



Tax & Budget

ASSESSING OHIO'S CHILD CARE SYSTEM

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Working families need a safe, affordable, high-quality place to send their children while they earn a living. But many Ohio jobs don't pay enough for young families to afford this.

The average cost of care for young children generally falls in the \$7,000 to \$11,000 range and parents can pay as much as \$4,000 per child for school-age child care. Yet Ohio makes it harder to qualify for help with child care than all but two other states in the country.

Ohio is not spending enough on public child care. In seven of Ohio's 10 most common occupations, child care for just one infant would consume 25% to 60% of full-time, year-round income. **Child care costs have grown 60% faster than the average costs of food, housing, and transportation over the past 30 years. Low-income families are increasingly expected to work, but childcare funding has been flat over the past 10 years.**

High-quality child care is also crucial for children. High-quality early childhood education can lead to higher test scores, graduation rates and earnings, and lower crime rates. **Estimates of the benefits of early childhood education find that a typical program yields around \$6 in social benefits for every \$1 invested.**

Ohio has instituted the Step Up to Quality system to rate child care centers, help parents assess quality, and encourage centers to provide higher quality care. Centers are increasing their ratings, but not at a fast enough rate to meet state benchmarks in the coming years.

To improve Ohio's child care system, Policy Matters Ohio recommends state policymakers:

- Correct miscategorization of counties so reimbursement rates for child care reflect local costs of care,
- Bring reimbursement rates in line with the results of the 2016 market rate survey so they reflect current costs of care, and
- Raise eligibility for child care to 200% of the federal poverty level to make low-income and working-class families eligible.

These reforms will begin to create the quality childcare system that working families need.