



Background

Nearly 30,000 low-income mothers with children under age 3 are currently in the workforce, but struggle to access affordable, reliable, quality early childhood education while they work.

Child care can cost \$12,500 per year in Louisiana—as much as, if not more than, in-state college tuition.

Over 50% of parents indicate they have trouble paying for basic household expenses, including utilities, child care, food, and clothing.

For a low-income single mother with an infant, \$12,500 per year represents more than 60% of her annual income. Parents with a family income below \$35,000 per year were more than twice as likely to have had to quit their job to care for their children.

A low-income married couple with two young children spends approximately 80% of their combined annual income on child care and education.



The Impact on Families & Businesses

A majority of parents making \$150,000 or less per year are worried about being able to afford the cost of child care.

More than 70% of parents said they could not work without a reliable child care arrangement for their children.



As of 2024, over 60% of child care providers in Louisiana maintained a waitlist, with an average waitlist size of 35 children, largely for children under age 3.

One in 13 working parents with young children was fired from their place of employment due to challenges with child care.

Almost half of working mothers with young children in Louisiana miss work regularly due to child care issues.



Nearly 14% of working parents with young children, including 12% of working mothers, turned down a promotion because of breakdowns in child care.

\$1.3 BILLION

Absences and turnover due to child care issues cost Louisiana employers \$762 million a year, and result in a \$1.3 billion loss annually for Louisiana's economy.

Potential Opportunities

The return-on-investment in quality early childhood education can reach 13% per year.

Early experiences for young children are foundational, with 90% of brain development taking place from birth through age four. Studies show that quality early childhood education programs support better learning, social behavior, and health outcomes for children.

Sources:

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- Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, Losing Ground: How Child Care Impacts Louisiana's Workforce Productivity and the State Economy, 2017.
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- Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, Maintain the Momentum: The Role of Child Care Investments in Supporting Working Families, 2023.
- Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, Help Wanted: The Staffing and Operating Challenges Facing Louisiana Child Care Providers, 2023.
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- Harvard Graduate School of Education, The Lasting Payoff of Early Ed, 2017.
- The Heckman Equation, The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program
- Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, Early Investments Pay Off: How Funding Early Care and Education Programs Prevents Future Crime, 2021.
- Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Investing in Kids Now Can Prevent Crime in the Future, 2020.
- Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, Caught in the Middle: Louisiana Parents, Work, and the Struggle for Affordable Child Care, 2025

Quality early childhood education is not babysitting. Quality early childhood education programs are led by teaching professionals who use age-appropriate learning materials and curriculum in their classrooms. Early childhood education professionals support positive interpersonal interactions and foster a safe and secure learning environment. Ensuring children can receive continuity of care in quality settings maximizes long-term benefits for children. Children enrolled in high-quality early childhood education programs are less likely to be arrested or engaged in violent crime, and investment in high-quality early childhood education can save millions of dollars as crime prevention.