating in early childhood care and education programs in Denver. The number of licensed care slots is sometimes different than the actual number of children served in child care facilities, the number of children served varies daily, the reporting is inconsistent between resource and referral agencies, city, and state licensing agencies, and how agencies define the age groups of the children served varies. Nonetheless, it's useful to get a rough estimate of the number of available slots for licensed care across a variety of settings to begin to assess the potential gaps in capacity vs. demand.

According to estimates provided by Qualistar Colorado, there are approximately 29,500 licensed child care slots available for all Denver children from birth through age 12. The actual slots available are closer to 28,700 with capacity for infants at 13 percent, 22 percent for toddlers, 44 percent for preschoolers, and 21 percent for summer and before and after school care for school-age children.⁷

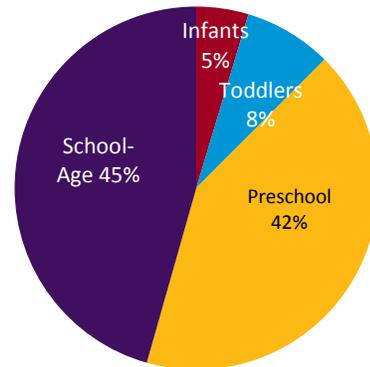
⁵ Colorado Center on Law and Policy. (2011). *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2011*.

⁶ Child Care Aware. (2012). *Parents and the High Cost of Child Care*.

⁷ Qualistar Colorado. (July 13, 2013). *Licensed and Desired Child Care Capacity in Denver*. Qualistar Colorado.

Infant care is the most expensive care for children and is the least accessible. Only five percent of all child care in Denver is available for infants, serving 13 percent of the potential need. Of course, not all parents need or want formal licensed care, and not all care must be located in the neighborhood in which the children live. However, choice for families is important and quality care should be accessible for all families who want it. Preschool is more readily available for Denver children with capacity for 44 percent (12,000) of two-, three-, and four-year-old children.

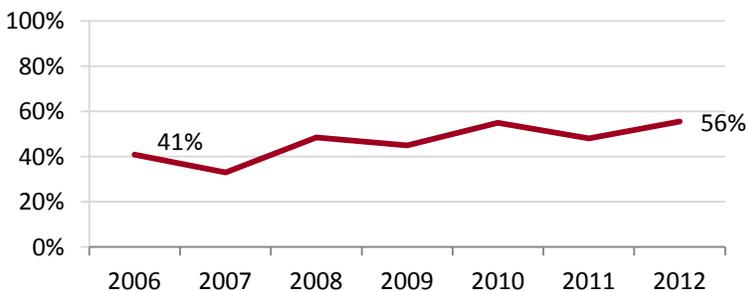
Proportion of Licensed Child Care by Age Group in Denver



Preschool

In Denver, approximately 56 percent (approximately 12,000) of all three- and four-year-olds were enrolled in preschool, 62 percent of those in publicly funded preschool programs and 38 percent in privately funded (family pay) programs.⁸ Research shows that high quality early learning programs, such as Head Start, benefit all children. These programs have also shown to better prepare at-risk children for kindergarten compared to their peers who do not attend preschool.

Denver 3- and 4-Year-Old Children in Preschool

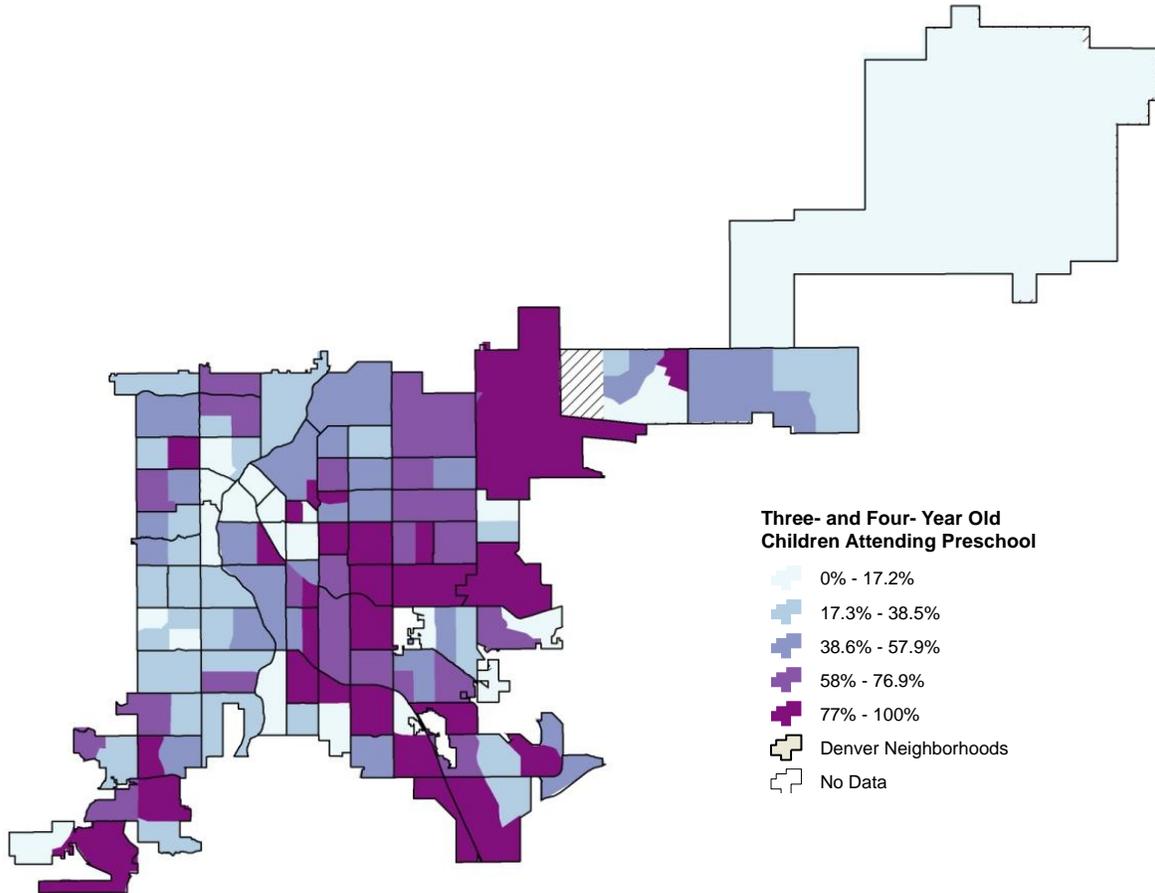


Denver Preschool Program

The Denver Preschool Program (DPP) provides Denver families with tuition credits to help pay for high-quality preschool for all Denver 4-year-old children who want to attend preschool the year before kindergarten. There are 250 preschools that participate in the program with 85 percent earning 3- or 4-Star quality ratings from Qualistar Colorado (4-Star is the highest rating). According to DPP, nearly 6,000 children are enrolled annually in the program, serving nearly 70 percent of Denver's four-year-old children in 2011.¹

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *School Enrollment Table S1401*. Retrieved October 2013, from American Community Survey: http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_12_1YR_S1401&prodType=table.

Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that children participate in preschool at higher rates in some neighborhoods than others. The highest percentage of Denver three- and four-year-old children participating in preschool live in the areas shaded darkest purple. The lowest percentages live in the light shaded areas.⁹



For more information about the Office of Children's Affairs go to:
www.denvergov.org/childrensaffairs

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2008-2012 5-year estimates). *School Enrollment Table S1401*. Retrieved January 2014, from American Community Survey.