



Early Care & Education in Western North Carolina: An Overview to Better Serve Young Children, Families and Programs

June 2022



This report was funded by



DOGWOOD
HEALTH TRUST



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Introduction

The benefits of early childhood education have been widely discussed in the literature — benefits for young children through access to additional social and educational experiences extending parental care, and benefits for families with access to child care.ⁱ These benefits, however, depend on providing equitable access to high quality early childhood education,^{i,ii,iii} where young children receive nurturing attention throughout the day, develop deep relationships with their child care providers and classmates and engage in age developmentally appropriate activities that support their cognitive, social-emotional and physical development.

North Carolina has often been referred to as a leader in early childhood education with initiatives that support both families and early care and education providers.^{iv} For instance, providers are required to participate in the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and, as such, quality of care has been assessed for all child care providers across the state of North Carolina since the 2000s through a star-rated licensing system.^v Though other states have adopted this practice more recently, many use QRIS as a voluntary measure of quality. Additional initiatives focus on early childhood educators, providing them, for instance, with better access to college education to guide teachers in providing high quality of care in all areas of child development. Finally, initiatives have targeted North Carolina families so they can learn about early care and education in their communities through consumer education and referral services^{vii} and/or access affordable high quality early childhood education through subsidy or state-funded preschool programs for eligible children.

Despite these initiatives, the field of early childhood education in North Carolina has faced numerous challenges similar to those encountered nationwide and affecting both families of young children and child care providers.

A first example of concerns relates to child care cost for families. Indeed, early childhood

education has become a heavy burden for families, as child care costs can represent, on average, up to thirty percent (30%) of the family income in North Carolina.^{viii} Such burden may leave families with upsetting decisions to make. For instance, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) reported in 2018, a market monthly rate in Avery County of \$1,010 for infants and toddlers in a 5-star center, i.e., a center rated as of higher

quality. By comparison, the rate was \$424 in a 1-star center, i.e., a center rated as of low quality care. For families with lower income, many may not have any other choice but to enroll their young child(ren) in a center with a much lower quality of care. This burden is exacerbated for families of infants and toddlers. The quality of care has not improved as much for infants and toddlers as it has for children age three to five in the past decade, and overall, the supply of infant and toddler care has not kept pace with demand. In addition, a lower percentage of infants and toddlers receive subsidy than preschoolers.^{ix}

A second example of concerns relates to early childhood educator compensation. For instance, the latest workforce study conducted by CCSA in 2019 showed that the median^{xi}

Despite these initiatives, the field of early childhood education in North Carolina has faced numerous challenges similar to those encountered nationwide and affecting both families of young children and child care providers.

hourly wage for the early childhood education teaching staff was \$12.00 per hour. As a comparison, a living wage for an adult living with one child in North Carolina is estimated to be \$33.52 per hour.^{xii} Differences in this median wage exist across counties. For instance, the median wage was \$8.00 per hour for teaching staff in Alleghany County, just 50 cents above the minimum wage in North Carolina compared to \$21.06 per hour in Hyde County.^x The living wage is \$28.60 per hour in Alleghany County and \$34.66 per hour in Hyde County for an adult living with one child.^{xii} In other words, even though initiatives aimed at increasing the low wages offered to the early childhood education teaching staff by providing salary supplements help, these efforts do not currently provide a substantial living wage in North Carolina, similar to what has been widely reported nationwide for years.^{xiv}

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified and created new challenges in the field of early childhood education, such as a decline in enrollment of young children and higher social and emotional difficulties for more young children.^{xv} In North Carolina, although the number of children under six with working parents has remained mostly unchanged since March 2020, there was a decrease of ten percent (10%) of young children birth to five enrolled in early childhood education centers during the pandemic. In family child care homes, there was a decrease of six percent (6%) in the enrollment of children three to five, and a decrease of twenty percent (20%) of children under three. Across North Carolina and more broadly, across the U.S., fewer

children participated in early care and education programs, with children in poverty being the most affected.^{xv} In addition, professional development opportunities for teaching staff have decreased by over forty percent (40%) since the beginning of the pandemic across the state of North Carolina^{viii} In other words, the pandemic has reduced access to educational opportunities for child care educators to provide higher quality of care.

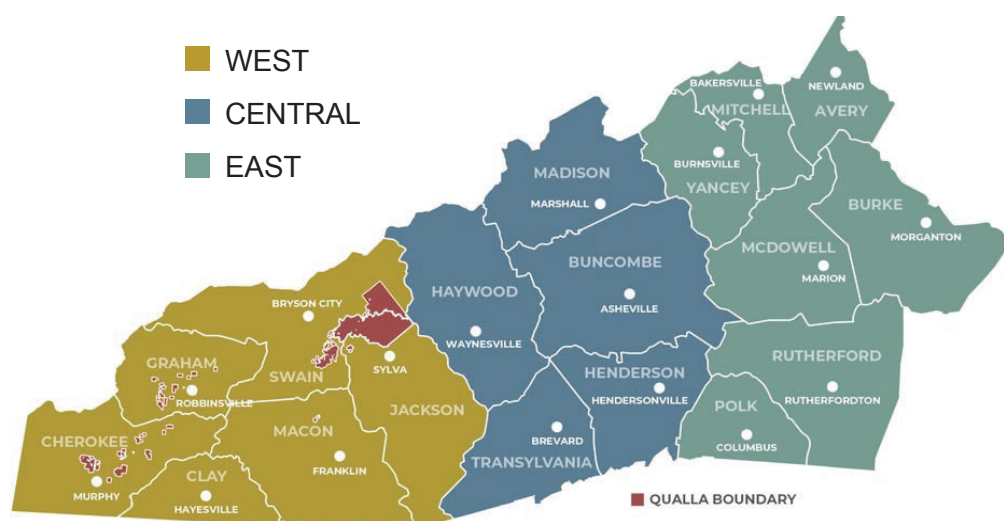


Figure 1. Geographical Area Served by Dogwood Health Trust.

Considering these challenges and variation across North Carolina counties, the present report aims to focus on a subsection of North Carolina. More specifically, the report focuses on the 18 counties served by Dogwood Health Trust (also referred to as Dogwood), and their subdivision into three regions—West, Central and East (Figure 1). The report presents an overview of the early childhood education landscape across the geographical area served by Dogwood as of February 2022, and provides insights on changes due to the pandemic by comparing 2022 data with data from 2020 and 2019. A focus on children under three, i.e., infants and toddlers, is also provided.



Methodology

Research Question

Throughout the report, the overarching research question that guided this report was: “What is the current status, across the 18 counties served by Dogwood, regarding 1) young children and their families, 2) characteristics of early care and education programs and 3) families’ process and young children’s enrollment in early care and education programs?”

Particular attention was given toward differences between the three regions—West, Central and East—served by Dogwood. Current data (February 2022) were also compared with data obtained prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (February 2019 and February 2020).

Data Sources

Child Care Services Association (CCSA) Factsheets

Through CCSA’s online data repository, CCSA produces, and regularly updates, five factsheets with statewide information and disaggregates these data to produce five factsheets for each of the 100 counties in the state.^{xvi} These factsheets focus on various aspects of early care and education. Data are updated as they become available, with some data updated monthly and other data updated less frequently. The five factsheets are as follows:

- 1) The **“Child Care in North Carolina”** factsheet provides an overview of the need for and the quality, availability and affordability of child care in our state. The factsheet builds from the most recent available data from Child Care Services Association, Internal Revenue Service, NC Budget and Tax Center, NC Division of Child Development and Early Education and NC State Data Center and U.S. Census Bureau.
- 2) The **“Young Children and Their Families”** factsheet provides an overview of the number of young children, their families’ economic condition and need for child care, their use of various types of publicly-funded types of care and the success of young children when they enter school. The spreadsheet builds up from the most recent available data from Child Care Services Association, NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, NC Budget and Tax Center, NC State Data Center and US Census Bureau, NC Department of Public Instruction, NC Child Resource and Referral Council and the NC Head Start State Collaboration Office.
- 3) The **“Early Care and Education Use in North Carolina”** factsheet provides information on the use of various types of early care and education programs and types of funding assistance, including child care subsidy, NC Pre-K and Head Start. The factsheet builds from the most recent available data from Child Care Services Association, NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, NC Child Resource and Referral Council and the NC Head Start State Collaboration Office.
- 4) The **“Early Care and Education Programs”** factsheet provides information on the numbers and types of early care and education programs in a county, their licensure and accreditation status, their use of programs to help them improve quality and the market price for programs that charge fees. The factsheet builds from the most recent available data from Child Care Services Association, NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, NC Child Resource and Referral Council, NC Head Start State Collaboration Office and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

- 5) The ***“Infant and Toddler Care in North Carolina”*** factsheet provides an overview of the state of infant and toddler care in child care centers and family child care homes, including enrollment, market rates, subsidy and teacher pay and education, with data collected starting in April 2021. The factsheet builds from the most recent available data from Child Care Services Association, NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, NC Child Resource and Referral Council, NC Head Start State Collaboration Office and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

The report is based on data presented in factsheets from February 2019, February 2020 and February 2022.

Working in Early Care and Education in North Carolina, 2019 Workforce Study

With funding from the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), CCSA conducted a statewide survey on the early care and education workforce in North Carolina from March 2019 through March 2020, just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study

focused on the education, experience, pay, benefits, turnover and demographics of the workforce, including directors, teaching staff and family child care (FCC) providers.

Infant Toddler Landscape Study

With funding from Think Babies™ NC Alliance, CCSA conducted a landscape study focusing on infants and toddlers from November 2021 through March 2022. This study combined census data with data from the North Carolina Child Care Resource and Referral System (CCR&R) through their WorkLife System database and licensing data from DCDEE. Data were also collected through surveying child care directors and family child care providers as well as their participation in a focus group.

Additional Sources

Recent census data available on the website of the United States Census Bureau and data from the Child Care Statistical Report accessible on the website of the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education were also used to estimate some sub-populations of young children, families and providers.





Analysis

A variety of descriptive statistics were performed.

Data from the most recent of these five factsheets (February 2022) were aggregated for the 18 counties served by the Dogwood Health Trust (Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, and Yancey, referred hereafter as Dogwood counties) to produce five new factsheets covering the 18 counties served by Dogwood.

Further, the data were broken into three regional areas (referred to hereafter as West Region, Central Region and East Region) to produce three additional factsheets. The West region included the counties of Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon and Swain; the Central region included the counties of Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania; and the East region included the counties of Avery, Burke, Mc Dowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford and Yancey.

Finally, data were compared with data collected prior to the pandemic (i.e., data from factsheets in February 2019 and February 2020).

Terminology

Throughout this report, terminology interchangeably uses 1) children under three, or infants and toddlers, to refer to children under 36 months of age, 2) early childhood educators and teaching staff to refer to people employed in early childhood education programs—a denomination including teachers as well as teacher assistants, 3) early care and education, early childhood education and child care to discuss programs offering child care services. Unless otherwise noted, these programs include both licensed centers as well as licensed family child care (FCC) homes. Family child care homes and family child care providers are used interchangeably. Additionally, unless otherwise noted, licensed centers includes both private and public providers, such as Head Start/Early Head Start and NC Pre-K programs.

Limitations

As with any data and research studies, limitations exist. For instance, the Infants & Toddlers factsheet was created in April 2021 and therefore does not provide data points prior to the pandemic. Also, some data from the factsheets are updated monthly while others are updated less frequently. Hence, data from February 2022 should be seen as a reference to data as disclosed in the February 2022 factsheets. Finally, the report lays on data related to licensed programs, with none reported in the Qualla Boundary, i.e., the report only provides evidence around early care and education in the 18 counties served by Dogwood.





Findings

Findings from the most recent data (February 2022) are displayed in a variety of factsheets (see Appendix). First, five “Child Care across all Dogwood counties” factsheets presents a) aggregated data across all Dogwood counties (one factsheet), b) aggregated data for the West Region, the Central Region and the East Region (three factsheets), and c) differences across time (one factsheet). Similarly, five additional factsheets present each of the three other topics i.e., “Young Children and Their Families,” “Early Care and Education Use,” “Early Care and Education Programs.” Finally, four factsheets present data around “Infant and Toddler Care” (aggregated data for all counties, West, Central and East Regions).

In addition, findings are also discussed hereafter through three sub sections. The first subsection focuses on young children and their families living across the Dogwood Health Trust counties. The second subsection focuses on characteristics of early care and education programs in service across the Dogwood counties. The third subsection focuses on young children and families in early care and education programs, e.g., finding child care,

cost of child care and enrollment of young children in programs by age, quality of care, etc. Differences among regions and the effect of time are also embedded throughout.

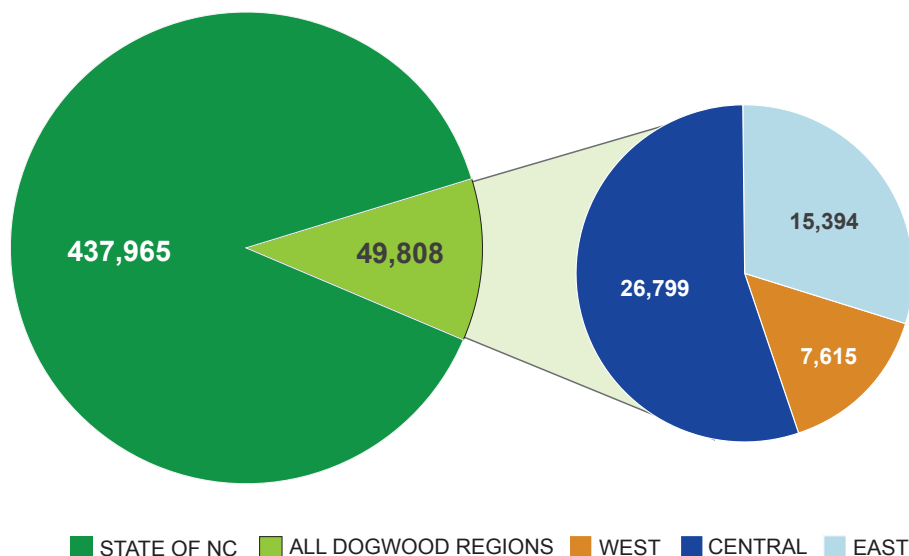
Young Children Living Across the Counties Served by Dogwood Health Trust and their Families

Young Children

The number of children under six living across all Dogwood counties was 49,808 in February 2022 (Figure 2). About fifteen percent (15%) lived in the West region, fifty-four percent (54%) in the Central region and thirty-one percent (31%) in the East region.

The number of children under six living in the regions served by Dogwood has decreased by about six percent (6%) since 2020. Such decrease seems to occur across regions (West: -8%, Central: -7%, East: -5%), and included counties such as Buncombe County, previously reported for its growing population prior to the pandemic. By comparison, the population of children under six decreased by about four percent (4%) across the state of North Carolina since the beginning of the pandemic.

*Figure 2.
Number of Children
Under Six Living in
the Regions Served
by Dogwood Health
Trust (February 2022).*





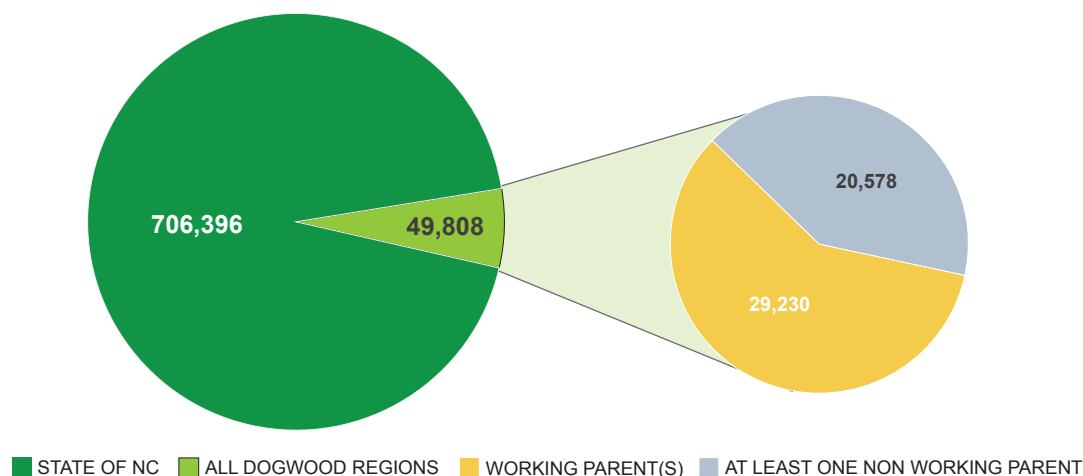
Young Children & Working Parents

Among these children, about fifty-nine percent (59%) lived with a sole parent who worked or two working parent(s), and were more likely to be in need of child care (Figure 3). The number of children under six living with working parents across all Dogwood counties

percent (16%) in the West region and thirty-one percent (31%) in the East Region.

About half of the children under six living with working parent(s) across the Dogwood counties were under three (approximately 16,000), emphasizing the need for early care

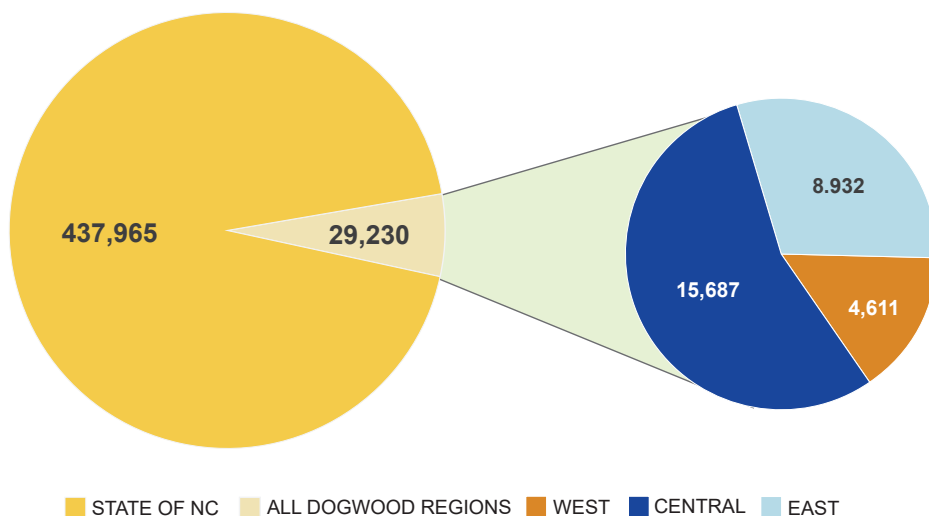
*Figure 3.
Number of Children
under Six by Parents'
Work Status
(February 2022).*



was 29,230 and has decreased by six percent (6%) since 2020 (31,080 in February 2020). The decrease was similar across the three regions served by Dogwood Health Trust.

More than half of these children lived in the Central region (Figure 4), compared to sixteen

and education not only for children age three to five, but also for children under three, i.e., infants and toddlers. Specific challenges reported in prior reports related to caring for children under three, such as a slower pace in improving quality and availability of care compared to children three to five, should be taken into consideration.^{ix}



*Figure 4.
Number of Children under Six
Living with Working Parents by
Dogwood Regions
(February 2022).*



Young Children & Poverty

The percentage of children under six, living in a family whose income was below the federal poverty level (e.g., \$27,479 for a family of four^{xix}) was twenty-two percent (22%) across the Dogwood counties (26% in the West Region, 18% in the Central Region and 28% East Region). However, according to the National Center for Children in Poverty,^{xx} a family would need nearly twice the threshold amount to be able to meet their needs, suggesting that poverty and low incomes affect more than twenty-two percent (22%) of children under six living across the counties served by Dogwood. The percentage of children under six living in a family whose income was below the federal poverty level decreased from thirty-three percent (33%) to twenty-two percent (22%) between February 2020 and February 2022, suggesting the positive effect of policies implemented during the peak of the pandemic. These policies have, however, been rolled back or eliminated since.

Characteristics of the Early Childhood Education Programs Across the Counties Served by Dogwood Health Trust

Infrastructure

Number of Programs

In February 2022, there were 447 early childhood education programs, i.e., 400 child care centers and 47 family child care homes

(Table 1) across all Dogwood counties. By comparison, there were 480 programs in February 2019 and 463 programs in February 2020.

As presented in Figure 5, the number of centers decreased during the pandemic, with 413 centers opened in February 2020 compared to 400 centers in February 2022, representing a decrease of three percent (-3%); (West: -1.3%, Central: -3.5%, East: -3.9%), similar to a decrease of two percent (-2%) across the state of North Carolina.

The number of family child care homes has also decreased since February 2020 across all Dogwood counties (West Region: -20%, Central region: -3.4%, East Region: -6.2%), continuing a decrease that started prior to the pandemic (Figure 6). As a comparison, the number of family child care homes has decreased by eight percent (-8%) since February 2020 across the state of North Carolina. In fact, the number of family child care homes has drastically decreased in the past decades, with the closure of 90,000 homes between 2005 and 2017 across the state of North Carolina.^{xxi} Some efforts are being made to increase this number as family child care homes tend to provide more flexible care options for families.

	ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	WEST	CENTRAL	EAST
Child Care Centers				
Number of centers	400	77	201	122
Number of centers enrolling children under 3	172	33	88	51
Number of centers enrolling children three to five	312	60	152	100
Family Child Care (FCC) Homes				
Number of homes	47	4	28	15
Number of homes enrolling children under 3	17	3	9	5
Number of homes enrolling children three to five	22	3	11	8

Table 1.
Number of Child Care Centers and Family Child Care (FCC) Homes (February 2022).



Feb-19

Figure 5.
*Numbers of Child
Care Centers Serving
Children Under Five
Over Time.*

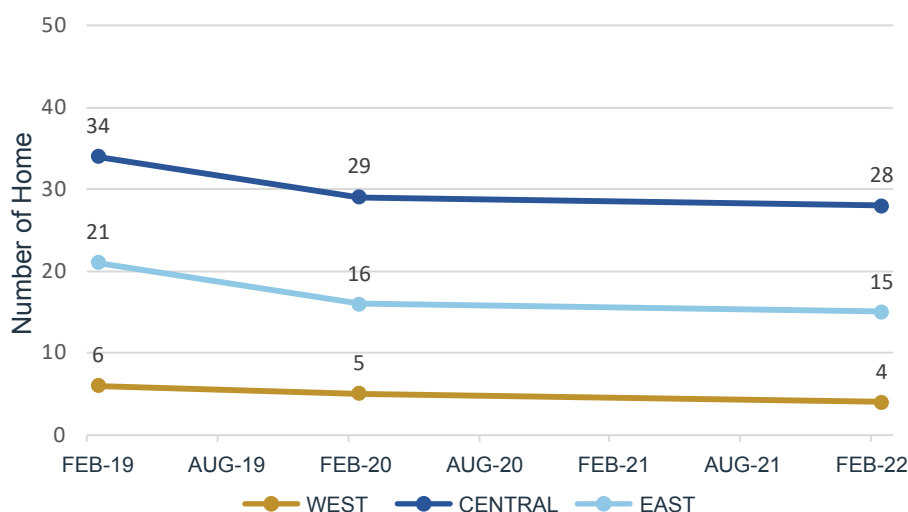
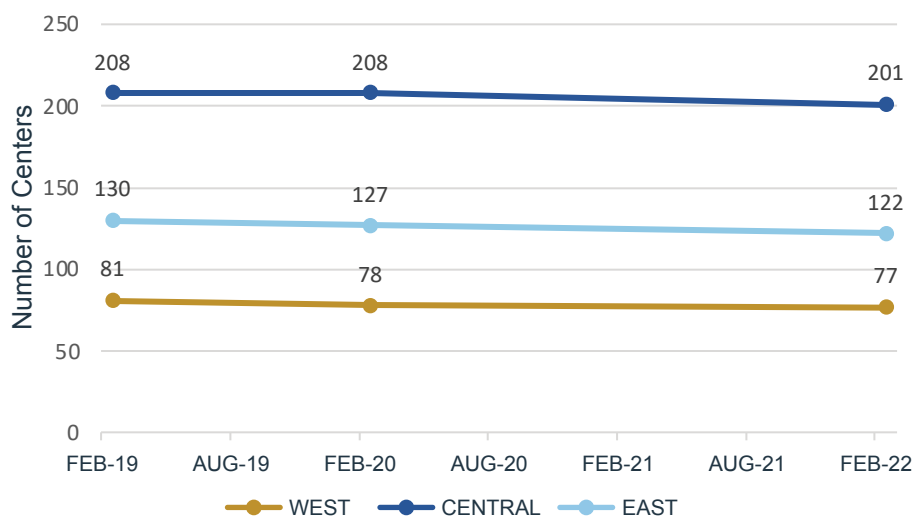


Figure 6.
*Numbers of Family
Child Care Homes
Serving Children
Under 5 Over Time.*

Organizational Structure

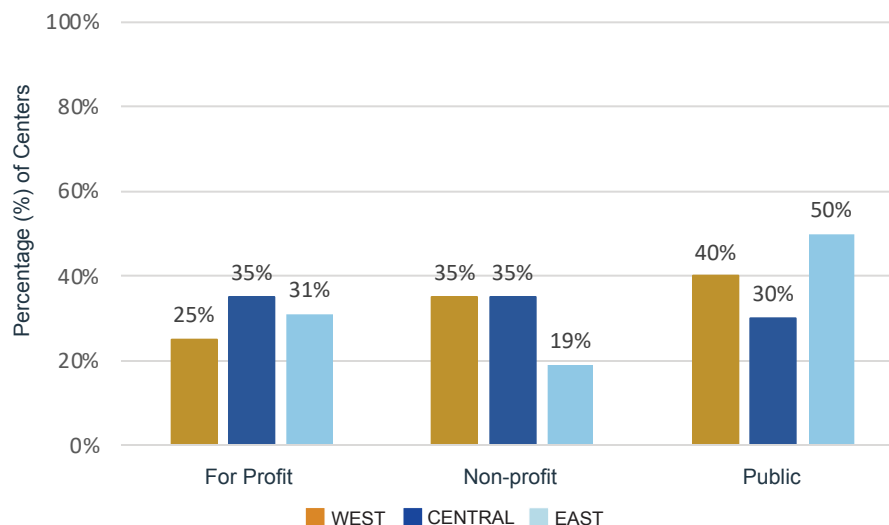
Early childhood education centers can be sorted into three types of programs—for-profit, non-profit and public centers (such as those offering Head Start and NC Pre-K classrooms).

In 2019, across all Dogwood counties, thirty-two percent (32%) of centers were for-profit, thirty percent (30%) were non-profit and

thirty-eight percent (38%) were public (Figure 7). There were slight variations depending on the regions. In the East Region, half of the centers were public, compared to thirty-one percent (31%) of for-profit and nineteen percent (19%) of non-profit, while the Central Region had a more even distribution. In the West Region, twenty-five percent (25%) of centers were for-profit, thirty-five percent (35%) were non-profit and forty percent (40%) were public.



Figure 7.
*Percentage of
Child Care Centers
by Organizational
Structure
(2019).*



Age Served

Child care centers and family child care homes can be split into those serving children under three, and those serving three to five years old, with some serving both. Child care programs can also serve children who are five and in kindergarten through age 12 in before and after school care. Programs that only serve this age children are beyond the scope of this study.

As previously presented in Table 1, the number of child care centers enrolling children under three in February 2022 was 172 across all Dogwood regions (33 in the West Region, 88 in the Central Region and 51 in the East Region). That number has increased slightly in the East Region (+2%) but decreased by ten to fifteen percent (-10 to -15%) in the West and Central Region since February 2020. The number of child care centers enrolling children three to five years old was 312 across all Dogwood counties (60 in the West Region, 152 in the Central Region and 100 in the East Region). That number decreased by about six to seven percent (-6% to -7%) in all three regions since February 2020. As a comparison, across the

state of North Carolina, there was a five percent (-5%) decrease in centers enrolling children under three and four percent (-4%) decrease in centers enrolling children three to five.

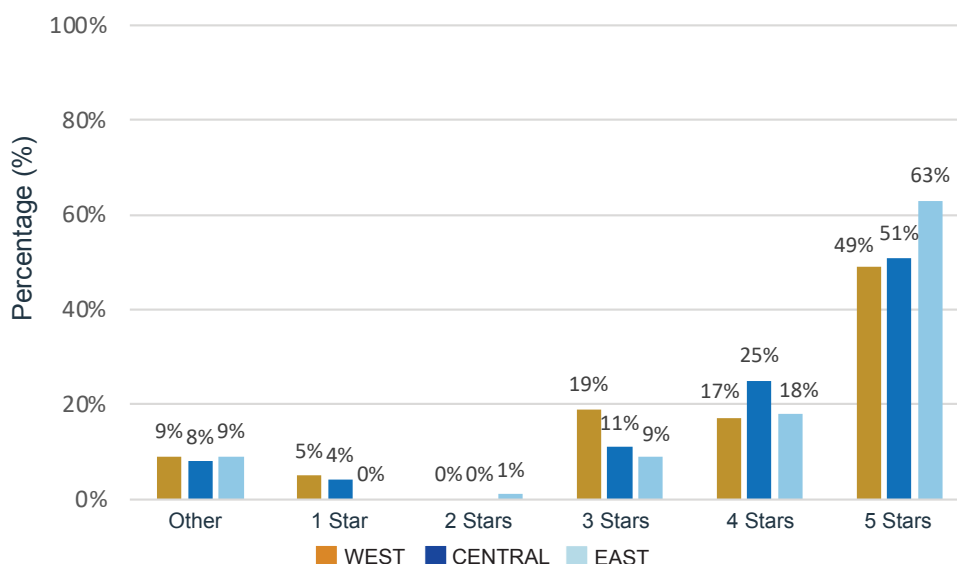
There were 17 family child care homes enrolling children under three in February 2022 across all Dogwood Health Trust counties (three in the West Region, nine in the Central Region and five in the East Region), representing a decrease of forty percent (-40%) in the West Region and thirty-six percent (-36%) in the Central Region. The number remained the same in the East Region. The number of family child care homes enrolling children three to five years old was 22 (three in the West Region, 11 in the Central Region and eight in the East Region), and has remained unchanged since February 2020, except in the Central Region where it has decreased by twenty percent (-20%). As a comparison, across the state of North Carolina, there was a twenty-three percent (-23%) decrease in homes enrolling children under three and twelve percent (-12%) decrease in homes enrolling children three to five.



Quality of Care (Star Rating System and National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation)

The Division of Child Development and Early Education issues star-rated licenses to child care centers and family child care homes meeting all minimum child care requirements as well as those choosing to meet higher standards.^v Programs rated as having 4- or 5-stars are considered as providing high quality care and having met standards that were higher than the minimum required to receive their license.

Figure 8.
*Percentage of
Child Care Centers
by Star Level
(February 2022).*



In February 2022, more than sixty percent (60%) of centers were rated as having either 4- or 5-stars across all Dogwood counties (Figure 8). Centers rated with 3-stars represented twelve percent (12%) while centers rated 1- or 2-stars, which would reflect a low quality of care, represented less than five percent (5%) of the centers. “Others” represented less than ten percent (10%) and included programs with a provisional license, probationary license, temporary license or GS-110 Notice of Compliance.

About fifty-five percent (55%) of the family child care homes across all Dogwood counties were rated as having either 4- or 5-stars (Figure 9). Homes offering lower quality of care (i.e., 1- or 2-star homes) represented about 13% across all Dogwood counties.

Table 2 hereafter presents changes in programs’ star rating between February 2020 and February 2022, across all Dogwood counties and by regions, for child care centers and family child care homes.

Overall, the quality of care, as assessed by the star rating system and the number of family child care homes and child care centers with 4 and 5 stars, did not drastically change between February 2020 and January 2022.

An accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is another indicator of quality of care. To be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) means that a program has voluntarily chosen to meet higher national standards related to teacher education and programmatic standards. No child care centers in the counties served



by Dogwood Health Trust were accredited by NAEYC, either in February 2020 or January 2022. Such finding is not surprising, as this accreditation is rare across the state of North Carolina, with only 95 centers accredited out of more than 4,400 centers offering early care and education as of February 2022.

Table 2 hereafter presents changes in programs' star rating between February 2020

and February 2022, across all Dogwood counties and by regions, for child care centers and family child care homes.

Overall, the quality of care, as assessed by the star rating system and the number of family child care homes and child care centers with 4 and 5 stars, did not drastically change between February 2020 and January 2022.

*Figure 9.
Percentage of
Family Child Care
Homes by Star Level
(February 2022).*

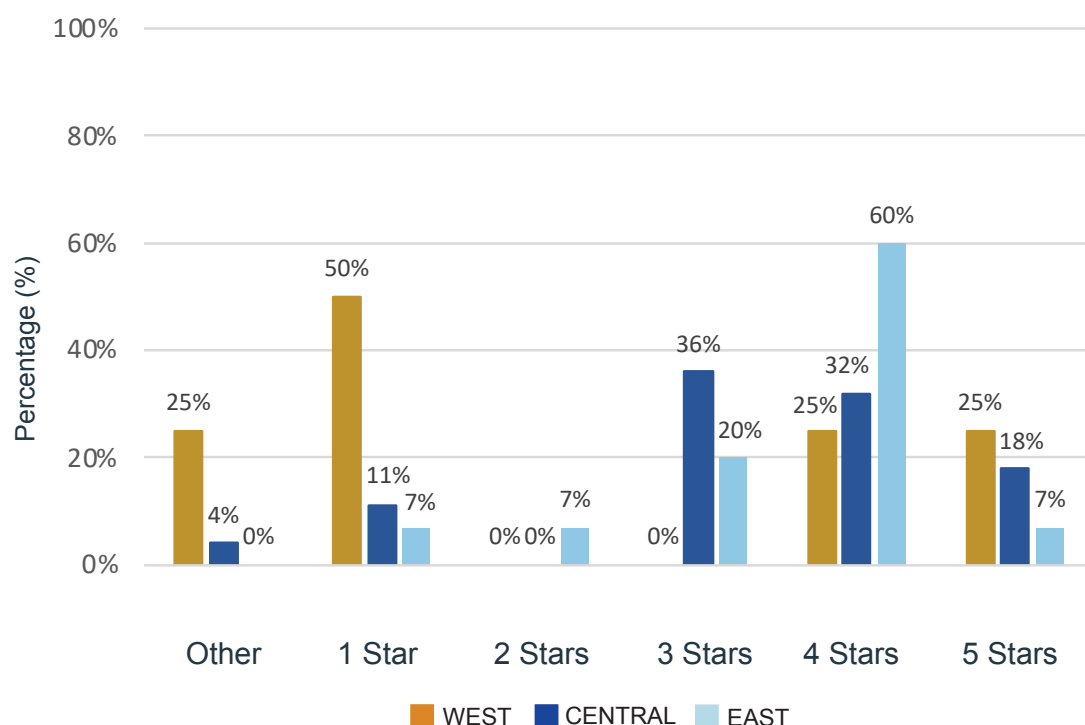




Table 2. Change Over Time in Early Care and Education Programs Star Ratings.

		Child Care Centers		Family Child Care Homes	
		Feb 2020	Feb 2022	Feb 2020	Feb 2022
4-5 STARS	ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	294	302	26	26
	WEST	49	51	2	2
	CENTRAL	147	152	14	14
	EAST	98	99	10	10
3 STARS	ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	53	49	14	13
	WEST	16	15	0	0
	CENTRAL	26	23	11	10
	EAST	17	11	3	3
UNDER 3 STARS	ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	62	75	9	8
	WEST	15	11	3	2
	CENTRAL	35	26	4	4
	EAST	12	12	2	2

An accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is another indicator of quality of care. To be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) means that a program has voluntarily chosen to meet higher national standards related to teacher education and programmatic standards.

No child care centers in the counties served by Dogwood Health Trust were accredited by NAEYC, either in February 2020 or January 2022. Such finding is not surprising, as this accreditation is rare across the state of North Carolina, with only 95 centers accredited out of more than 4,400 centers offering early care and education as of February 2022.



Workforce

Number of Staff

The number of people directly employed by early childhood education programs was 2,782 across all Dogwood regions, as of February 2022. That number represents a decrease of three to ten percent (-3% to -10%) in the West and Central Region but an increase of ten percent (+10%) in the East Region since February 2020 (Figure 10). As a comparison, the number of program staff has decreased by six percent (-6%) across the state of North Carolina since February 2020.

Across all Dogwood Health Trust counties, there was an estimated number of center directors of 343 compared to an estimated number of family child care home providers of 61 (Table 3). There was an estimated number of teaching staff of 2,374 across all Dogwood counties. On average, there were six teaching staff employed by centers (average of six in the West and East Region and an average of eight in the Central Region).

Figure 10.
*Number of Employees in
Early Care and Education
Programs Over Time.*

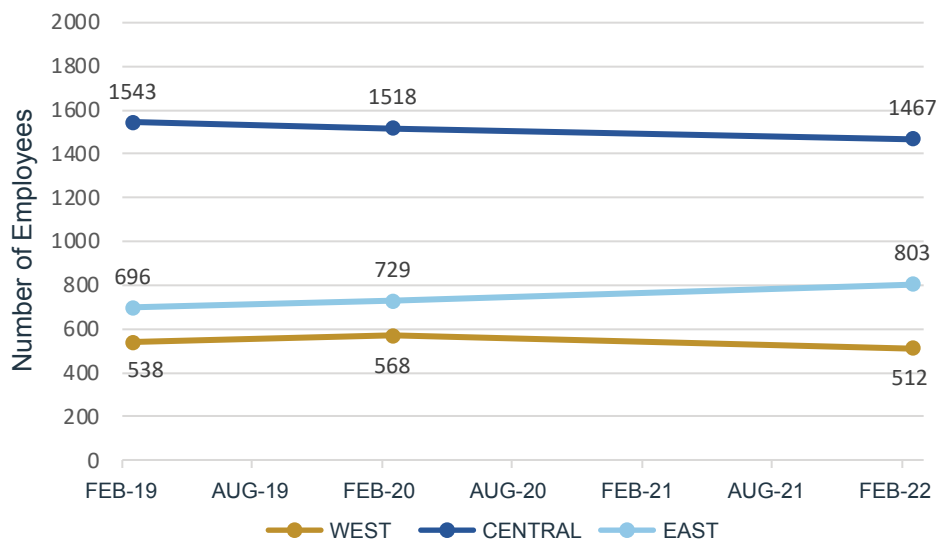


Table 3. Overview of the Workforce (2019).

	ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	WEST	CENTRAL	EAST
Estimated number of directors (centers)	343	68	164	111
Estimated number of directors (homes)	61	6	34	21
Estimated numbers of teaching staff (centers)	2,374	406	1,383	585
Average number of teaching staff (centers)	6	6	8	6



Demographics

Table 4 presents an overview of demographics data obtained in 2019. The median age was 49 years old for directors, 41 for teaching staff and 56 for family child care home (FCC) providers. A large majority of directors were female, with the lowest percentage being among directors in Central Region (82%). Among teaching staff and home providers, at least ninety-nine percent (99%)

were female. People of color represented about twelve percent (12%) of directors across the Dogwood counties, sixteen percent (16%) of staff employed in centers, and sixty-nine percent (69%) of home providers. The percentage of Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish people was less than five percent (5%) across all counties, for all three positions. No major differences emerged from region to region.

Table 4. Demographics of the Early Care and Education Workforce (2019).

		Median age	% female *	% people of color	% Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish
ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	Directors	49	90	12	1
	Teaching staff	41	99	16	4
	FCC providers	56	99	69	5
WEST	Directors	48	96	9	2
	Teaching staff	39	99	10	1
	FCC providers	56	99	64	3
CENTRAL	Directors	47	82	9	1
	Teaching staff	41	99	17	5
	FCC providers	56	100	74	6
EAST	Directors	51	98	17	0
	Teaching staff	40	99	20	4
	FCC providers	56	99	64	3

*(remaining percentage selected male, non-binary or preferred not to answer)

Education & Professional Development

Regarding the education of the early care and education workforce in 2019 (Table 5), more than eighty percent (80%) of the directors held at least an associate degree in any field of study. Such percentage contrasts with those of teaching staff (60%-70%), and family child care (FCC) providers (about 50%). About forty to fifty percent (40-50%) across all positions held an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education. As a comparison, the North Carolina Race to the Top Early Learning challenge grant application in 2011 set up a goal of “47% of lead teachers/ teachers working with children from birth through five in licensed child care, Head Start,

or Pre-K settings will have an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education or its equivalent or a Bachelor’s Degree in Child Development alone or with a BK license or its equivalent.”^{xviii}

More than seventy percent (72%) of the directors held six or more courses in early childhood education, compared to about sixty percent (60%) for teaching staff and sixty-nine percent (69%) for family child care providers.

Infant/toddler teachers and assistants tended to have less education than their counterparts teaching three to five year olds.



Table 5.
*Education of the Early
Childhood Education Workforce
in 2019.*

		At least an associate degree in any field of study	At least an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education	Six or more courses in early childhood education
ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	Directors	89 %	48 %	72 %
	Teaching staff	66 %	43 %	60 %
	FCC providers	53 %	43 %	69 %
WEST	Directors	83 %	46 %	84 %
	Teaching staff	63 %	43 %	56 %
	FCC providers	49 %	41 %	68 %
CENTRAL	Directors	91 %	51 %	65 %
	Teaching staff	63 %	37 %	55 %
	FCC providers	55 %	45 %	70 %
EAST	Directors	89 %	46 %	76 %
	Teaching staff	74 %	56 %	73 %
	FCC providers	49 %	41 %	68 %

According to data collected in January 2022, fifty-three percent (53%) of the infant/toddler teaching staff had an associate degree or more in any field compared to sixty-nine percent (69%) of three to five year old teachers.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® North Carolina Scholarship Program provides educational scholarships to early care professionals and those who perform specialized functions in the early care system.^{vi} See additional report focusing on the counties served by Dogwood Health Trust.

On-going professional development ensures that teachers continue to strengthen their skills in providing early care and education to children (Table 6). In fiscal year 2020-2021, 1,693 early educators in the counties served by Dogwood Health Trust participated in professional development activities provided by or through a child care resource and referral agency, a decrease of about twenty-two percent (-22%) compared to fiscal year 2019-2020.

Table 6.
*Number of Teachers who
Participated in Professional
Development Activities
Over Time.*

	ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	WEST	CENTRAL	EAST
2018-2019	2,158	434	1,112	612
2020-2021	1,693	263	979	451



Program and Field Experiences of Directors, Teaching Staff, and Family Child Care Providers

Program and field experiences of directors, teaching staff and family child care (FCC) providers are presented in Table 7 for data collected in 2019. The average time spent in the

program in centers was six years for directors and four years for teaching staff, which was lower than the average time for family child care providers (about 20 years). The average time working in the early care and education field was higher for directors and FCC (about 20 years), compared to teaching staff (10 years).

Table 7.
Program and Field Experiences of the Workforce (2019).

		Average time in their programs	Average time working in the early childhood education field
ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	Directors	6	21
	Teaching staff	4	10
	<i>Infant and toddler</i>	3	8
	<i>3 to 5 year old</i>	6	12
	FCC providers	19	22
WEST	Directors	6	22
	Teaching staff	4	9
	<i>Infant and toddler</i>	3	7
	<i>3 to 5 year old</i>	5	12
	FCC providers	19	22
CENTRAL	Directors	5	20
	Teaching staff	5	11
	<i>Infant and toddler</i>	5	10
	<i>3 to 5 year old</i>	6	13
	FCC providers	18	21
EAST	Directors	6	21
	Teaching staff	4	10
	<i>Infant and toddler</i>	3	8
	<i>3 to 5 year old</i>	6	12
	FCC providers	19	22



Turnover

Data collected in 2019 showed that about ten percent (10%) of the center teaching staff and directors were planning to leave the field in the next three years, with the exception of the directors in the East Region (3%) and the teaching staff in the Central region (20%). About twenty percent (20%) of the FCC providers were planning to leave as well. No major differences were found across regions. Data were also collected to determine the percentage of teaching staff that left their early childhood education program. Across all Dogwood counties, about twenty percent (20%) of the teaching staff left their program in the year prior to data collection, i.e., 2019. Additional data are needed to reflect on the effect of the pandemic, but current challenges in recruiting new staff makes it even more crucial to develop strategies to reduce turnover as much as possible.

Compensation

Wages

In 2019, and on average, directors were making \$20.00-\$22.00 per hour, teaching staff were making \$11.00-\$12.00 per hour and family child care providers were making \$8.00 per hour. No major difference emerged between regions (Figure 11).

Teachers vs Teacher Assistants

Data collected in 2019 also provide information regarding the salary range offered to teaching staff (i.e., teachers and teacher assistants), with the starting median^{xi} salary and the highest median salary offered in centers.

As presented in Figure 12, the highest median salary was \$18.00 per hour for teachers, and \$12.28 per hour for teacher assistants. Differences could be found across regions. The profiles were similar between the Central and East Regions regarding the starting median salary (\$12.59 to \$13.15 per hour for teachers and \$10.47 to \$11.05 per hour for teacher assistants) and the highest median salary (\$18.00 to 19.00 per hour for teachers and \$14.00 to \$15.00 per hour for teacher assistants), while salary were usually lower in the West Region for teachers (starting salary: \$11.18 per hour; highest median salary: \$17.00 per hour) and teacher assistant (starting median salary: \$9.61 per hour; highest median salary: \$13.00 per hour).

Figure 11.
*Earning of the Early Childhood
Education Workforce
(2019).*

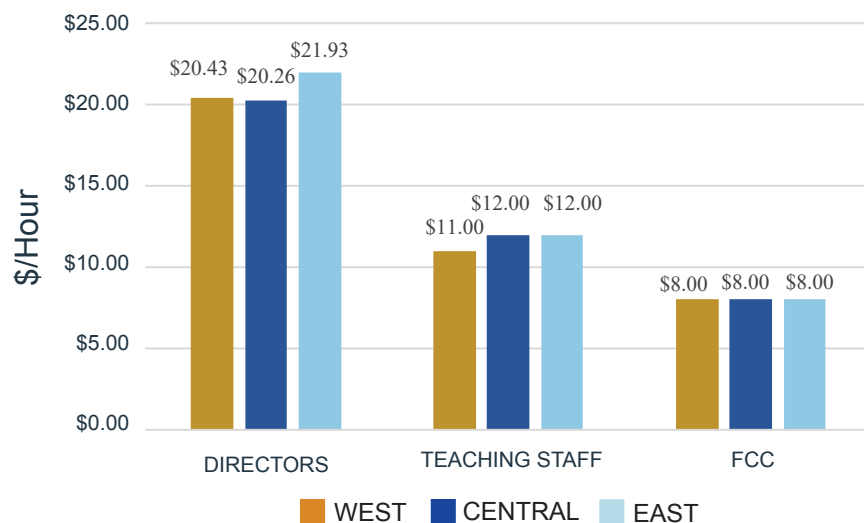
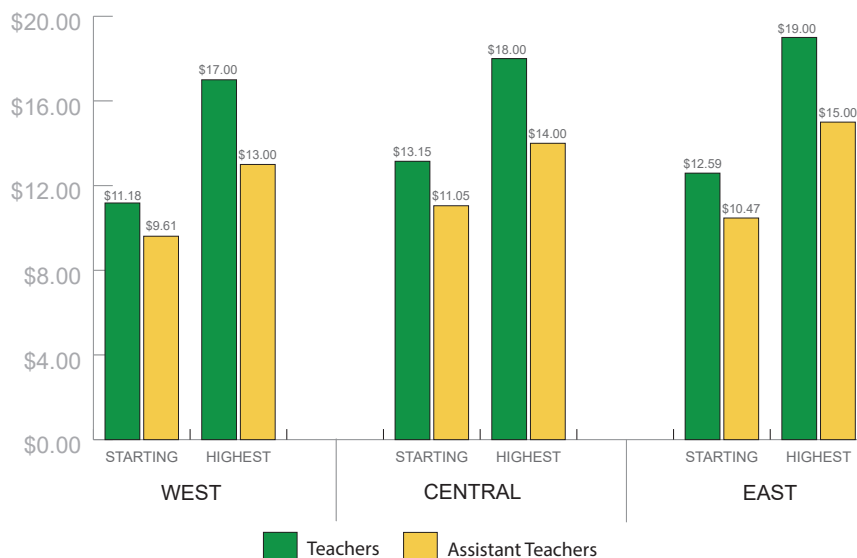




Figure 12.
Starting and Highest Average Salary (\$/hour) for Teachers and Assistant Teachers (2019).



Infant and Toddler Teachers vs 3 to 5 year old Teachers

Data collected in 2019 showed a difference in earnings among teaching staff, i.e., infant and toddler vs 3 to 5 year olds (Table 8). On average, teachers from 3 to 5 year old classrooms made \$1.42 more per hour than teachers from infant and toddler classrooms across the Dogwood counties. The difference was even more noticeable in the East Region, with teachers from 3 to 5 year old classrooms making more than \$2.00 more per hour than teachers from infant and toddler classrooms.

This pattern was observed with data collected in February 2022 as well, with the infant and toddler teaching staff making on average \$11.00 per hour compared to the three to five year old teaching staff making on average \$12.45 per hour.

Programs exist to provide salary supplements to early child educator. For

instance, the Child Care WAGE\$® Program provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid teachers, directors and family child care providers working with children between the ages of birth to five in participating counties. Also, Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® (AWARD\$) provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid early educators working full-time with children birth through age two in North Carolina. Most counties across the Dogwood Health Trust region participated in WAGE\$®, providing supplements to 433 teachers, directors and family child care providers with an average of about \$1,200 over a period of six months. All counties in the West Region participated in WAGE\$®. All counties in the Central region also participated except Madison County. In the East Region, all counties participated except Burke County, Mc Dowell County and Polk County. However, Burke County has indicated its intent to participate in fiscal year 2023.

Table 8.
Median Hourly Wages for Teaching Staff (2019).

	Teaching staff	Infant and toddler teaching staff	Three to five year old teaching staff
ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	\$11.62	\$11.00	\$12.42
WEST	\$11.03	\$10.49	\$11.55
CENTRAL	\$12.31	\$11.90	\$12.75
EAST	\$11.63	\$10.80	\$12.95

Benefits

Some centers also provide benefits to their employees, as presented in Table 9, with data collected in 2019. Across all Dogwood counties, the most common benefits provided were paid time off for vacation leave (88%) and holiday leave (94%). Centers also provided fully or partially paid health insurance (60%), paid time off for sick leave (79%), parental leave (73%) and retirement (57%). The least common benefit related to disability insurance, offered by only thirty-seven percent (37%) of the centers. A similar range of benefits were offered across regions, to the exception of parental leave. Only fifty-seven percent (57%) of the centers in the

West Region offered parental leave, compared to eighty-three percent (83%) in the Central region.

The wages and benefits offered leave out a significant percentage of teachers and providers from a health care and livable wage perspective. As presented in Table 10, twenty-two percent (22%) of teaching staff across the Dogwood counties did not have access to health insurance from any source in 2019, and forty-one percent (41%) received public assistance in the past three years prior to data collection, i.e., 2019.

Table 9.
Benefits Offered to Employees (2019).

% of centers providing ...	ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	WEST	CENTRAL	EAST
... fully or partially paid health insurance	60%	63%	57%	64%
... paid time off for sick leave	79%	79%	80%	77%
... paid time off for vacation leave	88%	90%	91%	88%
... paid time off for holiday leave	94%	93%	94%	94%
... disability insurance	37%	34%	41%	33%
... parental leave	73%	57%	83%	68%
... retirement	57%	61%	53%	59%

		% with no health insurance	% with public assistance in past three years.
ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	Teaching staff	22%	41%
	FCC providers	18%	N/A
WEST	Teaching staff	22%	38%
	FCC providers	21%	N/A
CENTRAL	Teaching staff	23%	40%
	FCC providers	15%	N/A
EAST	Teaching staff	22%	44%
	FCC providers	21%	N/A

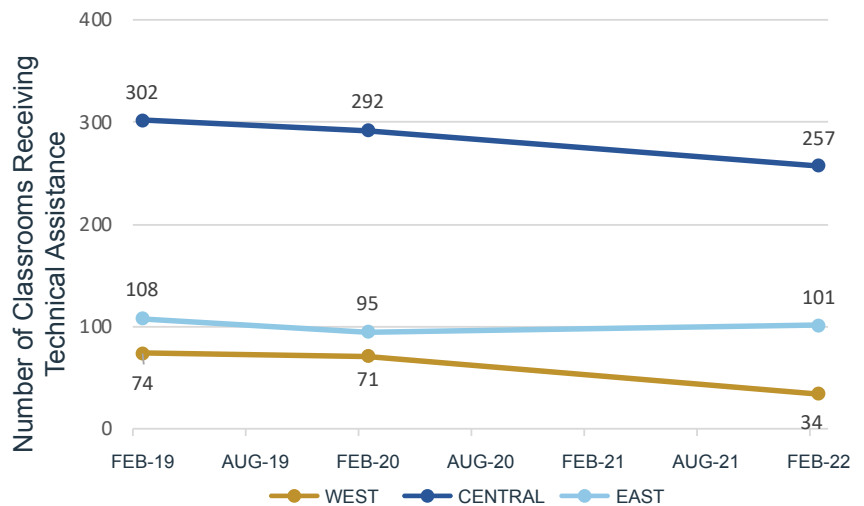
Table 10.
Access to Health Insurance and Public Assistance (2019).



Technical Assistance

In February 2022, 392 birth to five classrooms received technical assistance (Figure 13). Such number represents a decrease of fifty-two percent (-52%) in the West Region and twelve percent (-12 %) in the Central Region since the beginning of the pandemic, and a slight increase in the East Region (+6%). There was also a decrease of ten percent (-10%) across the state of North Carolina in early care and education classrooms receiving teaching assistance.

Figure 13. Number of Classrooms Receiving Technical Assistance Over Time.



Services Offered by Family Child Care (FCC) Homes

Family child care homes often provide a wide range of services, offering more flexibility for families (Table 11). Across the Dogwood Health Trust counties, the most common services were providing drop in care (69%), accepting children who received subsidy (67%) and participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (75%). Services offered were similar between the West Region and the East

Region. Overall, the Central Region seems to provide a smaller range of services.

Additional data are needed to reflect on the effect of the pandemic and additional services family child care homes may have offered to better support families in these challenging times.

Table 11.
Services Offered to
Families (2019).

% of programs...	ALL DOGWOOD COUNTIES	WEST	CENTRAL	EAST
... providing evening care	60%	62%	58%	62%
... providing overnight care	33%	41%	26%	41%
... providing week end care	24%	30%	20%	30%
... caring for sick children	13%	19%	9%	19%
... providing care on legal holidays	32%	40%	27%	40%
... providing drop in care	69%	68%	70%	68%
... accepting children who received subsidy	67%	72%	63%	72%
... participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program	75%	80%	70%	80%



Young Children in Early Care and Education Programs Across the Counties Served by Dogwood Health Trust

Finding Child Care

Finding child care for their young child(ren) is often a burden for families. Families can learn about early childhood education in their communities through consumer education and referral services, such as those offered by CCSA.^{vii}

The number of families who sought such services for a child from birth to five increased by seventy-three percent (+73%) across all Dogwood counties, going from 354 to 613 families between February 2020 and February 2022, catching up with numbers from February

2019 (667 families). Indeed, a drop in the number of families seeking such services occurred in February 2020 across regions (Figure 14). Further investigation is needed to better understand the reasons for this drop.

This drop also occurred whether children were under the age of three, or three to five years old. From February 2020 and January 2022, the number of children whose families sought consumer education and referrals increased from 213 to 379 for children under three (Figure 15) and from 141 to 234 from children three to five (Figure 16).

Figure 14.
Number of Children
(Birth to Five) who had
a Parent or Guardians
who Received Consumer
Education and Referrals
Over Time.

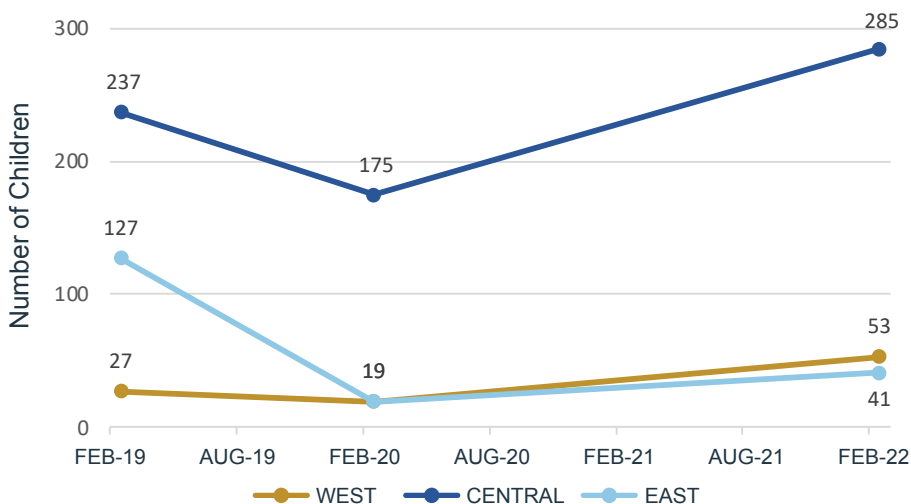
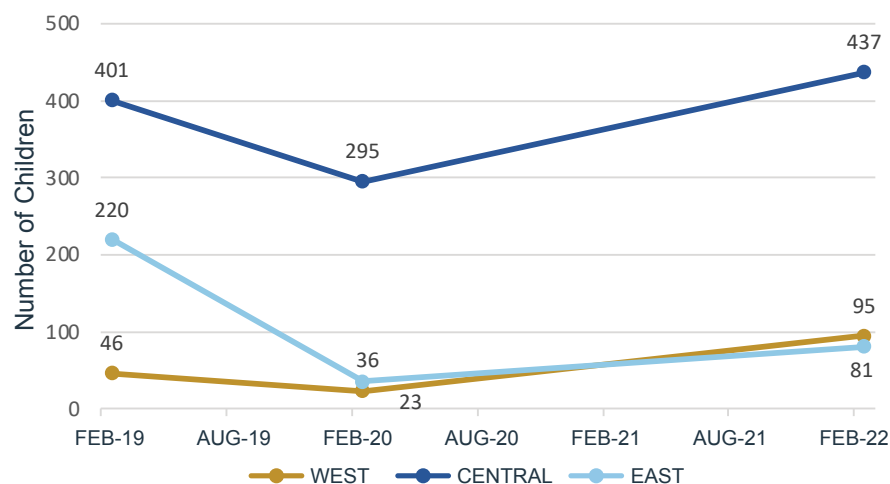


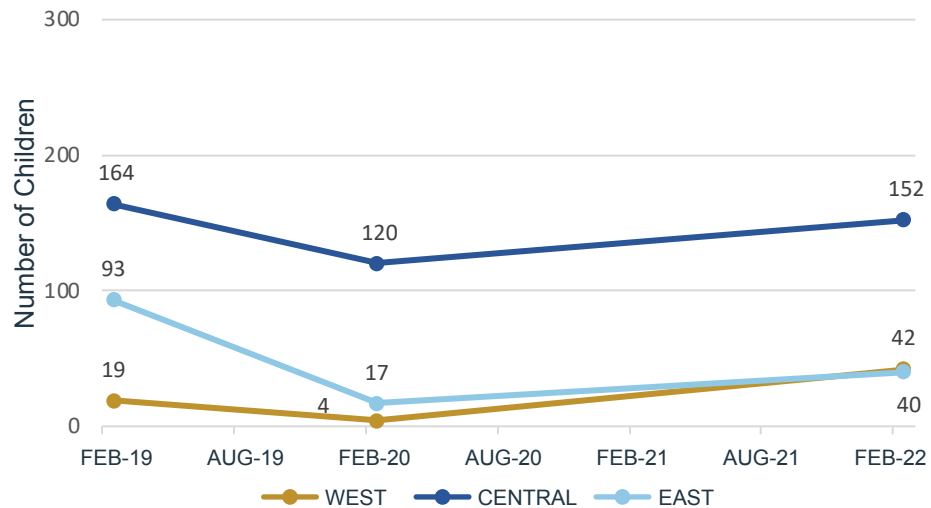
Figure 15.
Number of Children (Three
to Five) who had a Parent
or Guardian who Received
Consumer Education and
Referrals Over Time.



The number of children (ages birth through 12) whose families received referrals in a language other than English went from 19 (February 2019) to two (February 2020) to six (February 2022) in the Central Region. No

families received services in a language other than English in the West and East Region (February 2019, February 2020 and February 2022).

Figure 16.
Number of Children (Three to Five) who had a Parent or Guardian who Received Consumer Education and Referrals Over Time.



Cost for Families

Child care costs can represent another burden for families. In February 2022, the market rates in 5-star centers across all Dogwood counties was more than \$800 per month for children under three and about \$700 per month for children three to five (Table 12). This would represent an annual budget of \$8,400 to \$9,600 for one child, or half of the budget of a single parent living with one child

at the poverty threshold.^{xix} The rate was lower in family child care homes, with a rate of about \$600 per month for children under three and \$550 for children three to five (Table 12). The rate was noticeably lower for 4-star centers, compared to 5-star centers; families with lower incomes may have no choice but enrolling their children in child care centers offering a lower quality of care.

Table 12.
Market Rates for Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes (February 2022).

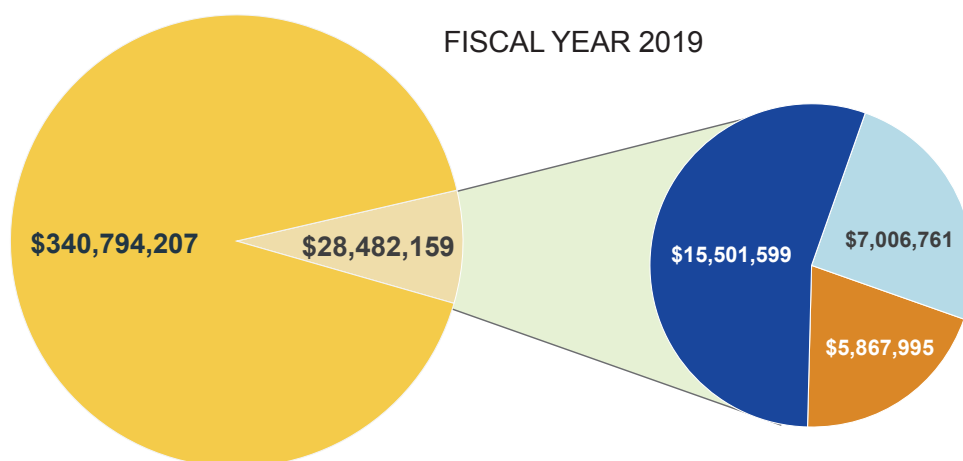
	Child Care Centers		Family Child Care Homes	
	5-star	4-star	5-star	4-star
Infants	\$913	\$744	\$646	\$606
Toddlers	\$913	\$744	\$600	\$576
Twos	\$807	\$699	\$592	\$562
Three-Fives	\$715	\$635	\$555	\$528



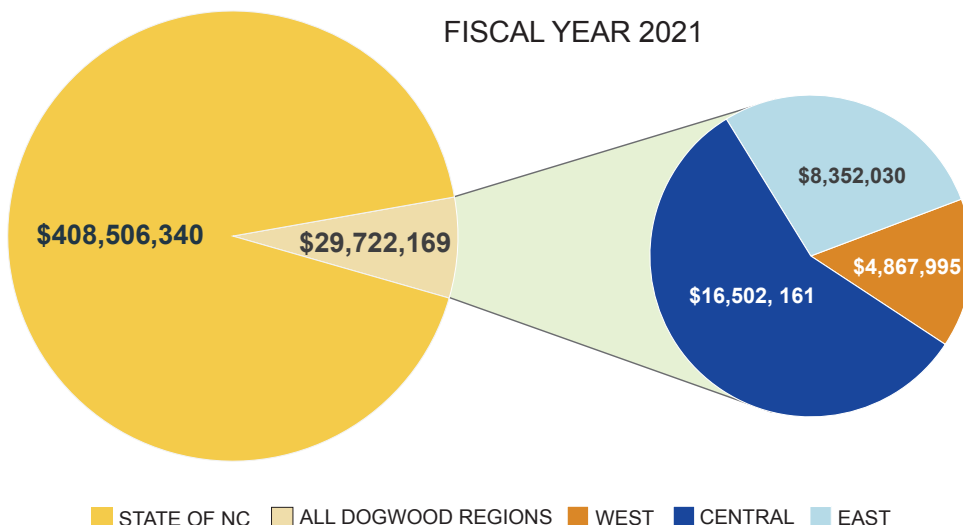
Federal and state funds may be available to help families access affordable child care through subsidy care or publicly funded programs.

As presented in Figure 17, federal and state funds available for families to pay for child care represented \$29,722,186 during fiscal year 2021 across all Dogwood Health Trust counties (not including Smart Start funds), an increase of four

percent (+4%) since 2019. However, differences can be noticed among regions. There was a decrease of nineteen percent (-19%) over time in the West Region. By contrast, there was an increase of six percent (+6%) in the Central Region, and nineteen percent (+19%) in the East Region. By comparison, the available funds for families to pay for child care increased by twenty percent (+20%) overall across North Carolina.



*Figure 17.
Federal and State
Funds Available for
Families to Pay for
Child Care Over Time*





Subsidy Care

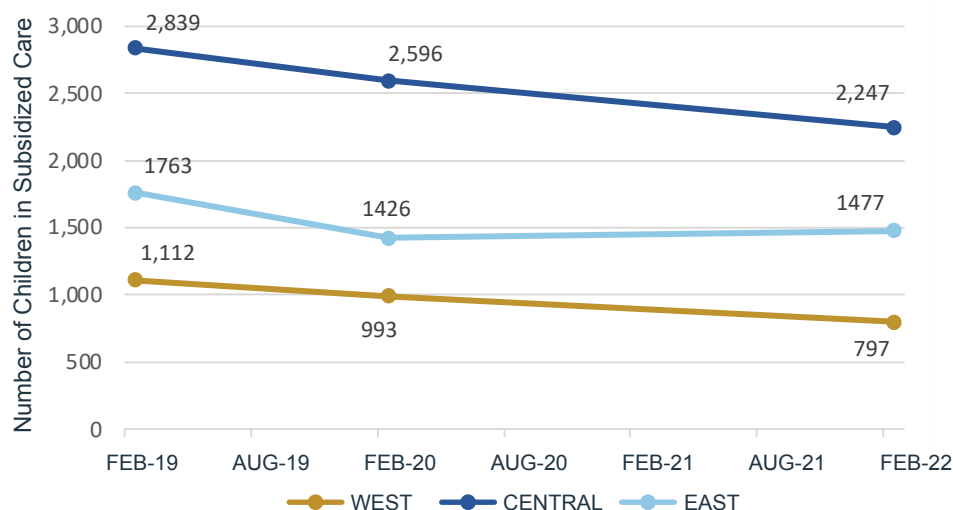
Families living in poverty are eligible to receive financial support to access early childhood education for their children through child care subsidy vouchers provided that: 1) they meet the work/school requirements, 2) a space is available in a program that meets the family's needs and 3) the county has enough money to support the families that apply. A single mother with one child earning \$34,836 or less per year can receive child care subsidy as funds are available. If funds are unavailable or if this parent's earnings exceed the income eligibility limit, a parent could spend up to thirty percent (30%) of their gross income for child care offered at the Dogwood county rates.

In February 2022, 4,521 children (birth to 12) across all Dogwood Health Trust counties were in subsidized child care (797 children in the West Region, 2,247 in the Central Region and 1,477 in the East Region).

children while the number slightly increased by 3.5% in the East Region.

Since February 2020, the number of eligible children under 12 on the waiting list decreased by seventy-five to ninety percent (-75% to -90%) across all Dogwood counties. Such a decrease could be explained by families looking for alternatives during the pandemic, or being discouraged by the waitlist. In other words, as of February 2022, 136 eligible children were on the waitlist across the Dogwood counties, i.e., 136 children who may not have access to early childhood education because of the cost for their families (45 children in the West Region, 33 in the Central Region and 58 in the East Region).

Figure 18.
*Number of Children
(Birth to 12) in
Subsidized Care.*



Among these children in subsidized child care, twenty-five percent (25%) were under three and forty-four (44%) were three to five years old. In addition, 136 eligible children (birth to 12) were on the waiting list for subsidy (45 children in the West Region, 33 in the Central Region and 58 in the East Region).

Overall, there has been a decrease in the number of children (birth to 12) in subsidized child care that started prior to the pandemic, going from 5,714 in February 2019 to 5,015 in February 2020 to 4,521 children in February 2022 (Figure 18). Some differences emerged between regions. Since February 2020, the West Region and the Central Region served around thirteen to twenty percent (-13 to -20%) fewer

Enrollment of Young Children in Early Childhood Education Programs

Enrollment of Young children by Age

The number of children from birth to five years old enrolled in child care programs was 11,497 in February 2022. This represents a decrease of about fifteen percent (-15%) across all Dogwood counties (19% in the East Region, -22% in the West Region and -16% in the Central region) since the beginning of the pandemic.

Among these children, a total of 2,889 were under three. As presented in Figure 19, sixty-one percent (61%) of these infants and toddlers lived in the Central Region, twenty-six percent (26%) live in the East Region and thirteen percent (13%) live in the West Region.

The number of children under three enrolled in early care and education settings has decreased since the beginning of the pandemic, with a decrease of fifty percent (-50%) in the West Region, twenty seven percent (-27%) in the Central Region and thirty percent (-30%) in the East Region.

In addition to children from birth to five years old, programs also enrolled school-age children. As of February 2022, 3,859 school age children were enrolled in early care and education programs across the Dogwood counties (West region: 635 children, Central region: 2,322 children, East region: 902 children). Similarly to children age five and under, the number of

school-age children enrolled in these child care programs also decreased during the pandemic by about twenty percent (-20%) throughout all Dogwood counties (about thirty-three percent (-33%) in the East Region and between fourteen to sixteen percent (between -14% and -16%) in the West and Central regions), decreasing from 4,842 children prior to the pandemic to 3,859 in February 2022.

The decrease in enrollment throughout the pandemic, observed across age range, could be explained by the closure of centers during the pandemic as well as families' alternative arrangements regarding child care during the pandemic. No matter what the rationale might be, the findings suggest that fewer children accessed

early childhood education throughout the pandemic.

Enrollment of Young Children by Star Rating

Young children were enrolled in programs whose quality of care varied. As presented in Figure 20, the percentage of children enrolled in 4- or 5-stars centers—comparable whether children were under three, or three to five years old—was about seventy-five percent (75%), meaning that one out of four children across the Dogwood counties was enrolled in a program rated as of low quality of care through the star rating system.

*Figure 19.
Percentage of Children Under Three
Enrolled in Early Childhood Education
Programs (January 2022).*

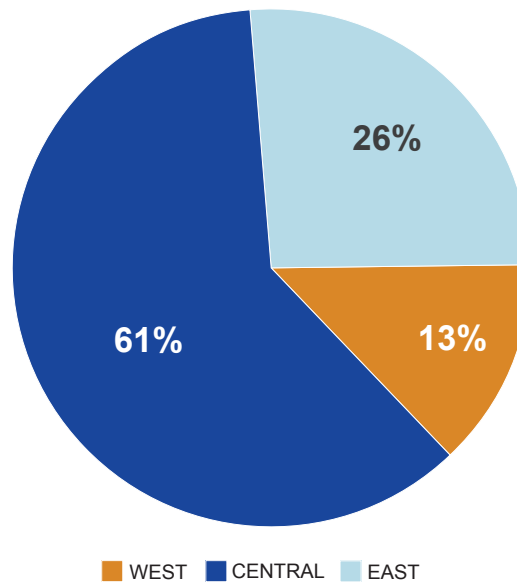
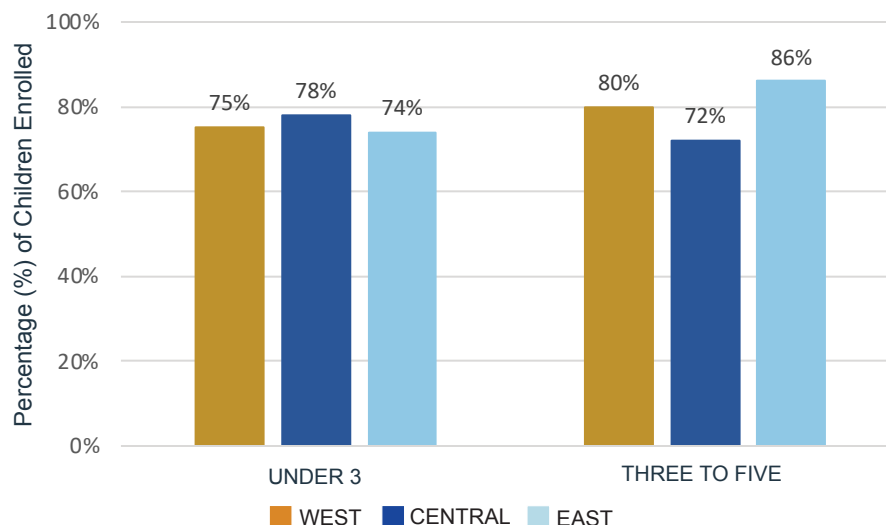




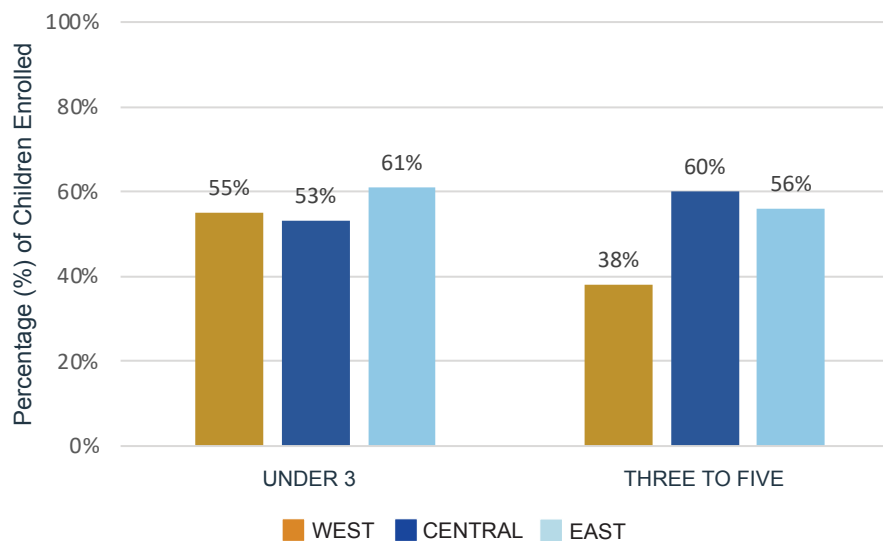
Figure 20
Percentage (%) of Children Enrolled in 4-5 star Child Care Centers, by Age (February 2022).



About fifty percent (50%) of children enrolled in family child care homes was enrolled in a high quality care, i.e., a home which received a 4- or 5-star rating. Interestingly, in the West Region, the percentage of children enrolled in 4- or 5- star

homes was lower for children ages three to five, than for children birth to three (Figure 21). Such findings may be explained by the small number of homes, i.e., a small change in number leading to a big change in percentage.

Figure 21
Percentage (%) of Children Enrolled in 4-5 star Family Child Care Homes, by Age (February 2022).





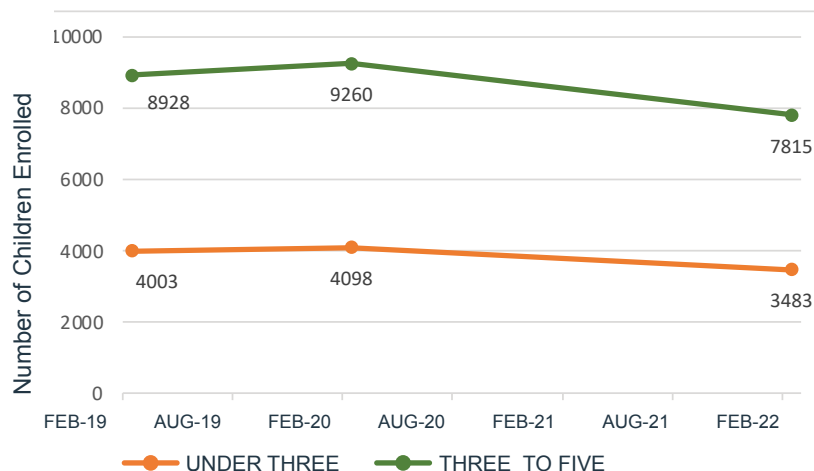
Enrollment of Young Children in Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes

Children enrolled in early childhood education programs received care either in child care centers or family child care homes. The large majority were in child care centers compared to those in family child care homes (Figure 22 and Figure 23, 11,298 vs 199 children, in February 2022).

The number of children in child care centers decreased during the pandemic to about 11,300 children by February 2022 (Figure 22), a decrease of about fifteen percent (-15%) across all Dogwood Health Trust counties, ten percent (-10%) in the East Region, twenty-three percent (-23%) in the West and sixteen percent (-16%) in the Central Region. The number of children in licensed child care centers includes children in NC Pre-K and Head Start/Early Head Start programs.

The number of children in family child care homes has also decreased across all Dogwood counties since 2019 (Figure 23). However, the decrease started prior to the pandemic, as the number dropped from 277 children (birth to five) in February 2019 to 212 children in February 2020 and 201 in February 2022.

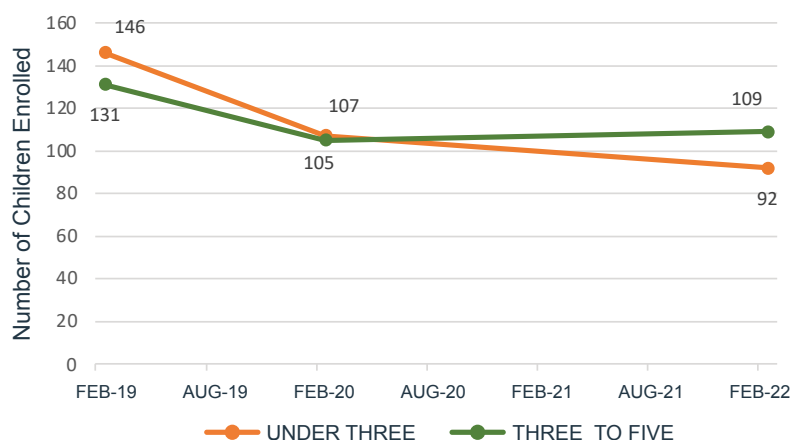
Figure 22. Number of Children Enrolled in Child Care Centers Over Time.



Decreases in enrollment during the pandemic were found whether children were under three, or children were ages three to five, in both licensed child care centers (Figure 24 and Figure 25) and family child care homes (Figure 26 and Figure 27).

In February 2022, 3,485 children under three, living across all Dogwood counties were enrolled in centers, compared to 4,098 enrolled in centers prior to the pandemic (Figure 24). This represents a decrease of fifteen percent (-15%) of children under three.

Figure 23. Number of Children Enrolled in Family Child Care (FCC) Homes Over Time.



Regarding children three to five (Figure 25), there were 7,815 children enrolled in centers compared to 9,260 children prior to the pandemic. This represents a decrease of sixteen percent (-16%) for children age three to five.

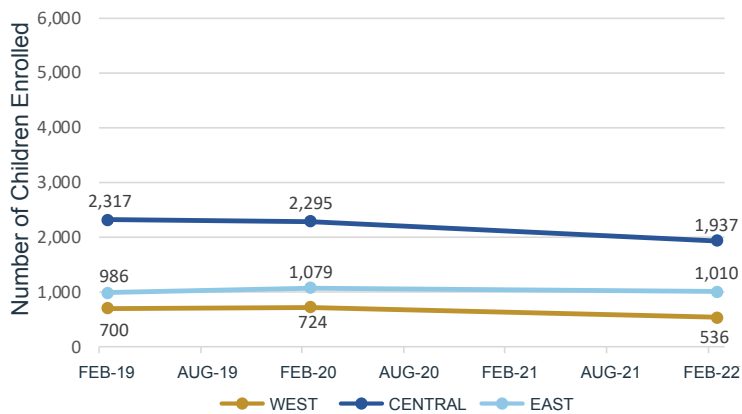


Figure 24.
Number of Children (Under Three)
enrolled in Child Care Centers Over Time.

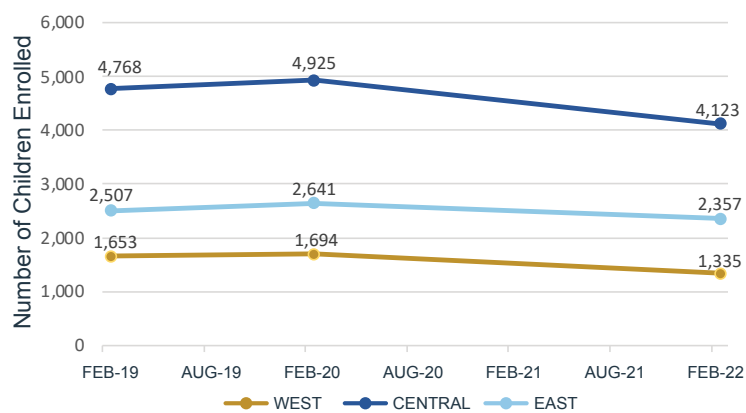


Figure 25.
Number of Children (Three to Five)
enrolled in Child Care
Centers Over Time.

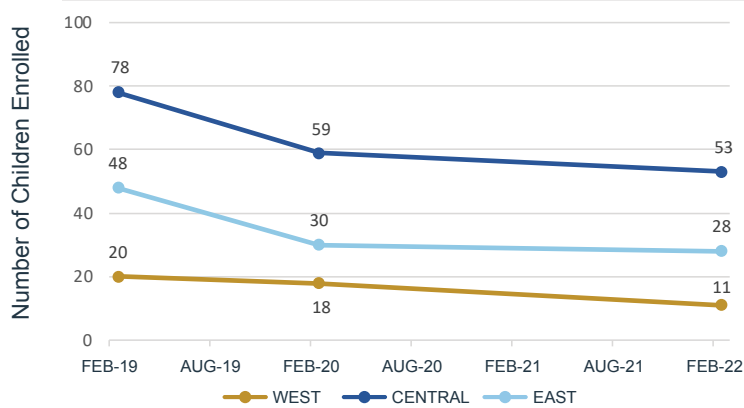
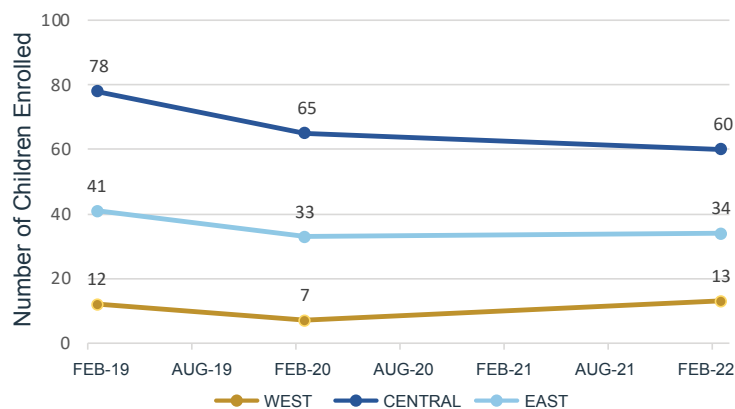


Figure 26.
Number of Children (Under Three)
Enrolled in Family Child Care
(FCC) Homes Over Time.

Figure 27.
Number of Children (Three to Five)
Enrolled in Family Child
Care (FCC) Homes Over Time.



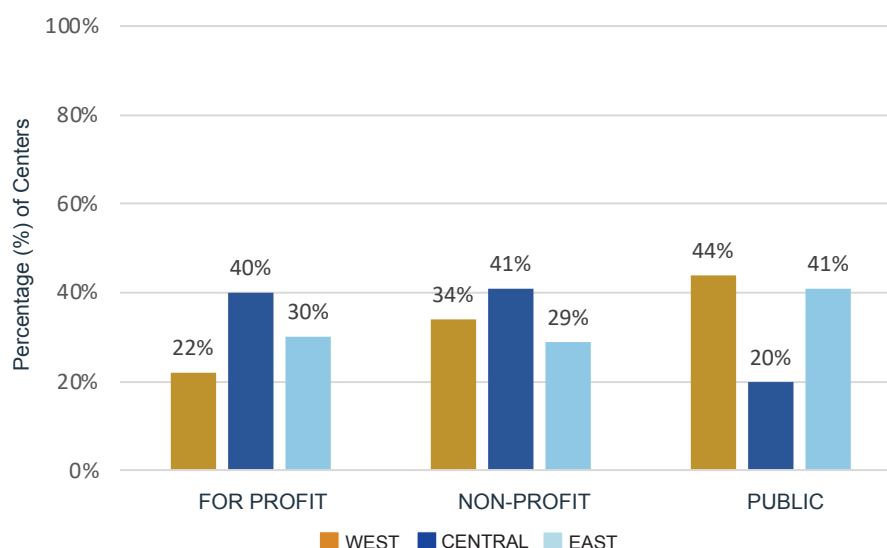


Enrollment of Young Children by Organizational Structure

Thirty-three percent (33%) of the children enrolled in early childhood education centers in the Dogwood service area were enrolled in a for-profit center, thirty-six (36%) in a non-profit and thirty-one (31%) in public settings (Figure 28). Differences were found across regions. In the West Region, twenty-two percent (22%) of children enrolled in centers were enrolled in a for-profit center, thirty-four percent (34%) in a non-profit and forty-four percent (44%) in public

centers. In the Central Region, forty percent (40%) of children were enrolled in a for-profit center, forty-one percent (41%) in a non-profit and twenty percent (20%) in a public center. In the East Region, thirty percent (30%) of children enrolled in licensed centers were in a for-profit center, twenty-nine percent (29%) in a non-profit and forty-one percent (41%) in a public child care center.

Figure 28
Percentage of Enrollment
by Organizational Structure
(2019).



Enrollment of Young Children in Head Start/Early Head Start and NC Pre-K

Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive early care and education program designed to meet the emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of three and four year olds and their families. Early Head Start serves families with children ages birth to three and pregnant women with low income. Most Head Start/Early Head Start programs in North Carolina are licensed. As of February 2022 (Figure 29), 92 sites were providing Head Start services across all Dogwood counties (13 in the West Region,

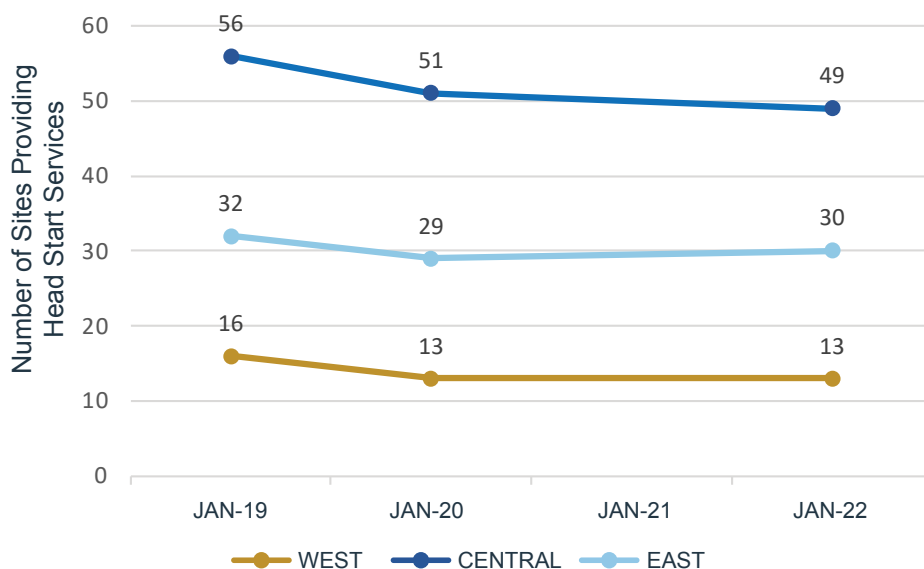
49 in the Central Region and 30 in the East Region). The number of sites providing Head Start services has decreased since 2019 (West Region: 16 sites, Central Region: 56 sites, East Region: 32 sites, as of February 2019). The funding for children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start allowed the enrollment of 21,308 children across North Carolina, and is slightly lower than the number of children enrolled prior to the pandemic (21,633).



The NC Pre-K Program is state-funded and designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds. During fiscal year 2020, the number of NC Pre-K classrooms was 138 across all Dogwood counties (20 in the West Region, 60 in the Central Region and 58 in the East Region). Overall, 1,910 children in the Dogwood Health Trust service area were served in a North Carolina Pre-K (NC Pre-K) program. That number has decreased by twenty-five to thirty-five percent (-25% to -35%), depending on the region, since the beginning of the pandemic,

while these numbers were rising just prior to the pandemic, between 2019 and 2020 by about seven to nine percent (+7% to +9%) in the Central and East regions and two percent (+2%) in the West Region. This is problematic because NC Pre-K may be the only option for families to access free high quality child care. Overall, about ten percent (10%) of the population of children under 6 living in poverty were enrolled in NC Pre-K in the West Region, compared to nine percent (9%) in the Central Region and fourteen percent (14%) in the East Region.

*Figure 29.
Number of Sites Offering Head
Start Services Over Time.*





Conclusion

Early childhood is a critical phase of child development, during which children develop their cognitive, physical and social-emotional skills at a fast pace. Access to high quality early care and education provides not only social and educational experiences for all young children, but also a supportive structure for working families. Ideally, the needs of children and families align with the services child care providers offer. In reality, families often face a heavy burden finding and affording child care, while child care providers receive compensation that often misalign with livable wages. While significant federal and state policy changes are necessary across the field of early childhood education to address these challenges, actions can also be pursued at the local level. Hence, the report provides relevant information about young children living across the counties served by Dogwood Health Trust, characteristics of early childhood education programs and the enrollment of young children in those programs, relevant information that can be used to envision how to better support young children, families and child care providers.


About 50,000 children under six lived across the counties served by Dogwood, with more than fifty percent (50%) living in the Central

Region. Among these children, about sixty percent (60%) lived with working parent(s). In addition, about one-fifth of the children under six lived in a family whose income is below the federal poverty level (e.g., \$27,479 for a family of four^{xix}). That represents an estimated number of over 11,000 children. Such number is most likely an underestimation of the number of children affected by low incomes as the National Center for Children in Poverty^{xx} suggests that families would need nearly twice the poverty threshold amount to be able to meet their needs.

As of February 2022, there were 447 early childhood education programs across counties served by Dogwood, i.e., 400 child care centers, with 172 enrolling children under three and 47 family child care homes, with 17 enrolling children birth to three years old. More than sixty percent (60%) of centers and about fifty-five percent (55%) of the family child care homes were rated as providing higher quality of care than required standards (i.e., 4- to 5-star).

The number of children from birth to five years old enrolled in child care programs was about 11,500 as of February 2022. Among these children, about 2,900 were under three. The large majority of birth to five year olds were in





child care centers compared to those in family child care homes (11,298 vs 199 children in February 2022). The number of children enrolled in an educational setting represented about forty percent (40%) of the total number of children under six living with working parent(s) and about twenty-three (23%) of the whole population of children under six. A decrease in enrollment of about fifteen percent (-15%) was found during the pandemic for children under three, and children age three to five in both licensed child care centers and family child care homes. In addition, subsidy care may be the only option for the Dogwood families of 11,000 children living in poverty to access high quality of child care. However, only about 1,000 children received subsidized child care. As an example, a single mother with one child earning \$34,836 or less per year can receive child care subsidy as funds are available. If funds are unavailable, she would have to pay from twenty-one percent (21%) to thirty percent (30%) of her gross income for child care, depending on the Dogwood county.




The report also provides evidence of challenges, affecting both families of young children and child care providers that are highlighted hereafter. Finding child care for their young child(ren) is often a burden for families, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, any decrease in the number of centers and homes means less access to child care for families of young children. The ability to find a child care space also depends on the child's age as families of children age three to five have

a broader choice of child care opportunities than families of infants and toddlers. Since the beginning of the pandemic, a decrease in both the number of early childhood education programs has been observed across the Dogwood counties, decreasing the number of spaces available for families of young children. Families can receive support to help them find child care through consumer education and referral services provided by their local CCR&R agency. The number of families who sought such services for a child from birth to

five increased by about seventy-three percent (+73%) across all Dogwood counties, going from 354 to 613 families between February 2020 and February 2022, catching up with numbers from February 2019 (667 families). Also this rebound is encouraging, because not all families received support to navigate the field of early care.

Another burden for families relates to the cost of child care, and any decrease in funds available for families to pay for child care means less opportunities to access to high quality child care for families of young children who may need it even more. In February 2022, the market rates in 5-star centers across all Dogwood counties was more than \$800 per month for children under three and about \$700 per month for children three to five. The rate was noticeably lower for 4-star centers compared to 5-star centers; families with lower income may have no choice but enrolling their children in child care centers offering a lower quality of care. Families living in poverty are eligible to receive financial



support to access early care and education for their children through child care subsidy. However, in February 2022, only 4,521 children (birth to 12) across all Dogwood counties were in subsidized child care. Among these children in subsidized child care, twenty-five percent (25%, i.e., about 1,130 children) were under three, and forty-four (44%) were three to five years old (i.e., about 2,000 children). In other words, looking at the population of children under six living in poverty, more than 7,000 children did not benefit from subsidy child care, and even more children if 200% of the poverty level is used as a threshold to be eligible for subsidy. Programs such as Head Start and NC Pre-K also support families in poverty but the number of sites that provided Head Start services has decreased since 2019. Similarly, 1,910 children were served in a North Carolina Pre-K (NC Pre-K) program across the Dogwood counties during fiscal year 2020, a number that decreased by twenty five to thirty five percent (-25 to -35%), depending on the region, since the beginning of the pandemic. Ensuring that the needs of children and their families living in poverty are met should be a priority.

Programs face challenges as well regarding the compensation of the staff, quality of care and continuing education.

Current compensation offered to early childhood educators, professionals and the child care workforce across the Dogwood Health Trust counties, similarly to nationwide, does not provide livable wages. In 2019, and on average, teaching staff were making \$11.62 per hour and family child care providers were making about \$8.00 per hour. The most common benefits provided to child care educators in centers were paid time off for vacation leave (88%) and holiday leave (94%). Only sixty percent (60%) of centers provided fully or partially paid health insurance. In other words, the wages and



benefits still leave out a significant percentage of teachers and providers from health care and livable wage. In 2019, forty-one percent (41%) received public assistance in the past three years. Lower wages often lead to higher turnover. The turnover was higher in centers than in family child care homes, as average time spent in the program in centers was 6 years for directors and 4 years for teaching staff, compared to about 20 years for family child care providers. Challenges in recruiting new staff should be anticipated, making it even more crucial to develop strategies to reduce turnover as much as possible. About twenty percent (20%) of the FCC providers were planning to leave the field within three years after the year data were collected, i.e., 2019. This is problematic as family child care homes often offer a wide range of services that centers may not provide, i.e., much more flexibility in child care for families of young children.

At least forty percent (40%) of programs across the Dogwood counties did not meet the criteria of high quality child care, similarly to the



statewide percentage. The percentage of high quality programs could be improved through higher education, professional development and technical assistance. However, access to higher education through the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Program or participation in professional development activities decreased throughout the pandemic. The number of classrooms receiving technical assistance decreased as well. Overall, the report findings suggest a decrease in opportunities and/or a decrease in taking advantage of these opportunities for teaching staff to access high education and strengthen their skills in providing early care and education throughout the pandemic

The challenges of the counties served by Dogwood Health Trust are alas, nationwide, and need significant policy changes to be addressed. Meanwhile, actions at various levels can be pursued.

At the federal and state level, advocate for policies supporting equitable access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education and providing support for families in poverty through programs such as Head Start and NC Pre-K. Advocate for additional funds to supplement wages in the field of early childhood education and to provide continuing education to all early

childhood educators. Disrupt the discourse that early childhood educators will continue to accept a low salary “out of love for children.”^{xii}

At the local level, develop partnerships with communities and seek additional evidence to better support providers, families and young children based on their own experiences. Survey directors and family child care home providers around successful practices they may have implemented throughout the pandemic. Observe classrooms to better assess the quality of care regarding interactions between young children and teaching staff in particular. Elevate the voices of early childhood educators as well as those of families regarding their experiences with early care and education. Assess the need for child care working parents may have, but also assess families’ interests in early childhood education beyond the needs due to working status. Observe and report all the benefits associated with the enrollment of young children in high-quality child care, regarding their cognitive development but also their social-emotional development that has been drastically impacted by the pandemic.^{xv}

Only concerted efforts across levels will ensure that all young children grow in the supportive and nurturing environment they deserve and reach their full potential.



Appendix



Child Care Across All Dogwood Health Trust Counties



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Did you know that...

... approximately **29,230** children under six live in families where their sole parent or both parents are working? The need for child care is critical to the economic viability of these families.

... overall, the counties received and spent **\$29,722,186** in federal and state funds (not including Smart Start) to help parents pay for child care in fiscal year 2021? In January 2022, the county served **4,521** different children with child care subsidy and had **136** eligible children on the waiting list for subsidy.

... overall, the Dogwood counties have **447** licensed child care programs? Of these, **400** are child care centers and **47** are family child care homes. Of all the licensed programs in the county, **76%** of the centers and **55%** of homes have a 4- or 5- star rating. These businesses employ **2,782** people directly, and also contribute to the economy through purchases of goods and services provided by other businesses in their communities and state.

... there are **11,497** birth to five year old and **3,859** school-age children currently enrolled in these child care programs.

... among birth to five year old children enrolled in centers across all Dogwood counties, **78%** are in 4- or 5-star licensed centers. Among birth to five year old children enrolled in family child care homes across all Dogwood counties, **56%** are in 4-5 star licensed family child care homes.

... using federal guidelines for setting subsidy payment rates and data from fiscal year 2015 market rate study, the 4-star center market rate for two year olds across all Dogwood counties is about **\$700** per month?

... most families across all Dogwood counties cannot afford the full cost of child care? Low-income families and families with more than one child have to pay a high percentage of their income for care. A single mother with one child earning \$34,836 or less per year can receive child care subsidy as funds are available. If funds are unavailable or if this parent's earnings exceed the income eligibility limit, a parent would pay from **21% to 30%** of her gross income for child care offered at the Dogwood county rates. Little is left in the family's budget for food, medical, clothing, travel or other basic living expenses. Due to the high cost of child care, parents often make difficult choices. Some may be forced to seek TANF. Others may seek cheaper, often inadequate child care or leave their children unattended.

While considering the data on this factsheet, please note that many of these data points may differ significantly from previous months or years. This may be due to the impacts of COVID-19 on both the information reported and the data collection process.



Child Care in the West Region



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Did you know that...

... approximately **4,611** children under six in the West Region live in families where their sole parent or both parents are working? The need for child care is critical to the economic viability of these families.

... the West Region received and spent **\$4,867,995** in federal and state funds (not including Smart Start) to help parents pay for child care in fiscal year 2021? In January 2022, the West Region served **797** different children with child care subsidy and had **45** eligible children on the waiting list for subsidy.

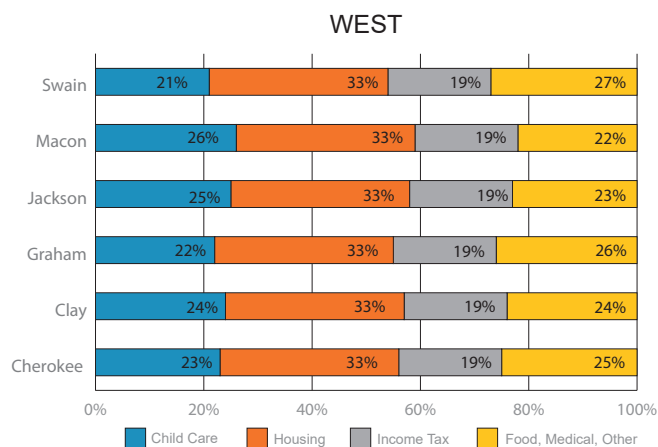
... the West Region has **81** licensed child care programs? Of these, **77** are centers and **4** are family child care homes. Of all the licensed programs in the county, **66%** of the centers and **50%** of homes have a 4- or 5-star rating. These businesses employ **512** people directly, and also contribute to the economy through purchases of goods and services provided by other businesses in their communities and state.

... there are **1,895** birth to five year old and **635** school-age children currently enrolled in these child care programs.

... among birth to five year old children enrolled in centers in the West Region, **78%** are in 4- or 5-star licensed centers. Among birth to five year old children enrolled in homes in the West Region, **49%** are in 4- or 5-star licensed homes.

... using federal guidelines for setting subsidy payment rates and data from fiscal year 2015 market rate study, the 4-star center market rate for two year olds in the Western Region is **\$686** per month?

... most families in the Western Region cannot afford the full cost of child care? Low-income families and families with more than one child have to pay a high percentage of their income for care. A single mother with one child earning **\$34,836** or less per year can receive child care subsidy as funds are available. If funds are unavailable or if this parent's earnings exceed the income eligibility limit, a parent would pay **21% to 26%** of her gross income (see chart) for child care offered at the county rate. Little is left in the family's budget for food, medical, clothing, travel or other basic living expenses. Due to the high cost of child care, parents often make difficult choices. Some may be forced to seek TANF. Others may seek cheaper, often inadequate child care or leave their children unattended.



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Child Care in the Central Region



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Did you know that...

... approximately **15,687** children under six in the Central Region live in families where their sole parent or both parents are working? The need for child care is critical to the economic viability of these families.

... the Central Region received and spent **\$16,502,161** in federal and state funds (not including Smart Start) to help parents pay for child care in fiscal year 2021? In January 2022, the county served **2,247** different children with child care subsidy and had **33** eligible children on the waiting list for subsidy.

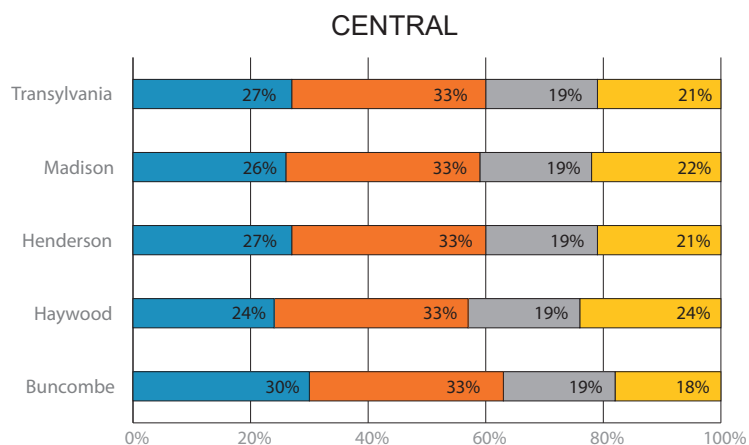
... the Central Region has **229** licensed child care programs? Of these, **201** are centers and **28** are family child care homes. Of all the licensed programs in the county, **76%** of the centers and **50%** of homes have a 4- or 5-star rating. These businesses employ **1,467** people directly, and also contribute to the economy through purchases of goods and services provided by other businesses in their communities and state.

... there are **6,173** birth to five year old and **2,322** school-age children currently enrolled in these child care programs.

... among birth to five year old children enrolled in centers in the Central Region, **74%** are in 4- or 5-star licensed centers. Among birth to five year old children enrolled in homes in the Central Region, **56%** are in 4- or 5-star licensed homes.

... using federal guidelines for setting subsidy payment rates and data from fiscal year 2015 market rate study, the 4-star center market rate for two year olds in the Central Region is **\$776** per month?

... most families in the Central Region cannot afford the full cost of child care? Low-income families and families with more than one child have to pay a high percentage of their income for care. A single mother with one child earning \$34,836 or less per year can receive child care subsidy as funds are available. If funds are unavailable or if this parent's earnings exceed the income eligibility limit, a parent would pay **24 to 30%** of her gross income (see chart) for child care offered at the county rate. Little is left in the family's budget for food, medical, clothing, travel or other basic living expenses. Due to the high cost of child care, parents often make difficult choices. Some may be forced to seek TANF. Others may seek cheaper, often inadequate child care or leave their children unattended.



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Child Care in the East Region

Did you know that...

... approximately **8,932** children under six in the East Region live in families where their sole parent or both parents are working? The need for child care is critical to the economic viability of these families.

... the East Region received and spent **\$8,352,030** in federal and state funds (not including Smart Start) to help parents pay for child care in fiscal year 2021? In January 2022, the East Region served **1,477** different children with child care subsidy and had **58** eligible children on the waiting list for subsidy.

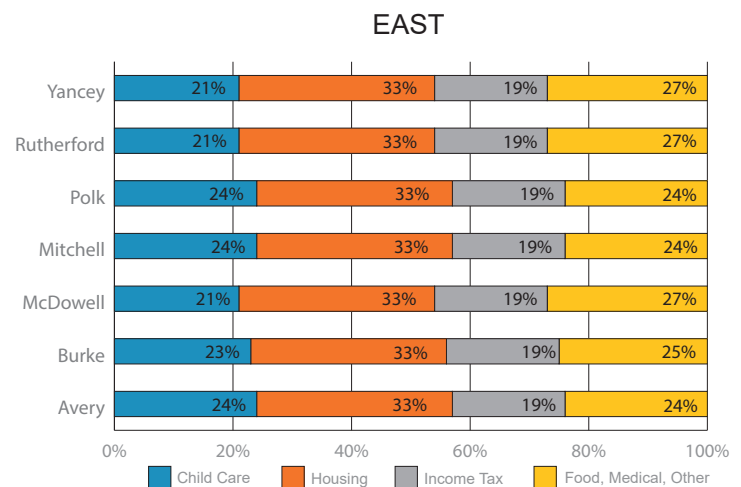
... the East Region has **137** licensed child care programs? Of these, **122** are centers and **15** are family child care homes. Of all the licensed programs in the East Region, **81%** of the centers and **67%** of homes have a 4- or 5-star rating. These businesses employ **803** people directly, and also contribute to the economy through purchases of goods and services provided by other businesses in their communities and state.

... there are **3,429** birth to five year old and **902** school-age children currently enrolled in these child care programs.

... among birth to five year old children enrolled in centers in the East Region, **84%** are in 4- or 5-star licensed centers. Among birth to five year old children enrolled in homes in the East Region, **58%** are in 4- or 5-star licensed homes.

... using federal guidelines for setting subsidy payment rates and data from fiscal year 2015 market rate study, the 4-star center market rate for two year olds in the East Region is **\$657** per month?

... most families in the East Region cannot afford the full cost of child care? Low-income families and families with more than one child have to pay a high percentage of their income for care. A single mother with one child earning \$34,836 or less per year can receive child care subsidy as funds are available. If funds are unavailable or if this parent's earnings exceed the income eligibility limit, a parent would pay **24 to 31%** of her gross income (see chart) for child care offered at the county rate. Little is left in the family's budget for food, medical, clothing, travel or other basic living expenses. Due to the high cost of child care, parents often make difficult choices. Some may be forced to seek TANF. Others may seek cheaper, often inadequate child care or leave their children unattended.



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Additional Facts on Child Care The Effect of Time and COVID-19

Did you know that, between February 2020 and January 2022...

... the number of children under six living with working parents slightly decreased across all Dogwood counties (West Region: **-6%**; Central Region: **-6%**; East Region: **-5%**)?

... federal and state funds (not including Smart Start) to help parents pay for child care increased by **2%** across the state of North Carolina but decreased by **3.5%** across all Dogwood counties? However, the funds increased in the Central and East Regions (**0.5 to 4%**), but decreased from about **\$6.4 million** to **\$4.9 million** in the West region. Between February 2020 and January 2022, the Dogwood counties served from **5,015 to 4,521** children with child care subsidy (i.e., a decrease of about **10%**) and had **763 to 136** eligible children on the waiting list for subsidy. Some differences emerged between regions. The West and the Central regions served around **13%-20%** fewer children while the number increased by **3.5%** in the East Region. The number of eligible children on the waiting list decreased by **80%** in the East Region, **90%** in the Central Region and **74%** in the West Region.

... the number of licensed child care programs slightly decreased across all Dogwood counties, with the highest decrease in the East Region (**4%**)? The number of centers decreased as well across all Dogwood counties, with the highest decrease in the East (**4%**). The number of homes decreased across all Dogwood counties (West: **-20%**, Central: **-3.5%**, East: **-6%**). The percentage of centers having a 4- or 5-star rating increased by five points across the Dogwood counties while the percentage of homes having 4- or 5-star rating remained the same. The number of people directly employed by these businesses decreased by **3.5%-10%** in the West and Central regions but increased by **10%** in the East Region.

... the number of birth to five year olds enrolled in these child care programs decreased by **9% to 22%**, depending on the region (West Region: **-22%**; Central Region: **-16%**; East Region: **-9%**). The number of school-age children enrolled decreased by about **14%** in the West Region, **16%** in the Central Region and about **33%** in the East Region.

... among birth to five year old children enrolled in centers in the Dogwood counties, the percentage of 4- or 5-star licensed centers remained similar. The percentage in 4-5-star licensed homes also remained similar.

While considering the data on this factsheet, please note that many of these data points may differ significantly from previous months or years. This may be due to the impacts of COVID-19 on both the information reported and the data collection process.



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Early Care & Education Programs Across all Dogwood Health Trust Counties

Did you know that...

... programs receive ongoing help through on-site assessments and technical assistance in order to provide the highest quality services for children and family? In fiscal year 2021, 392 classrooms serving children birth to five received technical assistance through a child care resource and referral agency.

... **447** child care centers and family child care homes are across all Dogwood counties?

... higher stars mean that the program has met a higher standard and provides increased quality for children? Across all Dogwood counties there are:

	Centers		Homes	
5-Star	217	54%	7	15%
4-Star	85	21%	19	40%
3-Star	49	12%	13	28%
2-Star	1	<1%	1	2%
1-Star	13	3%	5	11%
Other (e.g. GS-110)	35	9%	2	4%
TOTAL	400	100 %	138	100 %

... NC Pre-K serves at-risk children who are four years old, in private and public sites across the state? Across all Dogwood counties there were **138** sites with one or more NC Pre-K classrooms in fiscal year 2020.

... Head Start provides a range of services for children and families, including classroom settings and home visiting? Across all Dogwood counties, **92** sites provided Head Start services in fiscal year 2021.

... to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) means that a program has voluntarily chosen to meet higher national standards related to teacher education and programmatic standards? As of February 2022, **0** child care centers are accredited by NAEYC.

... **172** child care centers enroll children birth to three years old and **312** child care centers enroll children 3 to 5 years old across all Dogwood counties?

... **17** family child care homes enroll children birth to three years old and 22 family child care homes enroll children 3 to 5 years old across all Dogwood counties?

... on-going professional development ensures that teachers continue to strengthen their skills in providing Early Care & Education to children? Across all Dogwood counties, **1,693** early educators participated in professional development activities in fiscal year 2021 provided by or through a child care resource and referral agency.

While considering the data on this factsheet, please note that many of these data points may differ significantly from previous months or years. This may be due to the impacts of COVID-19 on both the information reported and the data collection process.



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Early Care & Education Programs in the West Region

Did you know that...

...programs receive ongoing help through on-site assessments and technical assistance in order to provide the highest quality services for children and family? In fiscal year 2021, **34** classrooms serving children birth to five received technical assistance through a child care resource and referral agency.

... **81** child care centers and family child care homes are in the West Region?

... higher stars mean that the program has met a higher standard and provides increased quality for children? In the West Region there are:

	Centers		Homes	
5-Star	38	49 %	1	25 %
4-Star	13	17 %	1	25 %
3-Star	15	19 %	0	0 %
2-Star	0	0 %	0	0 %
1-Star	4	5 %	1	25 %
Other (e.g. GS-110)	7	9 %	1	25 %
TOTAL	77	100 %	4	100 %

... NC Pre-K serves at-risk children who are four years old, in private and public sites across the state? In the West Region, there were **20** sites with one or more NC Pre-K classrooms in fiscal year 2020.

... Head Start provides a range of services for children and families, including classroom settings and home visiting? In the West Region, **13** sites provided Head Start services in fiscal year 2021.

... to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) means that a program has voluntarily chosen to meet higher national standards related to teacher education and programmatic standards? As of February 2022, **0** child care centers are accredited by NAEYC.

... **33** child care centers enroll children birth to three years old and **60** child care centers enroll children 3 to 5 years old in the West Region?

... **3** family child care homes enroll children birth to three years old and **3** family child care homes enroll children 3 to 5 years old in the West Region?

... on-going professional development ensures that teachers continue to strengthen their skills in providing Early Care & Education to children? In the West Region, **263** early educators participated in professional development activities in fiscal year 2021 provided by or through a child care resource and referral agency.

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Early Care & Education Programs in the Central Region

Did you know that...

... programs receive ongoing help through on-site assessments and technical assistance in order to provide the highest quality services for children and family? In fiscal year 2021, **257** classrooms serving children birth to five received technical assistance through a child care resource and referral agency.

... **229** child care centers and family child care homes are in the Central Region?

... higher stars mean that the program has met a higher standard and provides increased quality for children? In the Central Region there are:

	Centers		Homes	
5-Star	102	51 %	5	18 %
4-Star	50	25 %	9	32 %
3-Star	23	9 %	10	20 %
2-Star	0	0 %	0	0 %
1-Star	9	4 %	3	11 %
Other (e.g. GS-110)	17	8 %	1	4 %
TOTAL	201	100 %	28	100 %

... NC Pre-K serves at-risk children who are four years old in private and public sites across the state? In the Central Region, there were **60** sites with one or more NC Pre-K classrooms in fiscal year 2020.

... Head Start provides a range of services for children and families, including classroom settings and home visiting? In the Central Region, **49** sites provided Head Start services in fiscal year 2021.

... to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) means that a program has voluntarily chosen to meet higher national standards related to teacher education and programmatic standards? As of February 2022, **0** child care centers are accredited by NAEYC.

... **88** child care centers enroll children birth to three years old and **152** child care centers enroll children 3 to 5 years old in the Central Region?

... **9** family child care homes enroll children birth to three years old and **11** family child care homes enroll children 3 to 5 years old in the Central Region?

... on-going professional development ensures that teachers continue to strengthen their skills in providing Early Care & Education to children? In the Central Region, **979** early educators participated in professional development activities in fiscal year 2021 provided by or through a child care resource and referral agency.

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Early Care & Education Programs in the East Region



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Did you know that...

... programs receive ongoing help through on-site assessments and technical assistance in order to provide the highest quality services for children and family? In fiscal year 2021, **101** classrooms serving children birth to five received technical assistance through a child care resource and referral agency.

... **137** child care centers and family child care homes are in the East Region?

... higher stars mean that the program has met a higher standard and provides increased quality for children? In the East Region, there are:

	Centers		Homes	
5-Star	77	63 %	1	7 %
4-Star	22	18 %	9	60 %
3-Star	11	9 %	3	20 %
2-Star	1	<1 %	1	7 %
1-Star	0	0 %	1	7 %
Other (e.g. GS-110)	11	9 %	0	0 %
TOTAL	122	100 %	15	100 %

... NC Pre-K serves at-risk children who are four years old, in private and public sites across the state? In the East Region there were **58** sites with one or more NC Pre-K classrooms in fiscal year 2020.

... Head Start provides a range of services for children and families, including classroom settings and home visiting? In the East Region, **30** sites provided Head Start services in fiscal year 2021.

... to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) means that a program has voluntarily chosen to meet higher national standards related to teacher education and programmatic standards? As of February 2022, **0** child care centers are accredited by NAEYC.

... **51** child care centers enroll children birth to three years old and 100 child care centers enroll children 3 to 5 years old in the East Region?

... **5** family child care homes enroll children birth to three years old and **8** family child care homes enroll children 3 to 5 years old in the East Region?

... on-going professional development ensures that teachers continue to strengthen their skills in providing Early Care & Education to children? In the East Region, **451** early educators participated in professional development activities in fiscal year 2021 provided by or through a child care resource and referral agency.

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Additional Facts on Early Care & Education Programs

The Effect of Time and COVID-19

Did you know that, between February 2020 and January 2022...

...the number of classrooms serving children birth to five receiving technical assistance through a child care resource and referral agency decreased by **52%** in the West Region and by **12%** in the Central Region? By contrast, it increased by **6%** in the East Region.

... the number of child care centers and family child care homes slightly decreased by **2% to 4%**?

...higher stars mean that the program has met a higher standard and provides increased quality for children? The table below present changes between February 2020 and January 2022, across all Dogwood counties. Differences occurred between regions.

	Centers		Homes	
	February 2020	February 2022	February 2020	February 2022
5-Star	215	217	7	7
4-Star	79	85	20	19
3-Star	59	49	14	13
2-Star	0	1	4	1
1-Star	9	13	4	5
Other (e.g. GS-110)	51	35	1	2
TOTAL	413	400	50	47

...NC Pre-K serves at-risk children who are four years old, in private and public sites across the state? The number of sites with one or more NC Pre-K classrooms remains the same in the East Region, increased by about **2%** in the Central Region and decreased by **5%** in the West Region.

...Head Start provides a range of services for children and families, including classroom settings and home visiting? The number of sites provided Head Start services remains the same in the West Region, decreased by **4%** in the Central Region and increased by **3%** in the East Region.

...to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) means that a program has voluntarily chosen to meet higher national standards related to teacher education and programmatic standards? No centers were accredited by NAEYC, either as 2020 or 2022.

...The number of child care centers enrolling children birth to three years old slightly increased by **2%** in the East Region but decreased by **10%-15%** in the West and Central regions. The number of child care centers enrolling children 3 to 5 years old decreased by about **6%-7%** in all three regions.

... the number of family child care homes enrolling children birth to three years old decreased by 40% in the West Region and **36%** in the Central Region but remained unchanged in the East Region. The number of family child care homes enrolling children 3 to 5 years old remained unchanged, except in the Central Region where it decreased by **21%**.

... on-going professional development ensures that teachers continue to strengthen their skills in providing Early Care & Education to children? The number of early educators who participated in professional development activities provided by or through a child care resource and referral agency decreased by more than **20%** across all counties.

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Young Children & Their Families Across All Dogwood Health Trust Counties



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Did you know that...

... **49,808** children under six live across all Dogwood counties?

... **29,230** children under six across all Dogwood counties live in a household where the sole parent or both parents in the household are working? This number represents **59%** of all children under six.

... **22%** of children five years old or younger in the county live in a family whose income is below the federal poverty level?

... **9%** of children across all Dogwood counties participated in the state subsidized child care program in January to help offset the high cost of child care?

... **379** children age birth to three and **234** child age three to five years old in the county had a parent or guardian who received consumer education and referrals for child care programs through one of North Carolina's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies in fiscal year 2021?

... **6** children (ages birth through 12) whose families received referrals through child care resource and referral agencies in fiscal year 2021 were given that referral in a language other than English across all Dogwood counties?

... **11,298** children age birth to five are in licensed child care centers across all Dogwood counties? This number includes children in NC Pre-K and Head Start/Early Head Start programs. Of these children, **3,483** are birth to three years old and **7,815** are children age three to five years old.

... **199** children age birth to five are in licensed family child care homes across all Dogwood counties? Of these children, **92** children are birth to three years old and **107** children are age three to five years old.

... there was funding for **21,308** children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start in 2019? Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive preschool program designed to meet emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of three and four year olds and their families. Early Head Start serves families with children ages birth to three and low-income pregnant women. Most Head Start/Early Head Start programs in North Carolina are licensed.

... As of fiscal year 2020, **1910** children were served in a North Carolina Pre-K (NC Pre-K) program across all Dogwood counties? The NC Pre-K Program is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds. Most NC Pre-K programs are licensed.

While considering the data on this factsheet, please note that many of these data points may differ significantly from previous months or years. This may be due to the impacts of COVID-19 on both the information reported and the data collection process.



Young Children & Their Families Across the West Region



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Did you know that...

... **7,615** children under six live in the West Region?

... **4,611** children under six in the West Region live in a household where the sole parent or both parents in the household are working? This number represents 62% of all children under six.

... **26%** of children five years old or younger in the county live in a family whose income is below the federal poverty level?

... **10%** of children in the West Region participated in the state subsidized child care program in January to help offset the high cost of child care?

... **53** children age birth to three and **42** child age three to five years old in the county had a parent or guardian who received consumer education and referrals for child care programs through one of North Carolina's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies in fiscal year 2021?

... **0** children (age birth through 12) whose families received referrals through child care resource and referral agencies in fiscal year 2021 were given that referral in a language other than English in the West Region?

... **1,871** children age birth to five are in licensed child care centers in the West Region? This number includes children in NC Pre-K and Head Start/Early Head Start programs. Of these children, **536** are birth to three years old and 1,335 are children age three to five years old.

... **24** children age birth to five are in licensed family child care homes in the West Region? Of these children, **11** children are birth to three years old and 13 children are age three to five years old.

...there was funding for **21,308** children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start in 2019? Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive preschool program designed to meet emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of three and four year olds and their families. Early Head Start serves families with children ages birth to three and low-income pregnant women. Most Head Start/Early Head Start programs in North Carolina are licensed.

...As of fiscal year 2020, **354** children were served in a North Carolina Pre-K (NC Pre-K) program in the West Region? The NC Pre-K Program is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds. Most NC Pre-K programs are licensed.

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Young Children & Their Families Across the Central Region

Did you know that...

...**26,799** children under six live in the Central Region?

...**15,687** children under six in the Central Region live in a household where the sole parent or both parents in the household are working? This number represents 59% of all children under six.

...**18%** of children five years old or younger in the county live in a family whose income is below the federal poverty level?

...**9%** of children in the Central Region participated in the state subsidized child care program in January to help offset the high cost of child care?

...**285** children age birth to three and **152** child age three to five years old in the county had a parent or guardian who received consumer education and referrals for child care programs through one of North Carolina's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies in fiscal year 2021?

...**6** children (age birth through 12) whose families received referrals through child care resource and referral agencies in fiscal year 2021 were given that referral in a language other than English in the Central Region?

...**6,060** children age birth to five are in licensed child care centers in the Central Region? This number includes children in NC Pre-K and Head Start/Early Head Start programs. Of these children, **1,937** are birth to three years old and **4,123** are children age three to five years old.

...**113** children age birth to five are in licensed family child care homes in the Central Region? Of these children, **53** children are birth to three years old and **60** children are age three to five years old.

...there was funding for **21,308** children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start in 2021? Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive preschool program designed to meet emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of three and four year olds and their families. Early Head Start serves families with children ages birth to three and low-income pregnant women. Most Head Start/Early Head Start programs in North Carolina are licensed.

... As of fiscal year 2020, **666** children were served in a North Carolina Pre-K (NC Pre-K) program in the Central Region? The NC Pre-K Program is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds. Most NC Pre-K programs are licensed.

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Young Children & Their Families Across the East Region



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Did you know that...

...**15,394** children under six live in the East Region?

...**8,932** children under six in the East Region live in a household where the sole parent or both parents in the household are working? This number represents 59% of all children under six.

...**28%** of children five years old or younger in the county live in a family whose income is below the federal poverty level?

...**10%** of children in the East Region participated in the state subsidized child care program in January to help offset the high cost of child care?

...**41** children age birth to three and **40** child age three to five years old in the county had a parent or guardian who received consumer education and referrals for child care programs through one of North Carolina's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies in fiscal year 2021?

...**0** children (age birth through 12) whose families received referrals through child care resource and referral agencies in fiscal year 2021 were given that referral in a language other than English in the East Region?

...**3,367** children age birth to five are in licensed child care centers in the East Region? This number includes children in NC Pre-K and Head Start/Early Head Start programs. Of these children, **1,010** are birth to three years old and **2,357** are children age three to five years old.

...**62** children age birth to five are in licensed family child care homes in the East Region? Of these children, **28** children are birth to three years old and **34** children are age three to five years old.

...there was funding for **21,308** children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start in 2021? Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive preschool program designed to meet emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of three and four year olds and their families. Early Head Start serves families with children ages birth to three and low-income pregnant women. Most Head Start/Early Head Start programs in North Carolina are licensed.

... As of fiscal year 2020, **890** children were served in a North Carolina Pre-K (NC Pre-K) program in the East Region? The NC Pre-K Program is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds. Most NC Pre-K programs are licensed.

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Additional Facts on Early Care & Education Programs The Effect of Time and COVID-19

Did you know that, between February 2020 and January 2022...

...the number of children under six living across the Dogwood regions decreased by **5% to 6%**?

... the number children under six living in a household where the sole parent or both parents in the household are working also decreased by **5% to 6%**?

... the number children five years old or younger living in a family whose income is below the federal poverty level decreased from **33%** in February 2020 to **22%** in February 2022?

...the percentage of children who participated in the state subsidized child care program to help offset the high cost of child care decreased by two points across all Dogwood counties, going from **11% to 13%** to **9% to 10%**, depending on the regions?

... the number of children who had a parent or guardian who received consumer education and referrals for child care programs through one of North Carolina's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies increased from **213 to 379** for children birth to three and **141 to 234** from children three to five across all Dogwood counties, while these numbers decreased by more than **30%** across the state of North Carolina?

... the number of children (ages birth through 12) whose families received referrals through child care resource and referral agencies were given that referral in a language other than English in the East Region remains unchanged in the West and East Region, but increased from **2 to 6** in the Central Region?

... the number of children age birth to five who are in licensed child care centers decreased by **10%** in the East Region and by **16% to 23%** in the West and Central Region? This number includes children in NC Pre-K and Head Start/Early Head Start programs.

... the number of children age birth to five in licensed family child care homes decreased by **3% to 4%** in the West and East Region and **10%** in the Central Region?

...the funding for children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start decreased by about **30%**, serving **21,633** as of February 2020 to **21,308** children as of February 2022, across the state of North Carolina? Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive preschool program designed to meet emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of three and four year olds and their families. Early Head Start serves families with children ages birth to three and low-income pregnant women. Most Head Start/Early Head Start programs in North Carolina are licensed.

...the number of children served in a North Carolina Pre-K (NC Pre-K) program decreased by **25% to 35%**, depending on the regions? The NC Pre-K Program is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds. Most NC Pre-K programs are licensed.

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Early Care & Education Use Across All Dogwood Health Trust Counties

Did you know that...

... families sought consumer education and referrals for **613** child from birth to five years of age from a child care resource and referral agency across all Dogwood counties in fiscal year 2021?

... **3,483** children from birth to three years of age and **7,815** children from three to five years of age are currently enrolled in a licensed Early Care & Education center across all Dogwood counties? Of these children under three years of age, **77%** are in 4- and 5-star centers. Of these children three to five years of age, **78%** are in 4- or 5-star centers.

... **92** children from birth to three years of age and **107** children from three to five years of age are currently enrolled in a licensed family child care home across all Dogwood counties? Of these children under three years of age, **56%** are in 4- and 5-star homes. Of these children three to five years of age, **56%** are in 4- or 5-star homes.

... many families receive help paying for Early Care & Education for their children through one of three major programs: Head Start/Early Head Start, NC Pre-K and child care subsidy?

... there was funding for enrollment for **21,308** children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start in 2019? This program uses federal funds and serves preschool children in families living in poverty. This program uses federal funds and serves preschool children in families living in poverty.

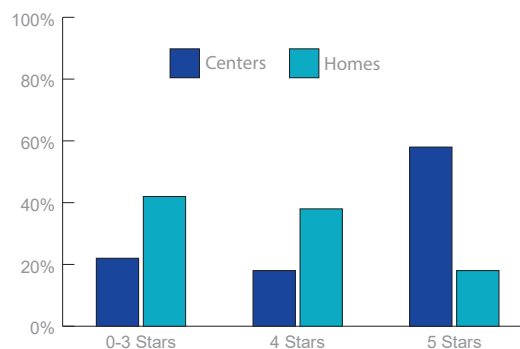
... as of fiscal year 2020, **1,910** children across all Dogwood counties participated in NC Pre-K in the past year? This program uses state funds and serves four-year-old children who are "at risk" for school failure.

... **4,521** children across all Dogwood counties participated in the state subsidized child care program in January? This program uses federal and state funds and targets working families with low income and/or in crisis. Additional children may be served through the N.C. Smart Start subsidy program.

... of the **4,521** children who participated in the state subsidized child care program across all Dogwood counties, **25%** were under three years of age and **44%** were three to five years of age?

... **136** eligible children from birth to 12 years of age were on the state subsidized child care program waiting list across all Dogwood counties?

Percentage of children (birth to five) using regulated child care by star level (all DHT counties)



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Early Care & Education Use in the West Region

Did you know that...

... families sought consumer education and referrals for **95** child from birth to five years of age from a child care resource and referral agency in the West Region in fiscal year 2021?

... **536** children from birth to three years of age and **1,335** children from three to five years of age are currently enrolled in a licensed Early Care & Education center in the Western Region? Of these children under three years of age, **75%** are in 4- and 5-star centers. Of these children three to five years of age, **80%** are in 4- or 5-star centers.

... **11** children from birth to three years of age and **13** children from three to five years of age are currently enrolled in a licensed family child care home in the West Region? Of these children under three years of age, **55%** are in 4- and 5-star homes. Of these children three to five years of age, **38%** are in 4- or 5-star homes.

... many families receive help paying for Early Care & Education for their children through one of three major programs: Head Start/Early Head Start, NC Pre-K and child care subsidy?

... there was funding for enrollment for **21,308** children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start in fiscal year 2019? This program uses federal funds and serves preschool children in families living in poverty. This program uses federal funds and serves preschool children in families living in poverty.

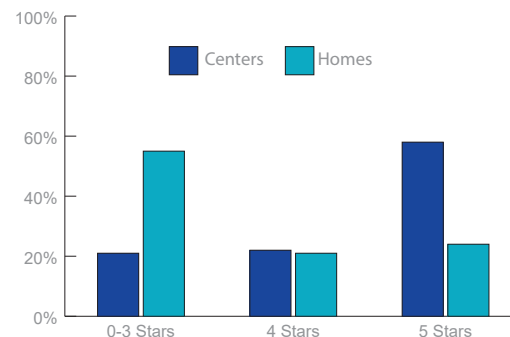
... as of January 2022, **354** children in the West Region participated in NC Pre-K in the past year? This program uses state funds and serves four-year-old children who are "at risk" for school failure.

... **797** children in the West Region participated in the state subsidized child care program in January? This program uses federal and state funds and targets working families with low income and/or in crisis. Additional children may be served through the N.C. Smart Start subsidy program.

... of the **797** children who participated in the state subsidized child care program in the West Region, **26%** were under three years of age and **44%** were three to five years of age?

... **45** eligible children from birth to 12 years of age were on the state subsidized child care program waiting list in the West Region?

Percentage of children (birth to five) using regulated child care by star level (West region)



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Early Care & Education Use in the Central Region



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Did you know that...

... families sought consumer education and referrals for **437** child from birth to five years of age from a child care resource and referral agency in the Central Region in fiscal year 2021?

... **1,937** children from birth to three years of age and **4,123** children from three to five years of age are currently enrolled in a licensed early care and education center in the Central Region? Of these children under three years of age, **78%** are in 4- and 5-star centers. Of these children three to five years of age, **72%** are in 4- or 5-star centers.

... **53** children from birth to three years of age and **60** children from three to five years of age are currently enrolled in a licensed family child care home in the Central Region? Of these children under three years of age, **53%** are in 4- and 5-star homes. Of these children three to five years of age, **60%** are in 4- or 5-star homes.

... many families receive help paying for Early Care & Education for their children through one of three major programs: Head Start/Early Head Start, NC Pre-K and child care subsidy?

... there was funding for enrollment for **21,308** children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start in fiscal year 2019? This program uses federal funds and serves preschool children in families living in poverty. This program uses federal funds and serves preschool children in families living in poverty.

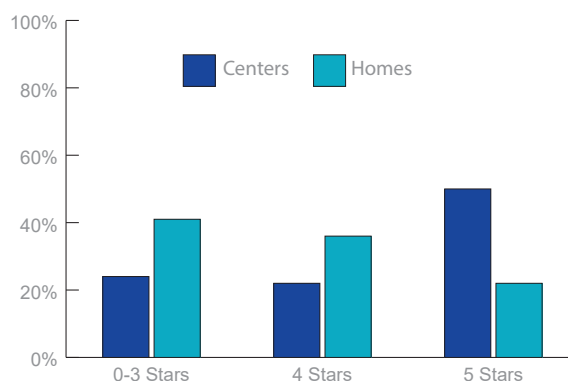
... as of January 2022, **666** children in the Central Region participated in NC Pre-K in the past year? This program uses state funds and serves four-year-old children who are "at risk" for school failure.

... **2,247** children in the Central Region participated in the state subsidized child care program in January? This program uses federal and state funds and targets working families with low income and/or in crisis. Additional children may be served through the N.C. Smart Start subsidy program.

... of the **2,247** children who participated in the state subsidized child care program in the Central Region, **24%** were under three years of age and **46%** were three to five years of age?

... **33** eligible children from birth to 12 years of age were on the state subsidized child care program waiting list in the Central Region?

Percentage of children (birth to five) using regulated child care by star level (Central region)



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Early Care & Education Use in the East Region

Did you know that...

... families sought consumer education and referrals for **81** child from birth to five years of age from a child care resource and referral agency in the East Region in fiscal year 2021?

... **1,010** children from birth to three years of age and **2,357** children from three to five years of age are currently enrolled in a licensed Early Care & Education center in the East Region? Of these children under three years of age, **74%** are in 4- and 5-star centers. Of these children three to five years of age, **86%** are in 4- or 5-star centers.

... **28** children from birth to three years of age and **34** children from three to five years of age are currently enrolled in a licensed family child care home in the East Region? Of these children under three years of age, **61%** are in 4- and 5-star homes. Of these children three to five years of age, **56%** are in 4- or 5-star homes.

... many families receive help paying for Early Care & Education for their children through one of three major programs: Head Start/Early Head Start, NC Pre-K and child care subsidy?

... there was funding for enrollment for **21,308** children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start in fiscal year 2019? This program uses federal funds and serves preschool children in families living in poverty. This program uses federal funds and serves preschool children in families living in poverty.

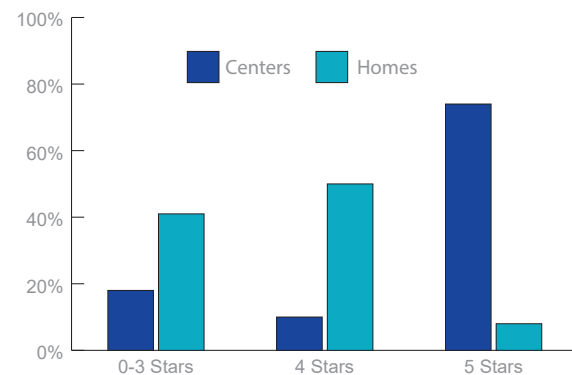
... as of January 2022, **890** children in the East Region participated in NC Pre-K in the past year? This program uses state funds and serves four-year-old children who are at risk for school failure.

... **1,477** children in the East Region participated in the state subsidized child care program in January? This program uses federal and state funds and targets working families with low income and/or in crisis. Additional children may be served through the N.C. Smart Start subsidy program.

... of the **1,477** children who participated in the state subsidized child care program in the East Region, **27%** were under three years of age and **41%** were three to five years of age?

... **58** eligible children from birth to 12 years of age were on the state subsidized child care program waiting list in the East Region?

Percentage of children (birth to five) using regulated child care by star level (East region)



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Additional Facts on Early Care & Education Use The Effect of Time and COVID-19

Did you know that, between February 2020 and January 2022...

... the number of families who sought consumer education and referrals for child from birth to five years of age from a child care resource and referral agency increased by about **73%** across all Dogwood counties? The increase was 50% in the Central Region, **125%** in the East Region and more than **300%** in the West.

... the number of children from birth to three years of age and the number of children from three to five years of age enrolled in a licensed Early Care & Education center decreased by about **15%** across all Dogwood counties?

... the number of children from birth to three years of age in a licensed family child care home decreased by **14%** across all Dogwood regions, with a decrease of **40%** in the West Region. The number of children from three to five years of age enrolled in a licensed family child care home remained about the same in the East Region, increased from **7 to 13** children in the West Region and decreased from **65 to 60** children in the Central Region?

... many families receive help paying for Early Care & Education for their children through one of three major programs: Head Start/Early Head Start, NC Pre-K and child care subsidy?

... the funding for children in Head Start, Early Head Start and migrant/seasonal Head Start decreased from serving **21,633** as of February 2020 to **21,308** children as of February 2022, across the state of North Carolina? This program uses federal funds and serves preschool children in families living in poverty. This program uses federal funds and serves preschool children in families living in poverty.

... the number of children who participated in NC Pre-K decreased by **25%-35%** depending on the region This program uses state funds and serves four-year-old children who are “at risk” for school failure.

... the number of children who participated in the state subsidized child care program decreased by **20%** in the West Region and **13%** in the Central Region but increased by **4%** in the East Region? This program uses federal and state funds and targets working families with low income and/or in crisis. Additional children may be served through the N.C. Smart Start subsidy program.

... the percentage of children who participated in the state subsidized child care program remained about the same for children under three years of age and three to five years of age?

... The number of eligible children from birth to 12 years of age were on the state subsidized child care program waiting list decreased by **70% to 90%**, depending on the region?

While considering the data on this factsheet, please note that many of these data points may differ significantly from previous months or years. This may be due to the impacts of COVID-19 on both the information reported and the data collection process.



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Infant and Toddler Care Across All Dogwood Health Trust Counties

Did you know that...

... **14,370** infants/toddlers across all Dogwood counties live in families where their sole or both parents work.

... **137 centers** and **38 homes** across all Dogwood counties provide Early Care & Education to infants and/or toddlers.

... As of **February 2022**, **2,412** infants/toddlers across all Dogwood counties were enrolled in centers. This number compares to **4,031** enrolled in centers prior to the pandemic*.

... As of **February 2022**, **56** infants/toddlers across all Dogwood counties were enrolled in family child care homes. This number compares to **105** enrolled in homes prior to the pandemic*.

... **66%** of infants/toddlers across all Dogwood counties are enrolled in high quality care (at 4- and or 5-star rated center or home). This compares to **67%** enrolled in high quality care statewide.

... Market rates in high quality programs across all Dogwood counties are as follows:

	Centers		Homes	
	5-Star	4-Star	5-Star	4-Star
Infants	\$913	\$744	\$646	\$606
Toddlers	\$913	\$744	\$600	\$576
Twos	\$807	\$699	\$592	\$562
Three-Fives	\$715	\$635	\$555	\$528

The market rate is obtained through a survey administered to all child care providers statewide. Though market rates do reflect a higher cost of care for younger children, at all age groups, they only reflect what parents can afford to pay, not the true cost of care.

... **38%** of children (birth through 5) across all Dogwood counties receiving subsidy are infants/toddlers. This compares to **33%** of infant/toddlers receiving subsidy statewide.

... The infant/toddler teaching staff make on average **\$11.00** per hour compared to the three to five year old teaching staff who make on average **\$12.45** per hour.

... Infant/toddler teachers and assistants tend to have less education than their counterparts teaching three to five year olds. **Fifty-three percent (53%)** of the infant/toddler teaching staff have an associate degree or more in any field compared to **69%** of three to five year old teachers.

The information reported on Infant and Toddler Care factsheets is updated quarterly (approximately every three months), depending on data availability. Until the new quarter, a factsheet with duplicate data is produced each month. While considering the data on this factsheet, please note that many of these data points may differ significantly from previous months or years. This may be due to the impacts of COVID-19 on both the information reported and the data collection process



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The Think Babies™ NC Alliance partnered with Child Care Services Association to produce the infant-toddler fact sheets. For more information about Think Babies™ NC, please visit www.ThinkBabiesNC.org



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Infant and Toddler Care in the West Region

Did you know that...

- ... Approximately **2,290** infants/toddlers in the West Region live in families where their sole or both parents work.
- ... **29 centers** and **4 homes** in the West Region provide Early Care & Education to infants and/or toddlers.
- ... As of **February 2022**, **349** infants/toddlers in the West Region were enrolled in centers. This number compares to **729** enrolled in centers prior to the pandemic.*
- ... As of **February 2022**, **5** infants/toddlers in the West Region were enrolled in family child care homes. This number compares to **15** enrolled in homes prior to the pandemic.*
- ... **73%** of infants/toddlers in the West Region are enrolled in high quality care (at 4- and or 5-star rated centers or homes). This compares to **67%** enrolled in high quality care statewide.
- ... Market rates in high quality programs in the West Region are as follows:

	Centers		Homes	
	5-Star	4-Star	5-Star	4-Star
Infants	\$919	\$724	\$615	\$574
Toddlers	\$919	\$724	\$568	\$544
Twos	\$805	\$686	\$558	\$525
Three-Fives	\$703	\$611	\$535	\$499

The market rate is obtained through a survey administered to all child care providers statewide. Though market rates do reflect a higher cost of care for younger children, at all age groups, they only reflect what parents can afford to pay, not the true cost of care.

- ... **43%** of children (birth through 5) in the West Region receiving subsidy are infants/toddlers. This compares to **33%** of infant/toddlers receiving subsidy statewide.
- ... The infant/toddler teaching staff make on average **\$11.00** per hour compared to the three to five year old teaching staff who make on average **\$12.45** per hour.
- ... Infant/toddler teachers and assistants tend to have less education than their counterparts teaching three to five year olds. **Fifty-three** percent (**53%**) of the infant/toddler teaching staff have an associate degree or more in any field compared to **69%** of three to five year old teachers.

The information reported on Infant and Toddler Care factsheets is updated quarterly (approximately every three months), depending on data availability. Until the new quarter, a factsheet with duplicate data is produced each month. While considering the data on this factsheet, please note that many of these data points may differ significantly from previous months or years. This may be due to the impacts of COVID-19 on both the information reported and the data collection process



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Infant and Toddler Care in the Central Region

Did you know that...

... Approximately **7,688** infants/toddlers in the Central Region live in families where their sole or both parents work.

... **60 centers** and **21 homes** in the Central Region provide Early Care & Education to infants and/or toddlers.

... As of **February 2022**, **1,433** infants/toddlers in the Central Region were enrolled in centers. This number compares to **2,253** enrolled in centers prior to the pandemic.*

... As of **February 2022**, **26** infants/toddlers in the Central Region were enrolled in family child care homes. This number compares to **58** enrolled in homes prior to the pandemic.*

... **91%** of infants/toddlers in the Central Region are enrolled in high quality care (at 4- and or 5-star rated centers or homes). This compares to **67%** enrolled in high quality care statewide.

... Market rates in high quality programs in the Central Region are as follows:

	Centers		Homes	
	5-Star	4-Star	5-Star	4-Star
Infants	\$959	\$820	\$738	\$702
Toddlers	\$959	\$820	\$698	\$669
Twos	\$870	\$776	\$689	\$665
Three-Fives	\$753	\$688	\$628	\$606

The market rate is obtained through a survey administered to all child care providers statewide. Though market rates do reflect a higher cost of care for younger children, at all age groups, they only reflect what parents can afford to pay, not the true cost of care.

... **32%** of children (birth through 5) in the Central Region receiving subsidy are infants/toddlers. This compares to **33%** of infant/toddlers receiving subsidy statewide.

... The infant/toddler teaching staff make on average **\$11.00** per hour compared to the three to five year old teaching staff who make on average **\$12.45** per hour.

... Infant/toddler teachers and assistants tend to have less education than their counterparts teaching three to five year olds. **Fifty-three** percent (**53%**) of the infant/toddler teaching staff have an associate degree or more in any field compared to **69%** of three to five year old teachers.

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Infant and Toddler Care in the East Region

Did you know that...

... Approximately **4,392** infants/toddlers in the East Region live in families where their sole or both parents work.

... **48 centers** and **13 homes** in the East Region provide Early Care & Education to infants and/or toddlers.

... As of **February 2022**, **630** infants/toddlers in the East Region were enrolled in centers. This number compares to **1,049** enrolled in centers prior to the pandemic.*

... As of **February 2022**, **25** infants/toddlers in the East Region were enrolled in family child care homes. This number compares to **32** enrolled in homes prior to the pandemic.*

... **41%** of infants/toddlers in the East Region are enrolled in high quality care (at 4- and or 5-star rated centers or homes). This compares to **67%** enrolled in high quality care statewide.

... Market rates in high quality programs in the East Region are as follows:

	Centers		Homes	
	5-Star	4-Star	5-Star	4-Star
Infants	\$875	\$708	\$608	\$564
Toddlers	\$875	\$708	\$558	\$538
Twos	\$764	\$657	\$553	\$520
Three-Fives	\$699	\$618	\$520	\$498

The market rate is obtained through a survey administered to all child care providers statewide. Though market rates do reflect a higher cost of care for younger children, at all age groups, they only reflect what parents can afford to pay, not the true cost of care.

... **38%** of children (birth through 5) in the East Region receiving subsidy are infants/toddlers. This compares to **33%** of infant/toddlers receiving subsidy statewide.

... The infant/toddler teaching staff make on average **\$11.00** per hour compared to the three to five year old teaching staff who make on average **\$12.45** per hour.

... Infant/toddler teachers and assistants tend to have less education than their counterparts teaching three to five year olds. **Fifty-three** percent (**53%**) of the infant/toddler teaching staff have an associate degree or more in any field compared to **69%** of three to five year old teachers.

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Endnote

- ⁱ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/24984>.
- ⁱⁱ See for instance, positive effects of preschool education reviewed in Barnett, 2008. Preschool education and its lasting effects: Research and policy implications. National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers, NJ.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ryan, S., Graue, M. E., Gadsden, V. L., & Levine, F. J. (Eds.). (2021). Advancing Knowledge and Building Capacity for Early Childhood Research. American Educational Research Association, Chapter 9.
- ^{iv} See for instance 2005 North Carolina Early Childhood Systems Study, conducted by Child Care Services Association, and highlighting how “over the last ten years, North Carolina has made great strides in improving the early care and education of children across the state” (introduction, p. 2).
- ^v Facilities are currently evaluated on two components, which are staff education and program standards. Before evaluating a program to determine star rating, programs are issued with a “temporary license”. Faith sponsored programs can request to be from licensing and be issued a “GS-110 Notice of Compliance”, or decide to go through the licensing process. Programs rated as having 4- or 5-stars are considered as provided high quality care and have met standards to receive their license that were higher than the minimum required. If an issue is raised, programs are monitored to ensure they meet minimum standards, and issued a “provisional license”. If the issue sustained after investigation, they are provided with a “probationary license”. For more information on the star rated system, see <https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Services/Licensing/Star-Rated-License>
- ^{vi} e.g., the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® North Carolina Scholarship Program provides educational scholarships to early care professionals and those who perform specialized functions in the early care system. For more information, see <https://www.childcareservices.org/programs/teach-north-carolina/>
- ^{vii} e.g., services offered to families by Child Care Services Association through Child Care Referral Central. <https://www.childcareservices.org/families/find-child-care/>
- ^{viii} North Carolina Early Care and Education Data Repository, 2022. <https://www.childcareservices.org/research/nc-ece-data-repo/>
- ^{ix} Who’s Caring for Our Babies? Early Care and Education in North Carolina, 2018. <https://www.childcareservices.org/research/ece-studies/whos-caring-for-our-babies-early-care-and-education-in-north-carolina/>
- ^x North Carolina Child Care Workforce Study, 2019. <https://www.childcareservices.org/research/workforce-studies/working-in-early-care-and-education-statewide-workforce-studies/2019-north-carolina-child-care-workforce-study/>

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- ^{xi} The median value is reported as the measure of central tendency. As such, “average” is used interchangeably with “median” unless specifically noted otherwise.
- ^{xii} Glasmeier, Amy K. Living Wage Calculator. 2020. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>
- ^{xiii} e.g., the Child Care WAGE\$® Program provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid teachers, directors and family child care providers working with children between the ages of birth to five in participating counties. <https://www.childcareservices.org/programs/wages/>. The Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® (AWARD\$) program provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid early educators working full-time with children birth through age two in North Carolina. <https://www.childcareservices.org/programs/awards/>
- ^{xiv} Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). Worthy work, STILL unlivable wages: The early childhood workforce 25 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.
- ^{xv} Barnett, W.S., & Jung, K. (2021). Seven Impacts of the Pandemic on Young Children and their Parents: Initial Findings from NIEER’s December 2020 Preschool Learning Activities Survey. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.
- ^{xvi} <https://www.childcareservices.org/research/nc-ece-data-repo/>
- ^{xvii} <https://www.census.gov/>
- ^{xviii} 2018 Working in Early Care and Education in Buncombe County, <https://www.childcareservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Working-in-Early-Care-and-Ed-Buncombe-Co-Report-2018-FINAL.pdf>
- ^{xix} Poverty Threshold by Size of Family and Number of Children, US Census Bureau, 2021
- ^{xx} <https://www.nccp.org/>
- ^{xxi} 2019 Working as a Licensed Family Child Care Provider in Wake County. https://www.childcareservices.org/wp-content/uploads/CCSA_2020_WakeCounty_Rprt-WEB.pdf
- ^{xxii} McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., Whitebook, M., & Olson, K.L. (2021). Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2020. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Dogwood Health Trust for funding this report about early care and education in western North Carolina. Child Care Services Association (CCSA) appreciated the chance to work with Ereka R. Williams, Ph.D., Vice President of Impact – Education and the Dogwood Health Trust team.



**CHILD CARE
SERVICES ASSOCIATION**

PO Box 901
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

 (919) 967-3272

 (919) 967-7683

 www.childcareservices.org



**This report was
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