



EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO

Child Care in Colorado: Data Essentials

COST OF CHILD CARE

Background and Data Context

States that receive federal dollars from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) for child care subsidies are required to collect data on the prices that child care providers charge to privately paying families. This information is used to set subsidy rates for low-income families who use child care subsidies to ensure that subsidized families can access child care services at prices comparable to those paid by private-paying families. States must conduct either a child care market rate survey every three years or use an alternative methodology to inform subsidy payment rates.

Most states in the US continue to use the traditional Market Rate Survey to estimate child care costs within their states. Colorado, however, along with a handful of other states, recently opted to use an [alternative cost estimation methodology](#) to calculate child care costs. As a result, it is difficult to compare Colorado's child care costs with those in other states. The last Market Rate Survey for Colorado was conducted in 2022, and the results are basis for the most recent national level comparisons of child care costs across states.

Additional Information and Helpful Links:

1. [2022 CO Market Rate Survey Report - FINAL.pdf - Google Drive](#)

These are the results of the final Market Rate Survey Colorado fielded before shifting to the alternative approach. This report contains county-level estimates of child care prices by children's age groups.

2. [CDEC Alternative Rate Setting Methodology Final Report v6.9.24 \(1\).pdf - Google Drive](#)

These are the first results using the new alternative methodology. Colorado made this change to assess the actual costs associated with providing quality child care. These results are not directly comparable across other US states or to the most recent Market Rate Survey. These results include county-level estimates of child care costs by children's age groups.

3. [Affordabilityof-Care.pdf](#)

This 2023 report from the Bell Policy Center includes detailed comparisons of Colorado child care market prices relative to the costs of providing care by children's ages in various counties. This report was produced before the alternative methodology was officially implemented, and instead uses the [Bell ECE Cost Calculator](#) methodology to estimate child care costs.

National Ranking

The best data comes from Child Care Aware. Child Care Aware is a trusted national organization. They publish these rankings regularly and include details about the methodology for their analysis and the source for their data. These data are considered credible and are widely cited, including in the most recent Colorado Kids Count 2024 report.

The most recent report is from 2023 and includes state child care cost rankings by children's age group and type of care.

- [2023 Child Care Aware Affordability Analysis](#)

Colorado ranks 6th in terms of the *least affordable* states for the overall average cost of both center- and home-based child care.

Colorado ranks 4th in terms of the *least affordable* states for the cost of center-based infant care.

Costs by Children's Ages

The best, most recent state-level data comes from Child Care Aware. All estimates listed below come from the [2023 Child Care Aware Affordability Analysis](#).

The Bell Policy Center used the same 2022 Colorado Market Rate Survey data to generate child care [affordability graphs by county](#).

Cost Per Infant

\$19,573 annually for center-based care

45% of the median income for single-parent families in Colorado

15% of the median income for married-couple families in Colorado

\$12,750 annually for family child care

30% of the median income for single-parent families in Colorado

10% of the median income for married-couple families in Colorado

Cost Per Toddler

\$16,307 annually for center-based care

38% of the median income for single-parent families in Colorado

12% of the median income for married-couple families in Colorado

\$12,750 annually for family child care

30% of the median income for single-parent families in Colorado

10% of the median income for married-couple families in Colorado

****Note that the costs of family child care for infants compared to toddlers in Colorado is the same, and these data points could be combined.***

Cost Per Preschooler (4 Year Old)

\$13,809 for center-based care

32% of the median income for single-parent families in Colorado

11% of the median income for married-couple families in Colorado

\$11,970 for family child care

28% of the median income for single-parent families in Colorado

9% of the median income for married-couple families in Colorado

CCCAP

Eligible Children Enrolled in CCCAP

The best, most recent data on the number of children eligible for CCCAP in Colorado come from the Department of Health and Human Services were published in 2024 and report on FY 2021. These data are compared to data reported by Annie E. Casey from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood on the number of children enrolled in CCCAP by fiscal year.

- [Estimates of Child Care Subsidy Eligibility & Receipt for Fiscal Year 2021](#)

According to federal eligibility rules, there were an estimated 195,690 children eligible for CCCAP in Colorado in FY 2021.

According to state eligibility rules, there were an estimated 107,470 children eligible for CCCAP in Colorado in FY 2021.

- [CCCAP Child Care Subsidy Services, by County | KIDS COUNT Data Center](#)

There were 24,648 children enrolled in CCCAP in FY 2021.

Early Milestones Colorado's calculations of these data:

Based on state eligibility rules, 23% of eligible children in Colorado were enrolled in CCCAP in FY 2021.

Based on federal eligibility rules, 13% of eligible children in Colorado were enrolled in CCCAP in FY 2021.

Additional Information:

The Bell Policy Center published a report in 2023 that includes a figure of the number of eligible children compared those utilizing CCCAP, but these data only go through 2019 and do not include specific percentages.

- o [In-The-Know-Childcare-CCCAP-09-2023.pdf](#)

Background and Related Data

The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), which subsidizes child care for low-income families, is primarily funded by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). These funds are distributed by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) to counties, which administer CCCAP locally.

The First Five Years Fund (FFYF) published state fact sheets in 2024 that reports on how many children receive CCDBG funds in Colorado.

- [2024-Colorado-CCDBG-State-Fact-Sheet.pdf](#)

11% of children eligible for CCDBG funds receive them in Colorado.