



What Docs Should Know About...Quality Child Care

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The majority of young children are in non-parental care on a regular basis at some point during their childhood.

- Over 70 percent of children under age five with employed parents are in the care of someone other than their parents for part of the day. Children in center-based care represent nearly one-third of this group.¹
- The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is a federal funding stream available for states to help parents pay for child care and to improve child care quality.

Research demonstrates that the quality of child care matters for children's development.

- Quality child care provides an opportunity to influence children's cognitive, social, emotional development as well as a link for children and families to comprehensive health, nutrition and social support services.
- Longitudinal studies of high-quality early care and education programs link quality early education to long-term positive child outcomes like enhanced cognitive scores, decreases in grade retention, lower rates of special education placement and higher rates of school completion. These programs include factors that are associated with high-quality care: qualified teachers, low teacher-child ratios, small class sizes, developmentally appropriate curricula, and parental involvement.²

Many children in this country do not receive high quality care.

- A major study of child care quality in four states conducted in 1999 found that only one in seven child care centers had an environment of sufficient quality to promote the cognitive development and socio-emotional functioning of children.³
- States have licensing requirements for child care centers and family child care homes, but they only provide minimal protection for the health and safety of children and most do not meet recommended program standards to enhance early development.
- The lack of quality child care is largely driven by an unstable child care workforce due to low teacher salaries (child care workers earned a mean hourly wage of \$8.37 in 2004),⁴ lack of training and high turn-over rate of child care providers.

Low-income families in particular have difficulty finding and paying for quality child care.

- Low-income families and families looking for specific types of care including care for infants and toddlers, for children with disabilities, and for children whose families work non-traditional hours have difficulty finding and affording quality care.
- In 49 states, the cost of child care for a four-year-old—which ranges from \$4,000 to \$10,000 per year—is more than the cost of public college tuition.⁵
- In 2000, only one in seven of all federally eligible children received child care assistance.⁶
- Over the past several years, state budget crises have forced states to cut back on child care assistance for low-income working families.

Docs can get involved by helping families find child care, talking with families about what quality child care is, and by advocating for high-quality child care for all children.

- Learn about the characteristics of quality child care, help families find quality child care, and learn whether child care assistance is available through local Child Care Resource and Referral Offices (CCR&Rs) by calling 1-800-424-2246 or at www.childcareaware.org.
- Additional federal funding for child care assistance is needed to enable families to work and ensure that children enter school prepared. Contact DFT@DocsForTots.org to learn how to become involved in advocating for quality child care.

Additional Resources for Docs

- "What Docs Should Know About..." Talking Points series, available at www.DocsForTots.org
- National Child Care Information Center, 800.616.2242, www.nccic.org
- National Association for the Education of Young Children, www.naeyc.org

¹ Sonenstein, F., Gates, G., Schmidt, S., Bolshun, N. (2002). *Primary Care Arrangements of Employed Parents*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. www.urban.org.

² Schumacher, R., Irish, K., and Lombardi, J. (2003). *Meeting Great Expectations: Integrating Early Education Program Standards in Child Care*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy. www.clasp.org.

³ Peisner-Feinberg, E.S., et.al. (1999). *The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go To School: Technical report*. www.fpg.unc.edu.

⁴ Center for the Child Care Workforce (2004). *Current Data on Child Care Salaries and Benefits in the United States*. Washington, DC: Author. www.ccw.org

⁵ Schulman, K. (2000). Issue Brief: The High Cost of Child Care Puts Quality Care Out of Reach for Many Families. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.

⁶ Mezey, J. (2003). *Threatened Progress: U.S. in Danger of Losing Ground on Child Care for Low-Income Working Families*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy. www.clasp.org.