

Support Rutgers DEI Initiatives and Childcare Infrastructure at the Rutgers Psychology Child Development Center

Childcare in the United States is inaccessible and unaffordable for many working families. At the same time, childcare workers—overwhelmingly women and disproportionately women of color—are severely underpaid. With too little funding available, childcare providers struggle to maintain staffing levels necessary to keep classrooms open, resulting in growing waitlists and dwindling supply that limits families' choices for care.¹

Rutgers University is not untouched by these challenges. Many Rutgers faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students find campus care inaccessible and unaffordable. The Rutgers Psychology Child Development Centers are 2 on-campus, licensed childcare programs operated by the Psychology Department and have been supporting research and academics, as well as providing early care and education for young children since its creation as the **“School for Child Study” at Douglass College (then known as The New Jersey College for Women) by Mabel Smith Douglass in 1930!**² While our program enrollment has grown from the original 12 children, we still cannot meet the demand for quality, on-campus childcare and continue to maintain waiting lists of over 100 children. Since many area school districts have utilized federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to create and expand PreK classrooms in the public schools, our programs have lost nearly 50% of their staff members to those districts where salaries are significantly higher even though those positions are 10-month academic year appointments.

The Rutgers Psychology Child Development Centers are self-funded, and all operational costs are supported by the tuition collected for the enrolled children and through childcare grants when they are available. Additional financial support is needed to support the program's infrastructure to ensure continued success, growth, and expansion, as well as to make campus childcare accessible and affordable for the Rutgers community.

Consider supporting Rutgers Psychology Child Development Center to invest in childcare infrastructure to reduce costs for Rutgers faculty, staff, and college student families, support Rutgers research and academics in early childhood learning and development, bolster the childcare workforce, and address racial and gender disparities in the childcare system.

Childcare is an economic issue

- Childcare is the work that enables all other work. When families have access to affordable, quality childcare, they can participate in the workforce, search for a job, or obtain education, boosting both economic growth and family financial stability.
- Access to childcare benefits families across a range of areas, leading to improved child and family health, better educational outcomes, and economic stability.³
- Across the country, 67 percent of children under age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, with more than 20 million children requiring regular care.⁴

¹ 5 Things To Know About the Child Care for Working Families Act, May 1, 2023, available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/5-things-to-know-about-the-child-care-for-working-families-act/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=amprog_en&utm_campaign=default&utm_content=eac+rpt+01+20230501+ccwf-act+grp+1+x

² Douglass Psychology Child Study Center: A Bit of Early History by Dean Marjorie Munson, available at <https://rupcdc.rutgers.edu/images/documents/history.pdf>

³ Hailey Gibbs and Rasheed Malik, “Child Care Spending Generates Massive Dividends” (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2022), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/child-care-spending-generates-massive-dividends/>.

⁴ Kids Count Data Center, “Children Under Age 6 With All Available Parents in the Labor Force in the United States” available at <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/1/any/false/2048,1729/any/11472,11473> (last accessed April 2023); The White House, “President Biden Announces the Build Back Better Framework,” Press release, October 28, 2021, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/28/president-biden-announces-the-build-back-better-framework/>.

- Estimates suggest that the United States loses \$122 billion in revenue, productivity, and lost earnings annually due to the lack of investment in childcare.⁵

High-quality has long-term benefits

- Babies’ brains make more than 1 million neural connections per second in the first three years of life, laying the foundation for all their future development and learning.⁶ Second only to a child’s home, childcare is where much of that foundation is shaped.
- High-quality childcare is linked to improved cognitive and language development, social and emotional development, and later school achievement.⁷
- Investing in young children is one of the smartest things the country can do because of these lifelong benefits: Children who attend high-quality early learning programs are less likely to need special education or grade repetition in elementary school and are more likely to graduate from high school and grow up to be active participants in their communities and the economy.⁸
- Economists estimate a return of \$4 to \$13 for every dollar spent on early education.⁹

Childcare workers are underpaid and undervalued

- For too long, childcare workers—disproportionately women of color—have been underpaid and undervalued for the important work they do.¹⁰
- More than three-fourths of early childhood educators hold some kind of professional credential, but full-time teachers are paid less than \$14 per hour (\$29,120 per year), and infant and toddler educators make less than \$11 per hour (\$22,880 per year), on average.¹¹
- In many parts of the country, providers are losing workers to jobs that pay more and have more competitive benefits, including McDonalds, Target,¹² and Sheetz.¹³ As one early educator at a preschool in North Carolina noted in an interview with The New York Times, “I make \$10 an hour to shape the future of children but make

⁵ Ready Nation, “\$122 Billion: The Growing, Annual Cost of the Infant-Toddler Child Care Crisis” (Washington: Council for a Strong America, 2023), available at <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/2038-122-billion-the-growing-annual-cost-of-the-infant-toddler-child-care-crisis>.

⁶ Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, “Brain Architecture,” available at <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/> (last accessed April 2023).

⁷ Weilin Li and others, “Timing of High-Quality Child Care and Cognitive, Language, and Preacademic Development,” *Developmental Psychology* 49 (8) (2013): 1440–1451, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4034459/#:~:text=Findings%20indicated%20that%20cognitive%2C%20language,the%20periods%2C%20and%20lowest%20among>.

⁸ Julie Kashen and Halley Potter, “The Case for Child Care and Early Learning for All: Healthy Child Development and School Readiness,” The Century Foundation, September 2, 2021, available at https://tcf.org/content/commentary/case-child-care-early-learning-healthy-child-development-school-readiness/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA99ybBhD9ARIsALvZavV9ZJuqvS3cE8dujJsSDIOtep1stcT16uVssCVNIMNT-AgwGMi_xYaAi8vEALw_wcB&agreed=1

⁹ Center for High Impact Philanthropy, “High Return on Investment” (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania, 2015), available at <https://www.impact.upenn.edu/early-childhood-toolkit/why-invest/what-is-the-return-on-investment/>; Center for American Progress and others, “America, It’s Time to Talk About Child Care” (Washington: 2019), available at <https://caseforchildcare.org/2020CaseForChildCare.pdf>.

¹⁰ Maureen Coffey, “Still Underpaid and Unequal: Still Underpaid and Unequal” (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2022), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/still-underpaid-and-unequal/>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Bryce Covert, “‘I Can’t Compete’: Child Care Providers Are Losing Staff to McDonald’s and Target,” *Early Learning Nation*, August 30, 2022, available at <https://earlylearningnation.com/2022/08/i-cant-compete-child-care-providers-are-losing-staff-to-mcdonalds-and-target/>.

¹³ Maureen Coffey and Rose Khattar, “The Child Care Sector Will Continue To Struggle Hiring Staff Unless It Creates Good Jobs” (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2022), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-child-care-sector-will-continue-to-struggle-hiring-staff-unless-it-creates-good-jobs/>.

\$15 an hour to hand someone a cup of coffee.” Even with an associate degree in early childhood education and teaching full time, this individual needed a second, higher-paying job at Starbucks in order to make ends meet.¹⁴

- When accounting for the more than 40 hours per week that most childcare workers work, real wages are much lower: approximately \$8 per hour for a full-time teacher and \$6 per hour for an infant and toddler educator. Notably, some family childcare providers, who are often sole proprietors, report working nearly 70 hours per week.¹⁵
- As a result of the low pay in the field, nearly one-third of childcare workers have faced food insecurity, and one-fourth have reported needing one or more additional jobs to afford basic needs, including food, housing, and utilities; even before the pandemic, more than half of childcare workers qualified for some form of public assistance.¹⁶
- The childcare workforce has lagged behind other sectors in its recovery from the pandemic: As of March 2023, the sector still had 56,500 fewer workers than it did in February 2020—representing 6 percent of the prior workforce. In contrast, nonfarm jobs saw 100 percent recovery and private sector jobs saw 103 percent recovery, as of September 2022.¹⁷
- More than 50 percent of licensed childcare providers are operating below capacity, and serving fewer children, because they cannot hire or retain enough staff, with care for infants and toddlers being the hardest for families to find.¹⁸
- The ongoing gap in the childcare workforce contributes to reduced capacity in childcare slots for families, amounting to as many as 169,500 unserved infants and toddlers and 452,000 unserved preschoolers, based on recommended caregiver-to-child ratios.¹⁹
- Raising pay for childcare workers would help to boost recruitment and retention, improve their health and well-being, and support overall quality of care.

Families need a range of childcare options

- Childcare is not a one-size-fits-all system: Parents need a range of options to suit their schedules and family needs and to give them choice over the types of care environments for their children.
- Providing parents with the ability to access year-round care helps them maintain jobs and ensure that their children are always cared for in a supervised and trusted setting.
- Many parents work nontraditional schedules and need flexible care for their children after hours and in the summer months. For example, parents may choose center-based care for their children due to ease of access and quality of care; and approximately 1 million paid providers care for children in licensed family childcare arrangements, which often appeal to parents because of lower cost, cultural fit, or the home-based setting.²⁰

The facts and figures referenced in this document have been taken, in part, from “5 Things To Know About the Child Care for Working Families Act” May 1, 2023, referenced in the first endnote.

¹⁴ Jason DeParle, “When Child Care Costs Twice as Much as the Mortgage,” *The New York Times*, October 9, 2021, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/09/us/politics/child-care-costs-wages-legislation.html>.

¹⁵ Connecticut Association for Human Services and Advancing Together, “Child Care at a Breaking Point: The Cost For Parents to Work” (Hartford, CT: 2022), available at <https://cahs.org/pdf/child-care-survey-report7-15-22.pdf>.

¹⁶ Jane Fillion, “1 in 3 Child Care Workers is Experiencing Food Insecurity,” *First Five Years Fund*, January 24, 2022, available at <https://www.ffyf.org/1-in-3-child-care-workers-is-experiencing-food-insecurity/>.

¹⁷ Coffey and Khattar, “The Child Care Sector Will Continue To Struggle Hiring Staff Unless It Creates Good Jobs.”

¹⁸ Early Care and Education Consortium, “The Child Care Workforce Shortage: Solutions from Around the Country” (Washington: 2022), available at https://www.ececonsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ECEC_Workforce-Report_6.2.22.pdf.

¹⁹ ChildCare.gov, “Supervision: Ratios and Group Sizes,” available at <https://childcare.gov/consumer-education/ratios-and-group-sizes> (last accessed April 2023).

²⁰ Office of Child Care, “Family Child Care Brief” (Washington: Administration for Children and Families), available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/occ_fcc_brief.pdf (last accessed April 2023).