



TRENDS IN CHILD CARE • 2025

Early childhood education during the first five years yields significant long-term benefits, supported by compelling economic evidence. The Heckman Equation demonstrates a substantial 13% return on investment when disadvantaged children participate in high-quality birth-to-five programs. This investment translates to “significant gains...through better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors and employment” (Heckman, n.d.)¹. Beyond immediate school readiness and health advantages, the long-term societal benefits include decreased need for remedial education, increased high school graduation rates, higher adult employment rates, and enhanced civic contributions, such as tax revenue.²

This publication presents an analysis of critical childcare components—demand, supply, and cost in Maryland from 2020 to 2030. The analysis leverages data collected by LOCATE: Child Care of the Maryland Family Network and the Maryland Child Care Resource Network. Historical data spanning 2020 to the present forms the basis of this summary and informs projections for 2025 through 2030. The findings are illustrated through a combination of visual aids (graphs and charts) and descriptive text, providing a comprehensive overview of the data and an interpretation of emerging trends.

Studies show that quality childcare in the first five years is crucial. The Heckman Equation¹ indicates that there is a 13% return on investment when disadvantaged children have access to high quality birth-to five programs. “Significant gains are realized through better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors and employment.” In addition to school readiness benefits and health benefits, that long term return on investment includes reduced remediation; increased rates of high school graduation; higher rates of adult employment; contribution to society including paying taxes.

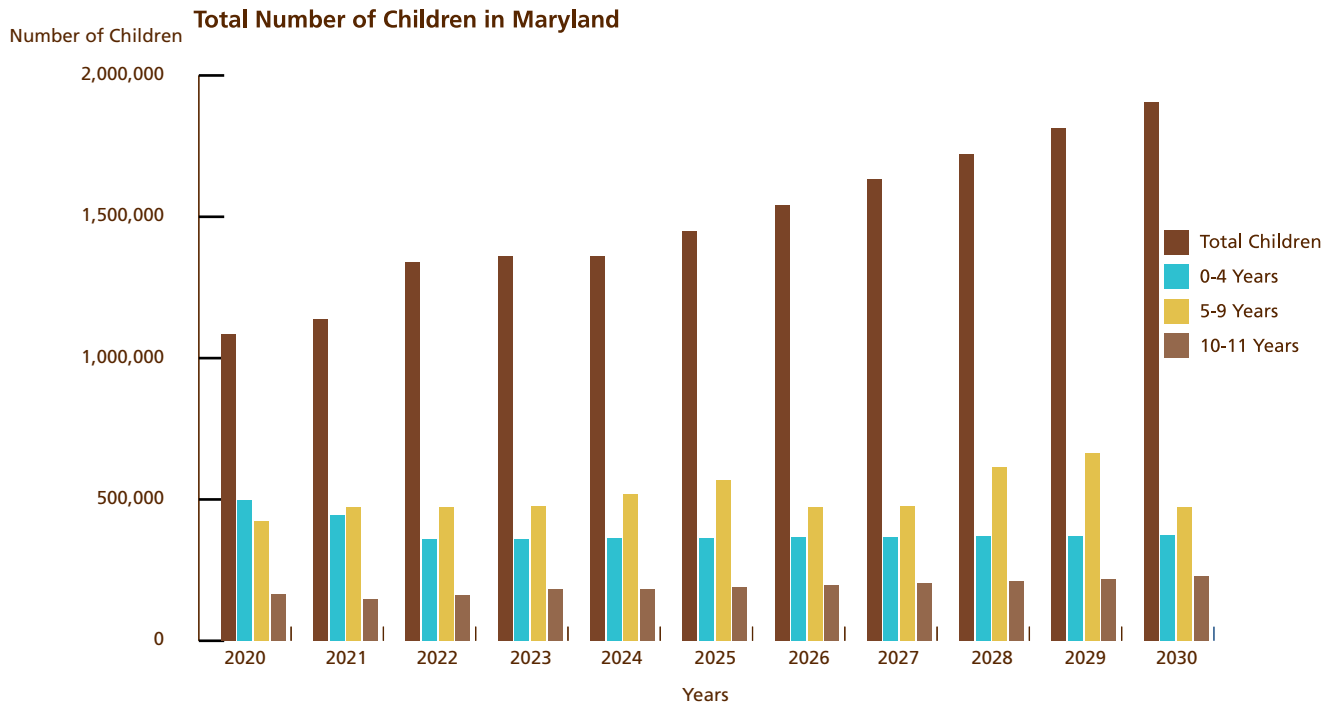
This publication provides a summary of the critical components of childcare (demand, supply, and cost) from 2019-2028. The analysis is based on the data collected by LOCATE: Child Care of the Maryland Family Network and the Maryland Child Care Resource Network. The historical data collected from 2019 to the present is analyzed in the following summary and is used to project the data forecasts for 2024 through 2028. The results of the analysis are presented through a combination of graphs, charts, and text descriptions that summarize the data and interpret the trends.



**MARYLAND
FAMILY
NETWORK**

How many children in Maryland will need child care in the future?

In Maryland, in 2024 there were an estimated 1,358,595 children . Seventy-nine percent or more, 1,094,794 children are under 12 and may require childcare while their mothers are at work.⁵



- **Demand Exceeds Supply:** Multiple sources indicate that the demand for childcare in Maryland continues to be greater than the available supply. This suggests a significant need for childcare services across the state.
- There are approximately 430,000 children aged 5 and under in Maryland, and 71% of these children have all available parents in the workforce, indicating a high potential need for childcare "The accompanying chart presents the estimated total number of children under twelve years old in Maryland, categorized into specific age ranges. This data reflects current figures and provides projections for this population through 2030. The analysis focuses on the potential future demand for childcare services, considering that a significant portion of these children under 12 have mothers in the workforce."³

Analysis of Projected Trends (2020-2030)

Analysis of the data from 2020 through 2030 reveals the following projected trends in the child population in Maryland.

- **A Notable Decrease in the Youngest Age Group (0-4 years):** The number of children in the 0-4 age range is projected to decrease by 25%.
- **A Significant Increase in the Elementary School Age Group (5-9 years):** The 5-9 age group is expected to experience a significant increase of 56%.
- **A large increase in the Older Elementary/Pre-Middle School Age Group (10-11 years):** The number of children aged 10-11 is projected to increase by 34%.
- **Overall Growth in the Under-12 Population: the total number of children under 12 in Maryland is projected to grow by 15%**

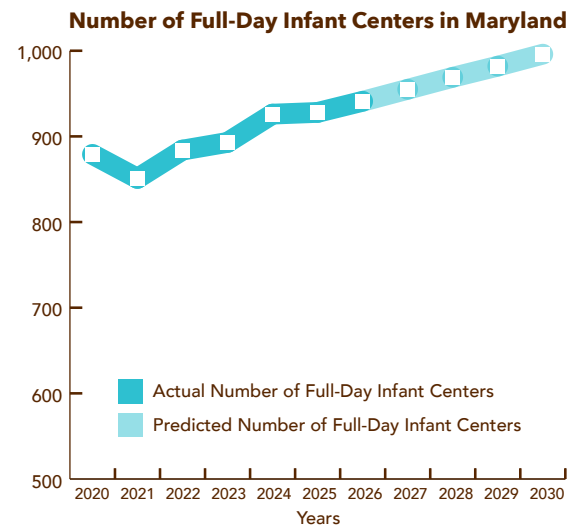
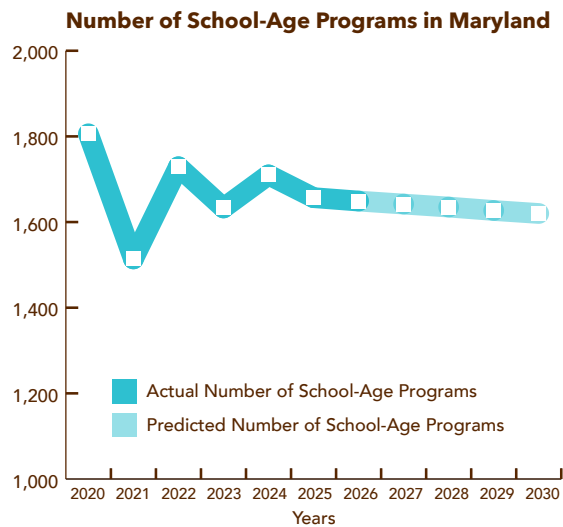
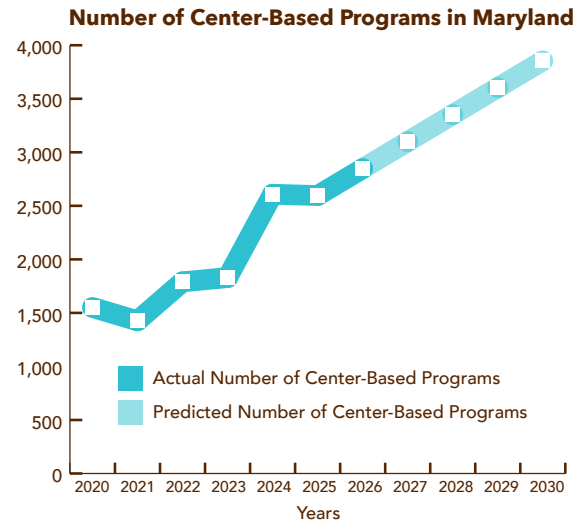
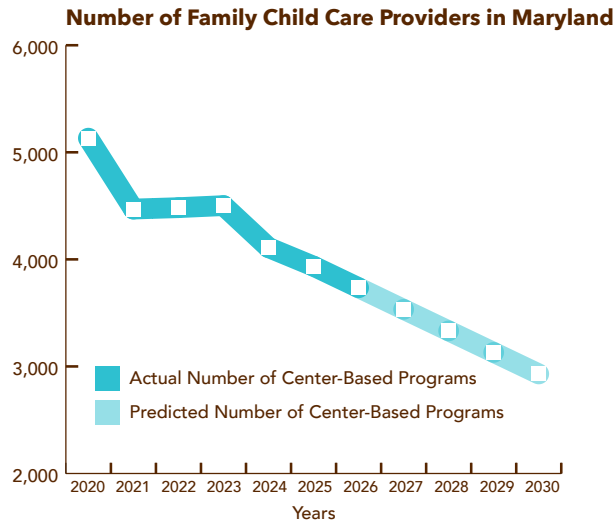
This analysis highlights a shifting demographic landscape within Maryland's under-12 population. While the youngest age group is expected to shrink substantially, (There was an estimated undercount in the 2020 census of an estimated 20,000 children ages 0 to 4.) the elementary school-age population is projected to grow significantly. The relatively stable population of children under 12, coupled with the likelihood of many having working mothers, suggests a continued need for childcare services in the state. The contrasting trends across age groups may necessitate a nuanced approach to childcare planning and resource allocation.

¹Heckman, James J (2016)/ There's more to gain by taking a comprehensive approach to early childhood development. Heckmanequation.org

² <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/Blog>

³American Community Survey

How many child care providers will there be in Maryland in the future?



The graphs above depict the supply of child care from 2020 to 2024 and predictions for 2025 through 2030. Family Child Care Providers: Maryland is projected to experience a significant decrease in the number of family child care providers, estimated at approximately 43% between 2020 and 2030.

- **Center-Based Programs:** In contrast to family child care, the number of center-based child care programs in Maryland is projected to see a substantial increase of about 49% during the same 2020-2030 period.
- **School-Age Programs:** The number of school-age child care programs in Maryland is projected to decrease by approximately 13% between 2020 and 2030.

- **Full-Day Infant Care Centers:** Over the same 2020-2030 timeframe, Maryland is expected to see a growth in the number of full-day infant care centers, with a projected increase of about 13%.

These projections indicate a notable shift in the landscape of child care provision in Maryland. There is an anticipated decline in family-based settings and school-age programs, while center-based care and specialized full-day infant care are expected to expand. This suggests a potential move towards more formal, center-based care options for young children and a contraction in the availability of family child care and programs catering specifically to school-aged children.⁴

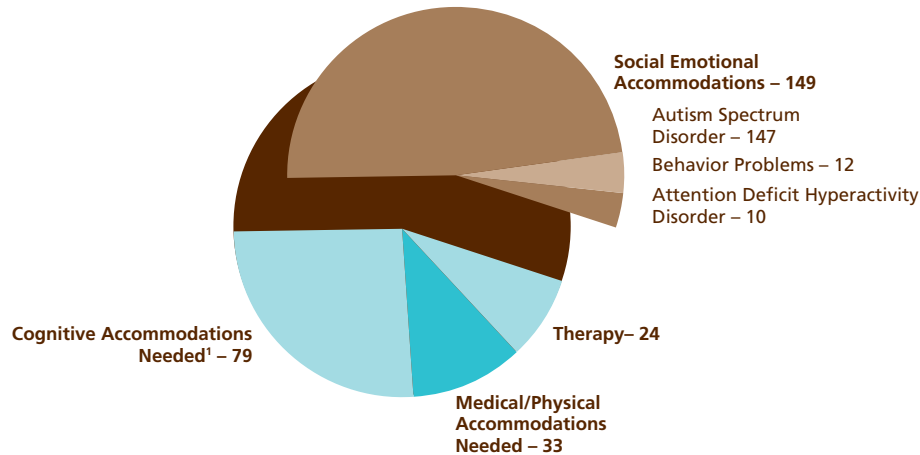
⁴Maryland Family Network's LOCATE Child Care

Is there a need for child care that can serve children with social/emotional disorders?

The need for child care for children with special needs is substantial, and children with emotional and social challenges comprise a large segment of the population in need of these services.

NEE

Accommodations Needed by Children with Special Needs Served Through LOCATE: Child Care



LOCATE: Child Care has been a critical resource in Maryland, providing specialized assistance to families seeking regulated child care for children with special needs. Their dedicated referral service utilized professionals who collaborate closely with parents to understand the specific accommodation necessary for each child's unique needs and the family's circumstances. These specialists then proactively connected families with child care providers possessing the relevant experience and available placements. Furthermore, LOCATE: Child Care offered invaluable counseling to parents navigating the process of securing quality child care.⁵

In 2024, LOCATE: Child Care's Special Needs Service provided enhanced resource and referral support to the families of 285 children with special needs. The demand for these specialized services was highest among young children up to the age of six, who constituted 73.6% of the children with disabilities served. In contrast, only 2.2% of services were for children aged thirteen to twenty-one.⁶

Among the children with disabilities requiring accommodations and served by LOCATE's Special Needs Service, a significant majority (70.6%) presented with a single disability, while the remaining 34.4% had multiple disabilities. Recognizing that many children with disabilities benefit from tailored support in child care settings, LOCATE's Special Needs Service has consistently observed a notable prevalence of children needing social/emotional accommodations. Since 2006, this need has consistently ranged between 36% and 54.9% of the children served. Notably, over 87% of those requiring social/emotional accommodations were identified as having autism spectrum disorder.

It is important to note that these figures include children with developmental delays as well as those with social/emotional disorders, as children with developmental delays often benefit from social/emotional accommodations in child care environments. LOCATE's Special Needs Service has consistently observed a high prevalence of children needing social/emotional accommodation.⁷

Addressing Mental Health Needs in Early Childhood: The ECMH Project

A significant portion of children requiring social/emotional accommodations in childcare settings are identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Recognizing the critical importance of early childhood mental health, the Maryland Family Network collaborates with the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Project, an initiative of the Maryland State Department of Education dedicated to supporting the mental well-being of children from birth to five years old. The ECMH Project aims to:

- Facilitate Access to Intensive Support: Refer children and their families who require more specialized mental health services to appropriate support and clinical programs.
- Promote Stability in Childcare: Support children in maintaining stable, high-quality childcare arrangements that are responsive to their individual needs.

⁵ Numbers include children with developmental delays as well as those with social/emotional disorders. Children with developmental delays often need social/emotional accommodations in the child care setting.

⁶ Includes such conditions as bipolar disorder, depression, emotional problems, mood disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

⁷ Maryland Department of Education, Early Childhood Development, earlychildhood.marylandpubicschools.org/early-childhood-mental-health

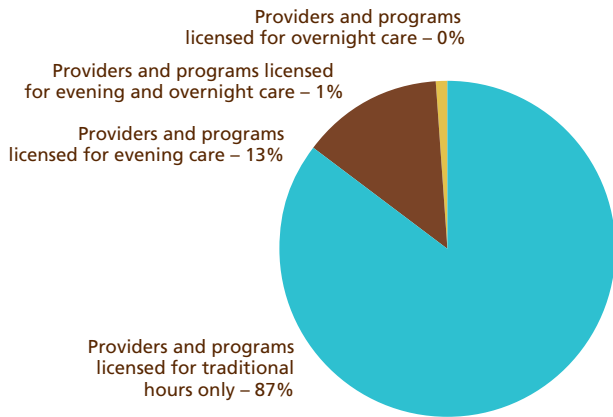
What about non-traditional hours of care?

EOD

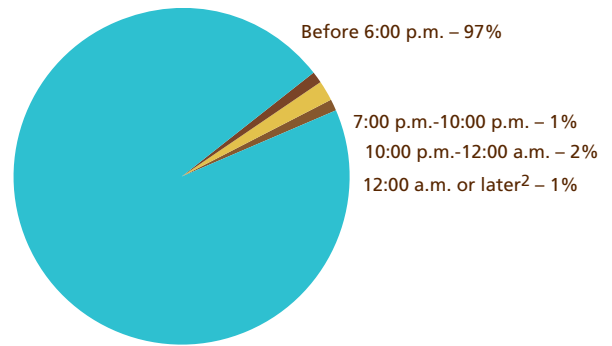
Approximately 16.1% of caregivers are licensed to offer evening or overnight care.



Child Care Providers and Programs Licensed to Provide Day, Evening, and Overnight Care



Closing Hours of Providers and Programs Licensed to Provide Evening or Overnight Care*

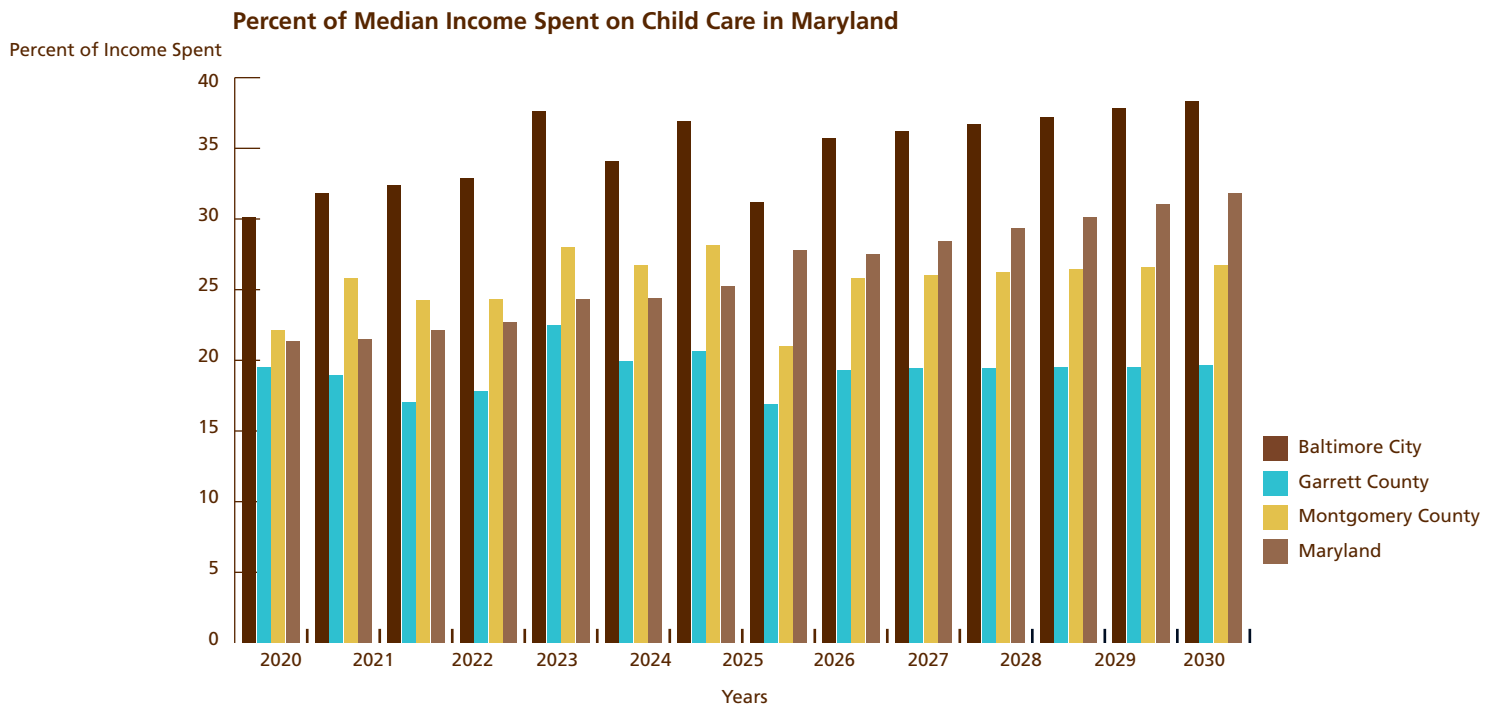


Among the 901 caregivers licensed for evening or overnight care, approximately 20% (178) actually offer services during these non-traditional hours.⁵ In fiscal year 2024, LOCATE: Child Care received requests for child care for 2,776 children. Of these requests, 1.7% (40) indicated a need for evening care (7:00 p.m. to midnight), and 0.7% (16) required overnight care (midnight to 6:00 a.m.). The proportion of demand for both evening and overnight care experienced a slight increase compared to the previous year.⁸

⁸ Maryland Family Network, LOCATE: Child Care

How much of a family's income is spent on child care?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human services recommends that a parent should not spend more than 10% of their family income on childcare.



The Rising Cost of Childcare in Maryland: A Projected Burden on Families

Visual data illustrates the percentage of family income currently spent on childcare services in Maryland, alongside projections for the near future. The estimated cost of childcare is calculated as the combined average of full-time care for an infant in a family childcare home and a preschooler in a childcare center. The chart presents data for three distinct population areas: an urban setting (Baltimore City), a suburban region (Montgomery County), and a rural area, providing a representative overview of the state.

Current child care expenditure as a percent of income, both statewide and across all jurisdictions in Maryland, already surpass the generally recommended affordability threshold of 10% of family income. Projections indicate that these costs are expected to continue their upward trajectory over the next five years. Consequently, analysis suggests that neither Maryland as a whole nor any of its individual jurisdictions are on track to meet the 10% child care affordability goal by 2029.⁹

Accompanying charts illustrate the actual and projected weekly costs of regulated child care in Maryland, broken down by the child's age group. These charts present historical cost data alongside future cost estimates based on current trends. Analysis of this data forecasts a significant increase in child care costs ranging from 23% to 39% through 2030, with the specific rate varying depending on the child's age and the type of care. Center-based care for children is projected to experience the highest growth rate at 39%. Following this, costs for both 2-4 year olds and five-year-olds in center-based settings are expected to increase by 31%. Family child care programs are also projected to become more expensive, with an estimated 28% increase for infants (0-23 months) and a 25% increase for school-age children.

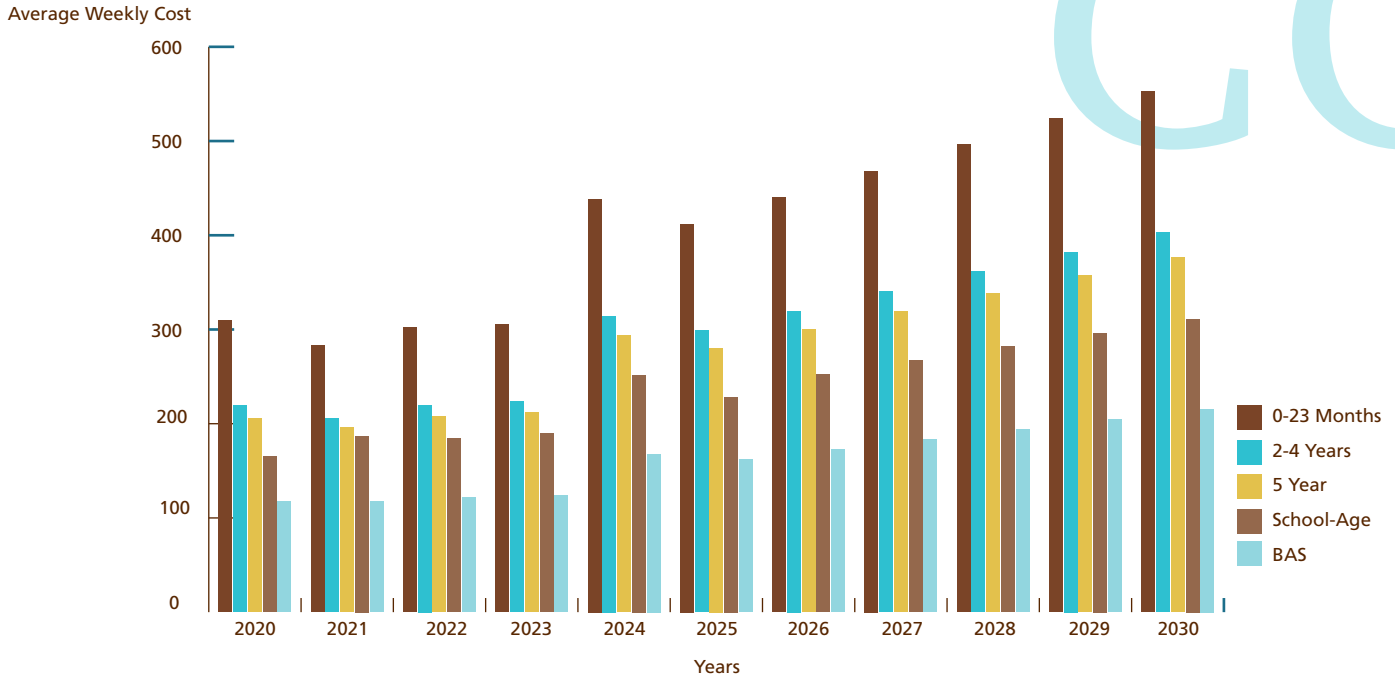
⁹ Maryland Family Network's LOCATE Child Care

Will the cost of child care continue to grow?

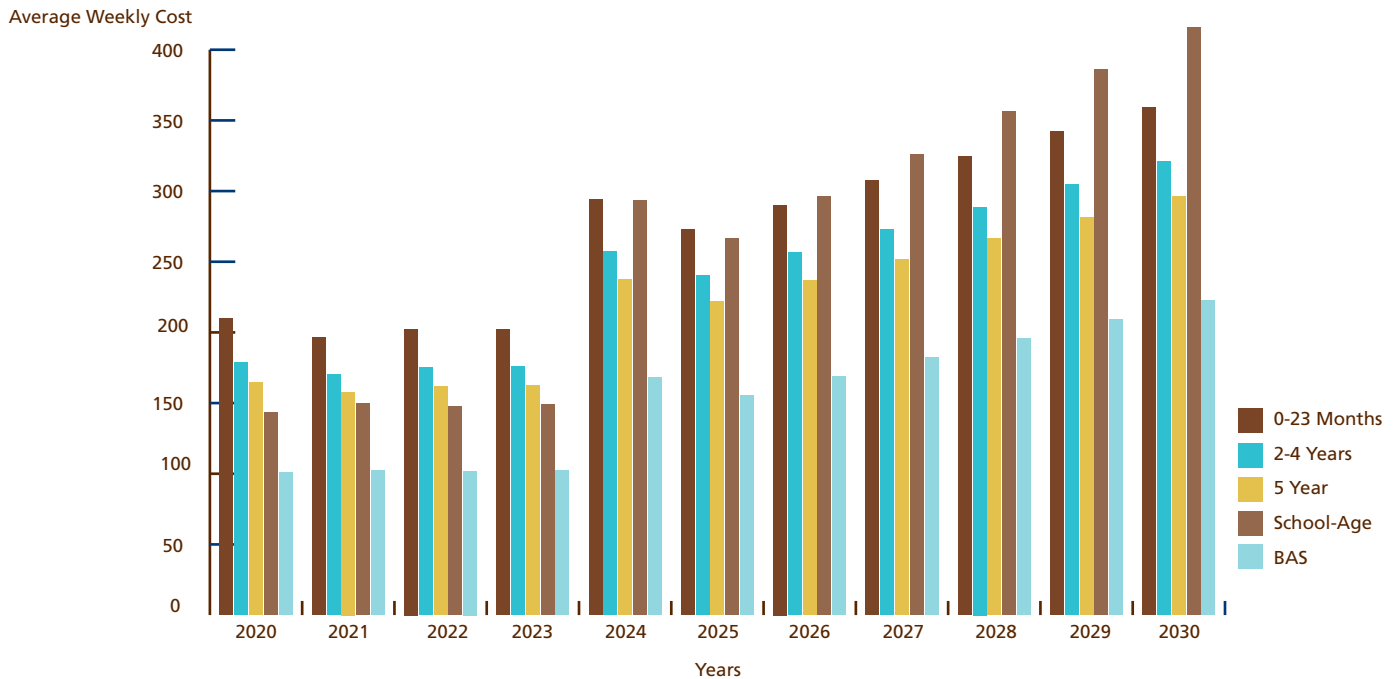
The cost of care has shown, and will continue to show, general growth.



Average Cost of Care in Maryland Center-Based Programs



Average Cost of Care in Maryland Family Child Care Programs



The annual average cost of center-based care for an infant (0-23 months) in Maryland is currently \$22,807.4. This figure underscores the significant financial strain childcare places on families when compared to other substantial household expenses:

- In-State College Tuition (Annual Average, 2023-2024): \$16,238¹⁰
- Estimated Average Annualized Mortgage Payment in Maryland: \$40,356¹¹
- Annual Payment for a \$23,000 Car Loan (6.96% interest, 48 months): \$8,688¹²

These comparisons highlight the substantial financial commitment required for childcare in Maryland, often exceeding the cost of in-state college tuition and representing a significant portion of housing and transportation expenses.¹³

¹⁰ University of Maryland

¹¹ Quicken Loans

¹² Lending Tree

¹³ Maryland Family Network's LOCATE Child Care Center Survey

What about the turnover rate among center-based child care staff?

T U R N

Total Staff and Exiting Staff at Responding Child Care Centers

Staff Level	Number of employees at start of year	Number of employees that left during the year	Percent of employees that left during the year
Director	158	22	14%
Teacher	863	321	37%
Assistant Teacher	214	78	36%
Aides	402	176	44%

Key Findings on Center-Based Child Care Staff Turnover in Maryland (Fiscal Year July 2023 - June 2024):

- In October 2024, Maryland Family Network (MFN) conducted a survey of child care centers in the state to measure the extent of staff turnover in the previous fiscal year. Responses were received from 113 of the centers. The workforce employed by the 113 responding centers numbered 1,637 as June 30, 2024
- Overall Turnover Rate: Responding centers experienced a 37% staff turnover rate, with 597 out of 1,625 staff members leaving their positions.
- High Turnover in Aide/Assistant Group: The highest turnover rate (37%) was observed among aides and assistants.¹⁴

Reasons for Leaving (Based on 113 Respondents):

- Wage-related concerns: A significant portion of the reasons cited were related to compensation (42% wages, 17% health benefits, 1% paid leave).
- Relocation: 17% of departing staff moved.
- Return to School: 25% left to return to educational pursuits.
- Termination/Layoff: 3% of departures were due to termination or layoffs.
- Prevalence of Turnover: Only about 4% of the 171 centers surveyed reported having no staff turnover during the fiscal year. 17 did not have any turnover
- Consequences of High Turnover: The high turnover rate is a concern because it leads to inconsistent care for children and a less experienced workforce.

In summary, the survey conducted by the Maryland Family Network in October 2024 reveals a substantial staff turnover rate of 37% in center-based child care in Maryland during the fiscal year ending June 2024. Low wages and lack of benefits appear to be major contributing factors to this high rate of attrition.¹⁴

The Consequences of High Turnover:

“The significant turnover rate in child care is a serious concern with detrimental effects on the quality of care. For children, frequent changes in caregivers disrupt the formation of secure attachments, which are crucial for their social, emotional, and language development. Furthermore, high turnover leads to a less experienced child care workforce overall.”

¹⁴ Maryland Department of Labor

¹⁵ Maryland Family Network’s LOCATE Child Care New Family Provider Survey

What attracts people to a career in family child care? What causes them to leave?

OVER

Now, let's address the questions about what attracts people to family care, what causes them to leave, and the factors contributing to center-based staff turnover.

What attracts people to a career in family child care?

Based on the 2024 survey of new family child care providers, the primary motivation for entering the profession was enjoyment of working with children (62%). Other reasons include wanting to stay home with their own children, and the lack of quality child care options.¹⁵

Last year, 16% of family child care providers exited the profession.

What causes family child care providers to leave?

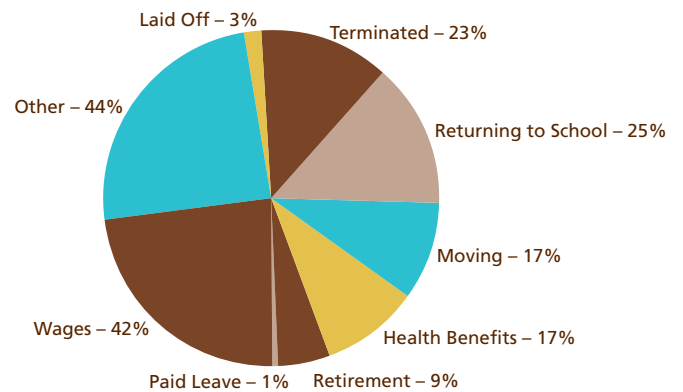
Data from the year ending June 2024 reveals several reasons for family child care providers leaving the profession, with the most prominent being:

- Retirement (33%)
- Burnout (6%)
- Moving (13%)
- Problem with Licensing/Regulations (6%)
- Couldn't get enough children (6%)¹⁰

Interestingly, compensation was not a primary factor cited for leaving in this survey of family child care providers.

In summary: While a passion for working with children often draws individuals to family child care, factors such as retirement, burnout, and the complexities of licensing and regulations are significant contributors to providers leaving the field. This contrasts with center-based staff turnover, where inadequate compensation and benefits are the primary drivers.

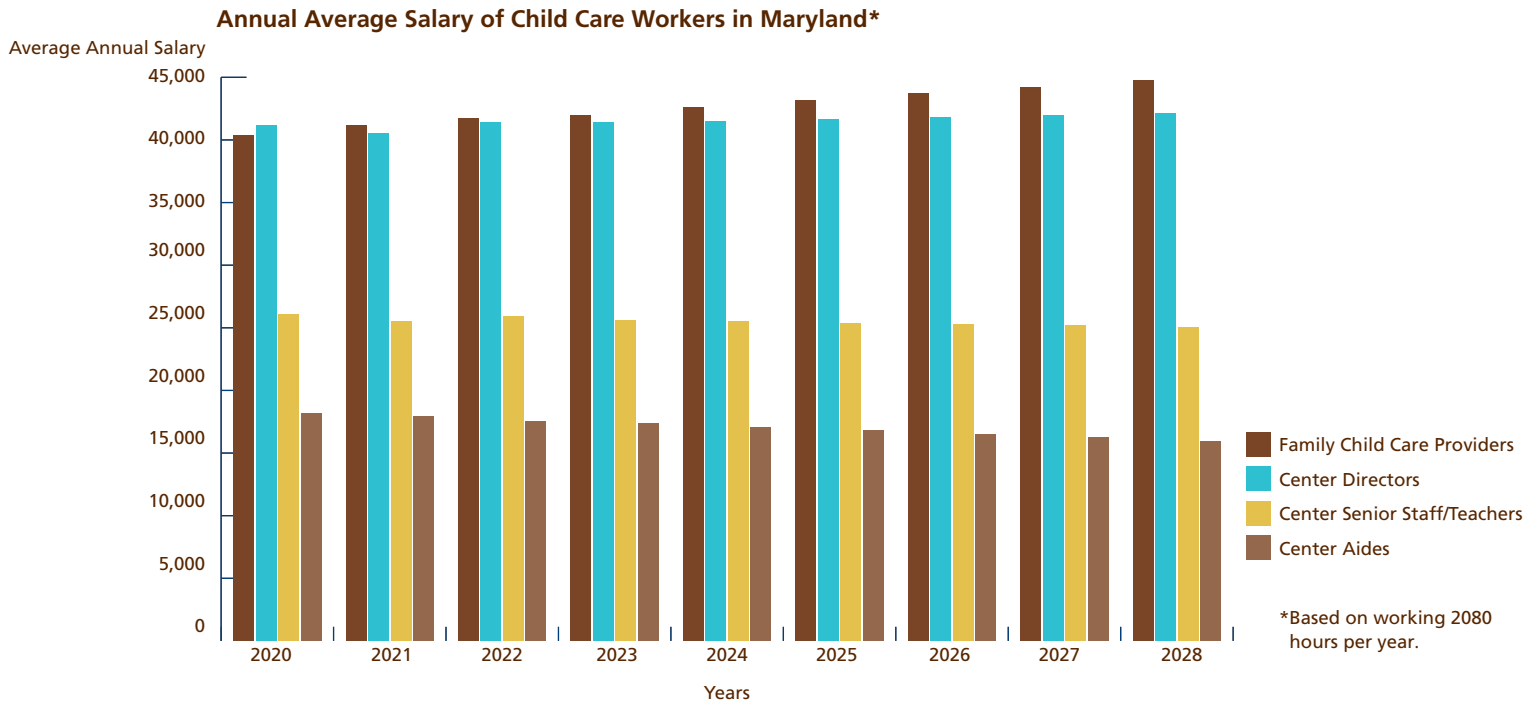
Reasons for leaving



¹⁶ Maryland Department of Labor

What are the average salaries of child care workers in Maryland?

COMPENSATION



It's definitely concerning to see the significant disparity in pay between child care workers and other professions, especially when considering the crucial role they play in early childhood development. The low salaries can indeed impact the quality of care.

The salaries of child care workers are low, when compared to other occupations – ranging between \$8.58* and \$19.77 per hour or annualized to \$17,566 to \$41,131.41.

As a comparison:

- A minimum wage worker in Maryland earns \$31,200¹⁶
- 11 Fast food cooks in Baltimore, Maryland earn a base hourly wage of \$18.94 annualized to \$39,395¹⁶
- Kindergarten teachers in Baltimore Maryland earn between \$42,920 to \$103,020.¹⁷

In the graph, the salaries of all child care workers show a general increase to date with continued projected growth.¹⁸

¹⁶ Oysterlink.com

¹⁷ Baltimore Public Schools

¹⁸ As reported to Maryland Family Network's LOCATE: Child Care by child care providers

How can the quality of child care be improved?

CREDENTIALIAL



Over the past several years, programs, both at the state and national level, have been created to improve the quality of child care. These voluntary programs have been credited with developing criteria for improving both child care programs and the skills of individuals working in the child care field. Participation in one of these programs provides recognition to those child care providers or programs that go beyond the minimum requirements of state licensing and regulations.

Successfully meeting the established criteria for programs is recognized by awarding the program a status of “accredited”. Likewise, meeting the criteria for individuals working in child care programs is recognized by awarding a status of “credentialed”. The credential program has been paused for the past year however there are still 1,015 active Family providers and 11,465 Center staff who have the credential. Maryland Excels has over 200 center providers and over 2500 Family providers in the program.¹⁹

¹⁹ Maryland State Department of Education

Maryland Child Care Resource Network

BALTIMORE CITY

Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center
The Family Tree
2108 N Charles St
Baltimore, MD 21218
tel 410.889.2300
<https://familytreemd.org/bcccr/>

CENTRAL MARYLAND NORTH - BALTIMORE, CECIL & HARFORD COUNTIES

Abilities Network Project ACT
8503 LaSalle Rd
Towson, MD 21286
tel 410.828.7700
<https://anprojectact.org>

CENTRAL MARYLAND SOUTH - ANNE ARUNDEL & PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTIES

Child Resource Connect
9475 Lottsford Rd,
Ste 202 Largo, MD 20774

44 Calvert St,
Rm 140A,
tel 301.772.8420
<https://www.childresource.org>

EASTERN SHORE - CAROLINE, DORCHESTER, KENT, QUEEN ANNE'S, SOMERSET, TALBOT, WICOMICO & WORCESTER COUNTIES

Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center
Salisbury University
East Campus Complex, Ste 500
Power and Wayne Sts
Salisbury, MD 21804
tel 410.543.6650
<http://www.easternshoreccrc.org>

HOWARD COUNTY

Howard County Child Care Resource Center
Howard County Office of Children & Families
9830 Patuxent Woods Dr
Columbia, MD 21046
tel 410.313.1940
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/children-families/child-care-resource-center>

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Montgomery County Child Care Resource Center
Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services
1401 Rockville Pike, Ste 200
Rockville, MD 20852

tel 240.777.GROW (4769)
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/CYF/MCCCRRC/index.html>

SOUTHERN MARYLAND CALVERT, CHARLES & ST. MARY'S COUNTIES

The Promise Resource Center
8395 Old Leonardtown Rd
Hughesville, MD 20637
tel 240.528.2288
<http://thepromisecenter.org>

WESTERN MARYLAND ALLEGANY, CARROLL, FREDERICK, GARRETT & WASHINGTON COUNTIES

Child Care Choices
226 S Jefferson St
Frederick, MD 21701
tel 301.663.0011

255 Clifton Blvd, Ste 319
Westminster, MD 21157

138 W Washington St, Ste 212
Hagerstown, MD 21740
<https://fcmha.org/how-we-help/child-care-choices/>

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Subscribe to our newsletter and public policy alerts for the latest news and information about early care and education.



Listen to *The First Five Years* on WEAA 88.9. It's the only radio series in Maryland dedicated to supporting families of very young children.

LOCATE: Child Care

Our free and confidential LOCATE: Child Care service will help your family identify high quality care and guide you through the process of selecting a program that is just right for your family including location, cost, and other considerations

Family Education

The Family Education Service helps adults make connections with educational opportunities such as parenting classes.

Child Care Scholarship

We will assist you in applying for child care scholarship and help you navigate the process including gathering the correct documentation that is needed.

Family Navigation

Parenting can be hard. That's why we've partnered with hundreds of agencies and organizations across Maryland so every family can connect with resources in their community needed to succeed.



Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and Tumblr.



Become a member. Membership supports our advocacy efforts. Member benefits include reduced fees for training and Professional Activity Units for participants in the Maryland Child Care Credential Program.



**MARYLAND CHILD CARE
RESOURCE NETWORK**

The Maryland Child Care Resource Network is a public/private partnership designed to expand and improve child care delivery in Maryland. Maryland Family Network manages the Network and operates as its Statewide Coordinating Entity.



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1800 WASHINGTON BLVD, STE 445
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21230-2344
tel 410.659.7701 fax 410.783.0814

marylandfamilynetwork.org