

CHILD CARE

At its annual meeting in 2019 the League of Women Voters of Lane County selected child day care as one of the topics to study for informational purposes during the 2019-2020 year. Our League does not have a local child care consensus and uses the advocacy positions of our national and state Leagues to guide action in this area.

League of Women Voters Positions

League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) position on child care states:

LWVUS supports programs, services, and policies at all levels of government to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it, in order to increase access to employment and to prevent and reduce poverty.

LWVUS also has a position on early intervention for children at risk, which states:

LWVUS believes that early intervention and prevention measures are effective in helping children reach their full potential. The League supports policies and programs at all levels of the community and government that promote the wellbeing, encourage the full development, and ensure the safety of all children.

In addition, the League of Women Voters of Oregon (LWVOR) has adopted the following position: LWVOR believes that child care is a social and economic issue that reaches beyond the family into the community. Quality child care needs to be available, accessible and affordable to all families for children of all ages and with differing needs.

Child care givers should be awarded recognition commensurate with their responsibilities. The State of Oregon should take a leadership role in elevating the professional status of child care givers and ensuring adequate compensation.

Historical Perspective – Child Day Care in the United States

American parents are living through a child care crisis. While unemployment rates are down, living wages have stagnated and cost of child day care has soared. Child care workers in Oregon are paid an *average* wage of less than \$12 per hour. But this current crisis is not new.

The Industrial Revolution in the United States (1790s) changed the landscape in America and created a need for child care outside the family circle, especially for poor working families. Often older children took care of younger children; some went to work themselves. Benevolent groups emerged to work on solutions. Quaker women in Philadelphia founded the society for the Relief and Employment of the Poor. Philanthropic women started the Boston Infant School, modeled after British infant schools. Other groups formed. But by 1850, the idea that women should stay home with their children permeated our society, and these institutions disappeared.

In the 1870s, inspired by the emerging American Kindergarten movement, Pauline Agassiz Shaw, a Swiss immigrant, established nurseries and kindergartens in the Boston area supported by her own money. Others followed. Frances Willard established the Women's Christian Temperance Union day nurseries, free to poor mothers, but not open to all racial and ethnic groups or to children of unwed mothers. The National Association of Colored Women established some day nurseries for urban African American families. But, in general, child care was regarded as a last-resort measure used only in dire circumstances.

The federal government made a gesture toward universal child day care briefly during the Depression (1929-1939). The federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) ran a collaborative federal and state program of nursery schools aimed at creating jobs. This program disappeared when the United States entered World War II a few years later. Then the employment situation reversed, and every industry now wanted workers.

Recognition of the need for quality child care got its most visible boost in 1943 when Henry J. Kaiser, encouraged by Eleanor Roosevelt, invited key child development specialists to his shipyards in Richmond, California and Portland, Oregon to set up facilities and programs so workers could build ships without worrying about the safety and health of their children.

The need was obvious. During the war the number of working women rose nationally by 57 percent, and in Oregon it tripled during 1942 alone. The Office of War Information, through broadcasts, newsreels, and a traveling photo exhibit, shared the story of the Kaiser centers internationally. They won awards, such as the *Parents' Magazine* medal for Outstanding Service to Children in 1944.

James L. Hymes, Jr., a child development scholar at Columbia University, was hired to oversee development of the Portland program. Katherine Read Baker of Oregon State College worked on Hymes' team. According to Hymes, "Every day-care center, whether it knows it or not, is a school. The choice is never between custodial care and education. The choice is between unplanned and planned education, between conscious and unconscious education, between bad education and good education."

These programs were considered innovative. But there were detractors. An editorial writer in *The Salem Statesman* (April, 1943) was appalled: "Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt finally had her way. Down at Kaisertown (nee Portland) the government is going to spend a million dollars building nurseries for children of mothers who work in the shipyards. Eleanor prevailed with the maritime commission, so the job is ordered. This has been the Russian system of child care; and we don't like it."

The centers were located at the entrance to the shipyards so that mothers could drop their children off or pick them up conveniently. All centers were well equipped and professionally staffed. Each 24-hour facility cared for up to 1,125 children between 18 months and six years of age. The government supplied the funds, but Kaiser managed the centers. The centers were open to any shipyard employee. Parents paid \$5 for a six-day week for one child with a \$3.75 charge for additional children. An infirmary was available for children with mild illnesses. Parents were called from work if a child became seriously ill or showed signs of communicable diseases. Immunizations and inoculations were provided.

Funding was provided through the Defense Housing and Community Facilities Services Act, 1940 (Lanham Act), which had initially been enacted to fund public works and provide jobs. The onset of the war created jobs. The focus now was on providing child care for workers in government jobs. With this new need, The Lanham Act was interpreted to include child care.

These highly successful programs were abruptly closed after only 22 months of operation when the war ended. In time they were physically dismantled. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson introduced what came to be known as the "War on Poverty" in his State of the Union address. "Our aim is not only to relieve the symptoms of poverty, but to cure and, above all, to prevent it." Head Start emerged from the initiatives that followed.

Head Start was designed to serve lower-income families. Government-supported child care for all families was still not available. Project Head Start was launched in 1965 as an eight-week summer program designed to help break the cycle of poverty for low-income families. In September of 1995, the

first Early Head Start grants were given, and in 1998, Head Start was reauthorized to expand to full-day and full-year services. It has been managed under various government agencies since its inception. Currently it is administered by the Administration for Children and Families (CDF) in the Department of Health and Human Services. Over 1,000,000 children, aged birth to five, are provided a comprehensive program of early education, health, nutrition, and parent- involvement services. Head Start serves children from ages three to five years in its daytime centers. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and provides part-day care for families with children under age three.

In 1971, a bipartisan Congress, still influenced by the Civil Rights movement and the War on Poverty, passed the Comprehensive Child Development Act (CCDA). This act provided that child care and other services would be accessible to every family that wanted them. President Richard Nixon vetoed the bill, suggesting that it was a “communal approach” to rearing children and could undermine family values.

In 1989, the 101st Congress passed the Military Child Care Act (HR 1277). This bill directs the Secretary of Defense to make a specified portion of FY 1990 operation and maintenance funding available for military child day care only. All centers must be accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children. In 2013, 98 percent of these centers were accredited with the rest in process. Four annual unannounced inspections are required to ensure compliance with standards for health, safety, and classroom environment, including class size.

The U.S. has a high-quality, universal child care program – in the military. To date, nothing comparable is available for all families.

Importance of Quality Child Care for Children and Families

Women’s participation in the U.S. labor force has fluctuated throughout the history of the country, but the most notable and most consequential rise was in the mid-1940s when the demand for wartime labor was most intense. Following the end of the war, when men returned from military service seeking jobs, the percentage of women in the workforce dipped to about 33 percent, despite polls suggesting that between 61 to 85 percent of women wanted to remain in their jobs. Women took ideological arms to battle to secure their rights to work. As they achieved success in this effort, the need for child care reached critical proportions.

According to both U.S. Bureau of Labor and private surveys, women today comprise close to half of the labor force. Mothers are increasingly the primary or sole earners in families with children under the age of 18. Putting this into numbers, in 2018, there were 75,978,000 women aged 16 and over in the labor force.

The increase in maternal employment has resulted in a greater number of very young children – those between birth and age two -- being placed in child care during the day. Some of these children are in the care of relatives or friends. Others are enrolled in child care centers or other less structured care situations. Research to date suggests that positive outcomes for social, emotional, and cognitive development are measurable but depend less on the form of care (parental vs. other) than on the quality of the care. Additional research is needed to assess best care for children aged birth to two. (Howes, Carolle)

Converging findings from both short-term and longitudinal research confirm the effects of *quality* child care for children ages two to five years in terms of language development, social learning and behaviors, cognitive achievement, and emotional stability. To date, these data show that benefits in development

are most often found in quality center care. To corroborate that tentative finding, more research is needed to establish benefits from other types of care.

Another body of research suggests that very early and long-term care in sub-standard facilities or circumstances contributes to less-than-optimal development in children and may interfere with a harmonious mother-child interaction.

The Importance of Quality Child Care for Society

High-quality child day care offers major benefits not only for children and parents, but for society at large. Our children's chances of succeeding in school are increased by the quality of their early environment and preparation toward school readiness. This is especially true for children who are economically disadvantaged or dual language learners. With proper enrichment these children become better prepared academically and socially, which can improve their economic well-being throughout life. Parents who can work without being distracted by child day care issues are more productive and able to advance toward better job opportunities and earnings. In turn, their higher incomes can be a boon to state tax revenue and economic growth.

Major shifts in society have reduced what James Coleman calls the "social capital" available to children. He defines "social capital" as "the strength of social relations that make available to the person the resources of others." These are the resources found in family relations and in a community's social organization. Coleman believed that social capital is useful for the cognitive and social development of a child or young person. These relationships play an important role in the education of children by modeling and communicating expectations for behavior within the family and community and enabling the development of language and social skills. Historically, the extended, multi-generational family and neighbors were able to assist working parents in need of child day care. The modern-day workforce and the mobility of the population has diminished those possibilities, limiting the social capital children can access. The types of care that families can choose from are often based on what they can afford or what is available to them. Parents not only need a stable environment for their children while they work, but they also need support from the school and community to help them find the assistance they need.

According to the latest statistics, 20.3 percent of children under the age of five (approximately four million) live in poverty. Children who are disadvantaged need even more encouragement and stimulation to help them become school-ready, thus preventing them from needing remedial classes or behavior management which can be costly to schools and communities.

Developmental Needs of Children in Care

Children develop at their own pace, so it is impossible to know exactly what skill or level a child should achieve at any given time. However, developmental milestones give a general idea of what to look for as a child grows and develops and help parents and other primary caregivers evaluate quality in center or other child care settings.

Various theories of development help guide families and caregivers in establishing care programs for growing children. Major long-established theories focus on psychosocial development (Erik Erikson), psychosexual development (Freud), cognitive development (Jean Piaget), moral development (Lawrence Kohlberg), and others. These theories are "tried and true" and provide the basis for establishing and evaluating various child care settings. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) relies on these findings, plus recent research focusing on brain development, in establishing standards for their widely used and accepted accreditation process.

Recent research findings take us into groundbreaking scientific areas. They assert that infants are born with most of their eventual 80+ billion brain cells, but that the circuitry of these cells is weak at birth. Synapses are forged every second during the first years of life, and these serve to build the circuitry necessary for learning, as well as for emotional and social health. The patterns of these connections are shaped significantly by a young child's interactions with her environment, especially her primary caregivers. We can assume that children do better in school and in life when optimal care situations exist.

Funding for Child Care

Unfortunately, the very families that need quality affordable child care are the ones who can least afford it, leading them to reduce their work hours or leave the work force. According to *Child Care in State Economies – 2019 Update*, 94 percent of workers involuntarily working part-time due to child day care problems are women.

Expanding mothers' access to child day care and other workplace supports is vital, as American families are increasingly relying on mothers' incomes. Almost 70 percent of mothers are in the labor force, and in 2015, about 42 percent of mothers were the sole or primary breadwinners in their homes. Black and Latina mothers work at even higher rates and are more likely to be the primary breadwinner in their households than white mothers, with 71 percent of black mothers and 41 percent of Latina mothers serving as the primary economic support for their families. At the same time, women are disproportionately working in low-wage jobs with nonstandard hours and inconsistent schedules. Many of these mothers struggle to find affordable child care that aligns with their work schedules and is available during evenings and weekends. Child day care challenges, coupled with low-wages and irregular schedules, make it difficult for many mothers to stay in the workforce—whether full or part time.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start are the largest federal programs that provide free or reduced child day care and early childhood education targeted toward low-income families with young children. The CCDBG is the largest source of federal funding for child day care assistance and is administered by the states which provide the subsidies for low-income families. Only 15 percent of eligible families receive subsidies through the CCDBG, but because the programs are consistently underfunded, the subsidies are still too low for most of these families to access good quality child day care. Annually, approximately one million low-income children and their families receive early childhood education and comprehensive health and social services through Head Start; still, two-thirds of eligible three- to five-year-olds are not enrolled, while Early Head Start serves only seven percent of eligible children under age three.

Even with subsidies for child day care, families may find that there is a lack of available providers in their area. What researchers call a "child day care desert" is encountered by 51 percent of families who live in communities with not enough licensed child day care for the number of children who need it.

The most recent statistics reveal that infant care can cost as much as \$10,759 annually in a center-based child day care facility (19.4 percent of household income) and \$7,887 in a family child day care home (13.1 percent of household income). Since 2010, family child day care homes have declined by 20.4 percent, resulting in fewer options for lower cost care.

The Oregon Department of Human Services offers Employment Related Day Care Assistance (ERDC) for qualifying families. An example of a maximum qualifying income for this program would be \$4,847 for a family of three, which is 185 percent of the 2018 Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Both

parents are required to be employed with exceptions for a disabled parent. According to the online calculator for the ERDC, a family of three with a gross monthly income of \$2,500 would have a copay of \$451. Preschool Promise is a state funding source for parents in Oregon and offers free preschool to children from families with an income under 200 percent of the poverty rate.

A federal requirement for the CCDBG is a market price study done by each state applying for the grant. The 2018 Oregon Market Price Study identified child day care prices across the state and examined geographic patterns, compared prices by factors including age of child and type of care, and compared hourly, monthly, daily, and weekly rates. Other factors in price included the local supply and demand for child day care and the family's ability to pay for care from the perspective of the facility providing the care.

Some examples of the survey show the monthly rate for a toddler's center-based care costs as much as \$1,010/month in Lane County, \$1,353/month in Multnomah County, and \$600/month in Coos County. Small home-based care is considerably less: \$600/month in Lane County, \$645/month in Multnomah, and \$500/month in Coos County.

2020 Federal Budget Passed with Modest Increases

The President signed a budget which includes over \$1 billion for child care and early learning:

- A total of \$5.826 billion for CCDBG, an increase of \$550 million over last year.
- A total of \$10.613 billion for Head Start, an increase of \$550 million over last year, including \$100 million for Early Head Start, \$193 million for a cost-of-living-adjustment, \$250 million for quality improvement activities, and some other small plus-ups.
- A total of \$275 million for Preschool Development Grants, an increase of \$25 million over last year.

Overall, this is good news and an important step forward, though we need significant additional funding to reach our shared vision of high-quality, affordable child care for all.

Child Day Care in Lane County Oregon

Child day care in Lane County includes center care, in-home care, home day care providers and pre-and after school care. Costs and availability depend on the location and age of the child. There are state regulations covering yearly training for providers and inspection of the site, un-announced, by Department of Human Services (DHS) Early Learning Division of the Office of Child Care of all licensed and license-exempt care providers. There are 288 providers in Lane County listed in the DHS Early Learning website, located through links at www.211info.org. The top centers and homes are rated, and there is information available on most. Ratings are achieved as providers voluntarily request additional assessment of their increased training, their operation standards and facility improvements. There are also other on-line provider lists on which the centers and home care providers have illustrated listings, like ads, for 28 towns in Lane County. These listings are specific to the area, or at least nearby.

Standard care rates vary from \$585 per month to over \$1,000. Registration and certification requirements are based on the number of children in care. Homes with fewer than four children other than those of the provider do not need to be licensed. Registered and certified care monthly rates are \$800 to \$1,415. Rates are listed by the state.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) "school free lunch" program, which reimburses meals costs according to nutrition rules, is available for all the day care children of home care providers and for child care center children if 25 percent of the children in care are from families whose income qualifies. This reimbursement helps providers keep rates as low as possible yet be able to stay in business. The

required records and nutrition standards benefit the children and families and assist the providers with ideas for providing attractive and nutritious meals.

Day care providers' wages average \$8 to \$14 per hour. Eighty percent have no benefits; 19 percent have some medical benefits. All providers need basic training such as first aid and food handler's certification, etc., and center staff have additional requirements for yearly training, such as child development classes. Grandparents caring for their children's children are exempt from most regulations but are still eligible for USDA reimbursement, since day care by a grandparent has proven to be beneficial to a child and his/her family.

An Update on the Cost of Child Care During the Pandemic

MARCH 27: The federal bipartisan Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act includes resources specifically targeted to individuals and families with low incomes who are affected by the public health and economic crises and includes provisions for children and families, policymakers, and others involved in child care and early education systems. It also includes \$3.5 billion in new Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) discretionary funds that the Administration for Children and Families' (ACF) Office of Child Care (OCC) will distribute according to the typical state formula with some minor changes. These funds do not require matching funds from states, do not fall under spending requirements for quality or direct service, and can be used in a variety of ways without waivers. The CARES Act includes \$750 million to support ongoing operations of Head Start programs as they accommodate their work to meet community needs.

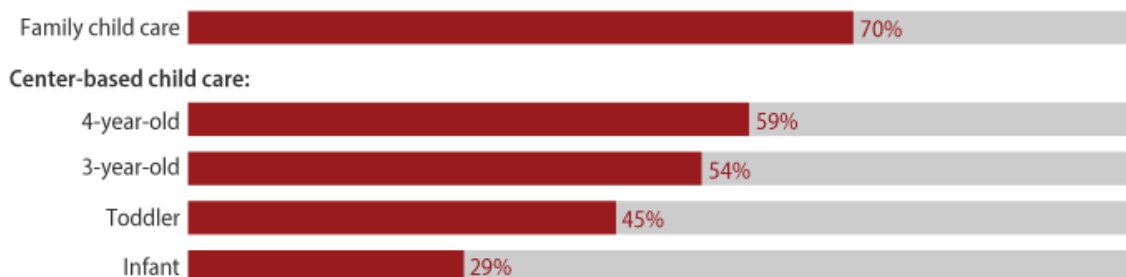
APRIL: The House of Representatives passed the Moving Forward Act (MFA), a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure package that included funds to help child care providers make the necessary modifications to their facilities in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The MFA specifically allocates \$10 billion over the next four years to finance grants to improve child care centers, including construction, renovations and improvement to facilities to address both longstanding issues and new challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was received by the Senate on July 20, 2020. There has been no action on the bill since then.

SEPTEMBER 3: The *Center for American Progress*, a public policy research and advocacy organization, in an article entitled, "The True Cost of Providing Safe Child Care During the Coronavirus Pandemic," by Simon Workman and Steven Jessen Howard, included the following chart:

FIGURE 1

The cost of child care during the pandemic has increased more for preschoolers than it has for infants and toddlers

The average increase in the cost of child care during the COVID-19 pandemic, by age



Source: Estimates based on author scenarios generated in interactive calculator. See Simon Workman, "The Cost of Child Care During the Coronavirus Pandemic," Center for American Progress, September 3, 2020, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/?p=489962>.



Additional Information on Child Care in Lane County in 2020

April 1: A coalition of partners was formed to address the need for child care in Lane County. The partners include the City of Eugene, School Districts 4J, Bethel, Fern Ridge, South Lane, and Springfield, and the YMCA.

May: Governor Brown directed that child care providers must provide a draft plan for child care and early education centers to meet all of the requirements of operating during the pandemic.

June 2: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act dedicates \$3.5 billion for assistance to child care providers. Experts say that this amount just scratches the surface of the existing needs.

Lane Community College continues to maintain a site to help parents seeking child care: qualitycareconnections@lanecc.edu. In June 2020, this site posted the following: Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, about 400 licensed child care programs operated in Lane County. About half are closed, but many remain open and are currently enrolling for summer. Enrolling soon will ensure summer care for parents, and financial viability for the small businesses that provide child care, many of which are owned and operated by women and minorities.

June 3: Half of all licensed child care programs in Lane County closed their programs. Various programs are provided for essential workers.

July 1: The YMCA and partners are providing summer child care for emergency and essential workers. On this date, the program was full and maintaining a waiting list, managed by applying to holly@eugeneymca.org. At one point 22 pre-kindergarten children and 39 2½ to 4 year olds were on the waiting list.

The Moss Street Children's Center for children of University of Oregon students had a long enough infant care wait list to fill five classrooms. It has two classrooms.

Megan Pratt, Associate Professor in Human Development and Family Sciences at Oregon State University, coordinates the Oregon Child Care Research Partnership that conducts research related to child care policy at the local and state levels. Its 2019 report, entitled "Oregon's Child Care Deserts," included this Lane County data:

- For every eight babies two years and younger, there is one child care slot available.
- There are three children age 3 to 5 years seeking each available spot for that age group.
- The cost of a year of toddler care in Lane County can be nearly twice as much as a year of public university tuition. The wait list to secure child care can rival that of Ivy League schools.

As a result, the Regional Solutions Program (established in 2011 by Oregon Governor Executive Order 11-12) and the Early Learning Division of the Oregon Department of Education put together a state agency work group to better understand the state's touch points and opportunities to support increasing the supply of high-quality providers and child care slots.

Oregon Futures Lab is one of six nonprofit organizations that have come together to address the need for child care and focuses on needs of families who speak languages other than English and families of color. Key findings from a 2017 Early Learning Workforce Study found that while people of color make up 22% of Other Oregon adult population, they make up 30% of the early learning workforce. The partners include Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, Unite Oregon Action, the PAALF Action Fund, Farmworkers and Latinx Working Families United and Family Forward Action.

September: White Bird provided a listing of emergency shelter centers for families with children. First Place Family Center (St. Vincent DePaul) was open 7 days a week, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Conclusion

Existing evidence confirms that providing all children the opportunity for quality care whether at home, in various types of non-center child care, or in center day care pays dividends not only for the individual children and families, but also for the health of the nation.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the history of child day care in the United States suggest for future planning?
2. What will it take to make child day care more accessible to lower-income families?
3. Would some women alter their career decisions if child day care were more readily available and affordable?
4. Should universal free or subsidized child day care be available to all families?
5. Will there be long-term consequences for children who do not have access to quality child care? If so, what are they?

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Individuals Reviewing the Material

Katheryn Blair, Center Coordinator, Child and Family Center, Lane Community College
Ruth Miller, member and past President of LWVLC, lead League efforts to organize the Lane County Chapter of Community Coordinated Child Care (a federal initiative 1969-70), to establish Child Care, Inc. (1966-71) and to promote establishment of the Lane Community College Child Care Center (1969).

Suggested Further Reading

"Why Does America Hate Its Children?" by Paul Krugman, *New York Times* opinion piece, January 16, 2020. He compares European countries' mandated three-four months of maternity leave including as much as three percent GDP in benefits to families with the U.S. which is sorely lacking in paid maternity leave and only offers 0.6 percent GDP in benefits to families. He also sees our subsidized lunch program as "a disposal site for farm surpluses." <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/16/opinion/children-america.html>

"Safety Net Investments in Children." *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, Spring 2018 Edition. It compares all the benefits children and families receive such as Medicaid, SNAP, and Earned Income Credits, etc., and which benefits have the most impact. <https://www.brookings.edu/bpea-articles/safety-net-investments-in-children/?referringSource=articleShare>

Resources

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15. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/more-states-leaning-into-child-care.aspx>
16. Film: *The Raising of America* with Dr. Renee Boynton-Jarrett of Boston Medical Center, and Dr. Jack Shonkoff, director of the Harvard Center on the Developing Child)
17. <https://www.ced.org/childcareimpact>
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