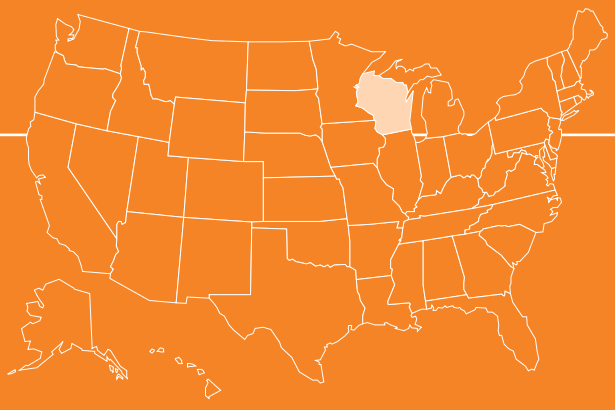
The Status of Early Care and Education in WISCONSIN



The Institute for Women's Policy Research

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About This Report

Women have entered the labor force in unprecedented numbers, and the majority of mothers now work outside the home. These massive shifts in our nation's work and family lives have created an unmet need for quality, affordable early care and education. This report by the Institute for Women's Policy Research seeks to provide a snapshot of the need for and availability of quality early care and education in Wisconsin.

This publication is one in a series of *The Status of Women in the States* reports by the Institute for Women's Policy Research. *The Status of Women in the States* project is designed to inform citizens about the progress of women in their state relative to women in other states, to men, and to the nation as a whole. Between 1996 and 2004, IWPR produced individual reports on women's status in 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as biennially updated reports on national trends across the states, and occasional special reports on specific topics, such as this one. The reports are designed to give advocates, policymakers, and other leaders the information they need to advance policies and programs to improve the lives of women and their families.

This report on the need for expansion of quality early care and education programs is part of a joint project with People for the American Way, and was produced with support from the Rockefeller Family Fund, the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

About the Institute for Women's Policy Research

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is a scientific research organization dedicated to informing and stimulating the debate on public policy issues of critical importance to women and their families. IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family, health and safety, and women's civic and political participation.

The Institute works with policymakers, scholars, and public interest groups to design, execute, and disseminate research that illuminates economic and social policy issues affecting women and families and to build a network of individuals and organizations that conduct and use women-oriented policy research. IWPR, an independent, nonprofit, research organization also works in affiliation with the graduate programs in public policy and women's studies at The George Washington University.

IWPR's work is supported by foundation grants, government grants and contracts, donations from individuals, and contributions from organizations. Members and affiliates of IWPR's Information Network receive reports and information on a regular basis. IWPR is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

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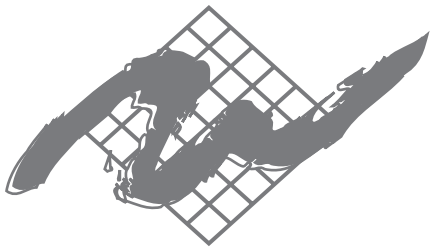

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marked growth in the labor force participation of women in general, and of mothers specifically, has deepened the need for work and care supports for families. Early care and education has emerged as a critical resource to keep parents working and to provide much needed early care for young children.

Accessing quality early care and education arrangements is both expensive and difficult, as availability and financial assistance are scarce relative to today's demand. These concerns are of particular importance in Wisconsin, where the labor force participation rates of all mothers are higher than the national average. Wisconsin ranks fairly highly for providing state-funded preschool to the state's four-year-olds. And Wisconsin has made important steps toward improving the quality of the state's early childhood education programs. However, Wisconsin ranks poorly among the states on access, particularly for three-year-olds and all low-income children. Current programs in Wisconsin improve quality for some children but do not meet the needs of all families, especially poor families.

This growing need for quality early care and education programs calls for an increased effort on the part of the federal government and the Wisconsin state legislature to move toward developing a universal, voluntary prekindergarten system that will provide all of Wisconsin's families with access to a dependable, safe, and nurturing system of care and education for their preschool-aged children.

This report outlines the need for such care by working parents and by children in the early stages of development, discusses the benefits of such care for children, and provides an overview of the programs that currently exist. The report presents national and state data on the availability, quality, and cost of early care and education programs, and provides policy recommendations for an overall expansion and improvement of Wisconsin's early care and education programs, putting the state on a path toward high-quality, voluntary, universal early care and education.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have marked a growing demand for early care and education programs. This demand stems in part from striking changes in the U.S. labor force, especially the growth in mothers' labor force participation. According to analysis of data from the 2000 Census, 58.3 percent of all women aged 16 and older were in the labor force in 2000 (Table 1). In fact, mothers represent the fastest growing group in the U.S. labor market (Brown 1994). As women continue to work at higher rates, and families renegotiate work and family terrain in search of balance, early care and education has emerged as an important resource for families. Working parents need access to care arrangements that provide nurturing and stimulating environments for their children.

Table 1
Overview of Early Care and Education in Wisconsin

	Average of 50 States	Wisconsin
Need for Early Care and Education Policies		
Percent of All Women in the Labor Force, 2000	58.3%	65.3%
Percent of Women with Children Under Age 18 in the Labor Force, 2000	64.2%	75.2%
Percent of Women with Children Under Age 6 in the Labor Force, 2000	59.9%	70.6%
Summary of State Prekindergarten Programs		
Percent of Eligible 4-year-olds Served by State-funded Prekindergarten Programs, 2001-2002	14.8%	19.1%
State Spending Per Child Enrolled in State Prekindergarten Program, 2001-2002	$3,455	$3,518
B.A. Required of State-funded Prekindergarten Teacher, 2001-2002	Required in 21 states and the District of Columbia; Not required in 29 states	Yes, No[a]
Specialized Training in Early Childhood Education Required of State-funded Prekindergarten Teachers, 2001-2002	Required in 29 states and the District of Columbia; Not required in 21 states	No, Yes[a]
Summary of State Child Care Policies		
Percent of Children Eligible under State Law Receiving Child Care Subsidies	18.3%	13.4%
Income Eligibility Limit for Child Care Assistance for a Family of Three, 2002-2003	$28,268	$27,060
Income Eligibility Limit for Child Care Assistance for a Family of Three as a Percent of State Median Income, 2002-2003	60.3%	51.0%
Preservice Training in Early Childhood Education Required of Teachers (for child care center licensing)	Required in 14 states and the District of Columbia; Not required by 36 states.	Required
Preservice Training in Early Childhood Education Required of Master Teachers (for child care center licensing)	Required in 13 states; Not required in 4 states; 34 states and the District of Columbia do not have master teachers.	State does not have master teachers.

See Appendix for sources and methodology.
Note: [a] First entry refers to Four-year-old Kindergarten, second entry refers to State-funded Head Start Model.
Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Quality early care and education programs, including prekindergarten, Head Start, and licensed center-based and in-home child care, not only allow parents to work, but can prepare children of all socioeconomic backgrounds for school and contribute to their healthy development. Children of low-income families, who often lack access to quality early care programs, are at greater risk of falling behind when they enter the school system (Gershoff 2003). Quality early care and education programs can help give those children a better start. Early care and education programs in the United States, however, are unevenly funded and administered and vary in quality and accessibility among the states that provide them. While infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children all need expanded quality care and education arrangements, this report focuses on meeting the needs of preschoolers and their families as a crucial step in providing all children and families in Wisconsin access to high-quality care. This report serves as a general overview of the need for expanded early care and education for three- and four-year-olds[1], providing a

[1] Data in this report at times includes five-year-olds who are not yet enrolled in kindergarten.

snapshot of existing programs, as well as general policy recommendations for moving toward a system that ensures that quality early care and education is available to all preschool-aged children and families in Wisconsin.

So far, Wisconsin has taken important steps toward expanding access to quality early childhood care and education. Wisconsin's school aid formula builds in funding for public four-year-old kindergarten (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2002), and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development combines federal and state funding streams for child care to streamline access and eliminate wait lists for child care subsidies, which are administered through the Wisconsin Shares program (Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development 2004b). In efforts to improve the quality of child care services, Wisconsin has initiated T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® WISCONSIN (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) and R.E.W.A.R.D. Wisconsin (Rewarding Education with Wages and Respect for Dedication), programs that provide child care workers with scholarships to increase education and training and use stipend awards to reward workers with elevated education levels who remain in the field (Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development 2003b; 2003a). The Department of Workforce and Development has also coordinated an Early Childhood Excellence Initiative to create model programs designed to serve low-income children by promoting "positive, holistic child development, with an emphasis on intellectual and social development" along with community outreach to parents and child care providers (Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development 2004a). These, among other initiatives, demonstrate Wisconsin's commitment to the state's children.

At the same time, Wisconsin could improve early childhood education in the state in a number of ways. There is a wide distribution of program management among state agencies,[2] causing difficulty in program coordination, inefficient use of resources, and a complex array of programs and agencies for families to navigate (Edie et al. 2003). In addition, Wisconsin has not done enough to expand early childhood education to three-year-olds and low-income children, and to expand services for four-year-olds. Much still needs to be done to coordinate and expand Wisconsin's early care and education into a high-quality, voluntary, universal, and well-funded preschool system that will allow parents to keep working and will better prepare all of Wisconsin's children for school and life. Many steps can be taken to integrate existing programs as the foundation for a comprehensive and universal early care system.

THE DEMAND FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The growth of women's labor force participation in the United States suggests that many parents must employ new strategies to meet children's care and education needs. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce (Downs 2003), in 2002, approximately 54.6 percent of women with children under age one were in the labor force, compared with 31.0 percent in 1976. In fact, as of 2000, women with children have an even higher labor force participation rate than other women, with 64.2 percent of mothers with children under age 18, and 59.9 percent of mothers with children under age six, in the labor force (Table 1). Labor force participation rates for mothers in Wisconsin exceed the national averages by a significant margin. In Wisconsin, 75.2 percent of mothers with children under age 18, and 70.6 percent of mothers with children under age six, were in the labor force in 2000 (Table 1), ranking 6th-highest in the nation for both percentages (Table 2). Also notable is that more than half of women with children under the age of six from every major racial and ethnic group in the state are in the labor force (Figure 1). Such high rates of labor force participation among mothers in Wisconsin underlines the importance of providing quality care and education arrangements for the state's children and families. Table 3 shows the labor force participation for all women of each racial and ethnic group in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

[2] In Wisconsin three state departments play important roles in the coordination, implementation and maintenance of child care and early childhood education within the state: the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS). DWD administers Wisconsin Shares (the state child care subsidy program), child care certification for public reimbursement, and child care quality improvement initiatives including T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® WISCONSIN and R.E.W.A.R.D. Wisconsin. It also provides information and support to the families participating in Wisconsin Shares. DPI oversees the state's four-year-old kindergarten (part of the public school system), early childhood special education programs, and the Wisconsin Head Start State Supplement. Finally, DHFS oversees the licensing of child care programs and birth-to-three programs for children with disabilities (Edie, et al. 2004).

Table 2: Labor Force Participation Rates for Women with Children <18 and <6 by Race/Ethnicity, 2000

	ALL		WHITE		AFRICAN AMERICAN	
	Percent of Women with Children under 18 in the Labor Force	Percent of Women with Children under 6 in the Labor Force	Percent of Women with Children under 18 in the Labor Force	Percent of Women with Children under 6 in the Labor Force	Percent of Women with Children under 18 in the Labor Force	Percent of Women with Children under 6 in the Labor Force
State						
Alabama	61.9%	59.5%	63.1%	59.0%	60.5%	61.9%
Alaska	66.1%	61.8%	68.2%	61.6%	78.1%	81.1%
Arizona	60.2%	54.8%	67.1%	62.1%	68.2%	65.9%
Arkansas	64.8%	61.7%	66.4%	62.8%	62.4%	62.8%
California	57.2%	53.1%	64.2%	59.3%	63.6%	63.0%
Colorado	67.0%	61.2%	70.4%	64.3%	68.9%	66.5%
Connecticut	68.2%	63.6%	70.2%	64.3%	69.9%	72.3%
Delaware	69.5%	66.2%	71.4%	66.7%	69.2%	70.7%
Dist. of Columbia	60.4%	61.5%	67.9%	67.2%	59.3%	60.9%
Florida	63.9%	60.8%	67.0%	62.5%	64.9%	65.9%
Georgia	64.1%	60.7%	64.6%	59.0%	66.5%	67.7%
Hawaii	63.0%	59.9%	62.0%	55.2%	62.8%	63.3%
Idaho	66.7%	60.6%	68.1%	61.9%	N/A	N/A
Illinois	65.1%	60.5%	69.2%	63.9%	63.8%	63.7%
Indiana	69.7%	65.1%	70.6%	65.8%	69.5%	69.4%
Iowa	76.9%	73.2%	78.3%	75.2%	67.0%	62.7%
Kansas	70.7%	65.6%	72.9%	68.0%	68.9%	68.0%
Kentucky	63.8%	60.5%	63.9%	60.4%	66.5%	65.5%
Louisiana	60.7%	59.1%	61.7%	58.3%	60.6%	61.9%
Maine	73.0%	66.8%	73.3%	67.2%	N/A	N/A
Maryland	68.7%	65.6%	69.7%	65.1%	70.2%	70.5%
Massachusetts	67.6%	62.4%	70.1%	64.8%	62.9%	61.8%
Michigan	67.3%	62.9%	68.7%	63.1%	65.5%	66.1%
Minnesota	76.3%	71.7%	78.5%	74.3%	68.8%	68.6%
Mississippi	63.1%	61.4%	64.7%	60.3%	61.6%	62.7%
Missouri	70.0%	66.7%	70.9%	66.9%	69.0%	70.1%
Montana	71.0%	66.8%	72.9%	68.1%	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	75.7%	72.1%	78.1%	75.2%	68.2%	65.8%
Nevada	63.1%	58.8%	67.5%	63.8%	65.9%	66.1%
New Hampshire	73.4%	65.3%	73.7%	65.5%	N/A	N/A
New Jersey	62.6%	58.0%	64.2%	57.8%	67.1%	66.8%
New Mexico	60.2%	56.2%	64.5%	57.6%	66.0%	72.6%
New York	60.0%	55.9%	64.8%	58.9%	61.7%	62.6%
North Carolina	66.8%	63.1%	68.1%	63.4%	67.9%	68.7%
North Dakota	75.6%	73.8%	77.6%	77.3%	N/A	N/A
Ohio	68.4%	64.4%	69.2%	64.7%	66.3%	65.7%
Oklahoma	64.6%	59.8%	66.1%	60.9%	65.6%	65.8%
Oregon	66.4%	60.9%	67.9%	62.6%	69.7%	64.9%
Pennsylvania	66.2%	61.7%	67.4%	62.3%	65.3%	65.5%
Rhode Island	67.8%	62.8%	72.0%	66.8%	63.1%	62.5%
South Carolina	66.3%	64.8%	67.3%	63.8%	65.8%	67.7%
South Dakota	76.8%	74.7%	79.9%	78.9%	N/A	N/A
Tennessee	64.8%	61.0%	65.1%	60.3%	66.0%	66.5%
Texas	59.4%	55.0%	65.0%	60.2%	67.9%	69.1%
Utah	64.8%	58.0%	65.6%	58.6%	71.6%	N/A
Vermont	74.6%	69.2%	74.9%	69.3%	N/A	N/A
Virginia	67.0%	63.8%	67.3%	63.0%	70.0%	71.0%
Washington	65.5%	59.4%	67.2%	60.5%	68.7%	68.8%
West Virginia	57.7%	55.1%	57.8%	55.0%	63.4%	64.5%
Wisconsin	**75.2%**	**70.6%**	**77.6%**	**73.2%**	**66.6%**	**66.3%**
Wyoming	70.9%	66.0%	71.0%	65.6%	N/A	N/A
United States	***64.2%***	***59.9%***	***67.9%***	***62.9%***	***65.4%***	***66.0%***
Puerto Rico	38.8%	41.5%	38.7%	36.4%	24.0%	N/A

N/A=Not applicable due to small sample sizes.

Source: Urban Institute 2004.

Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

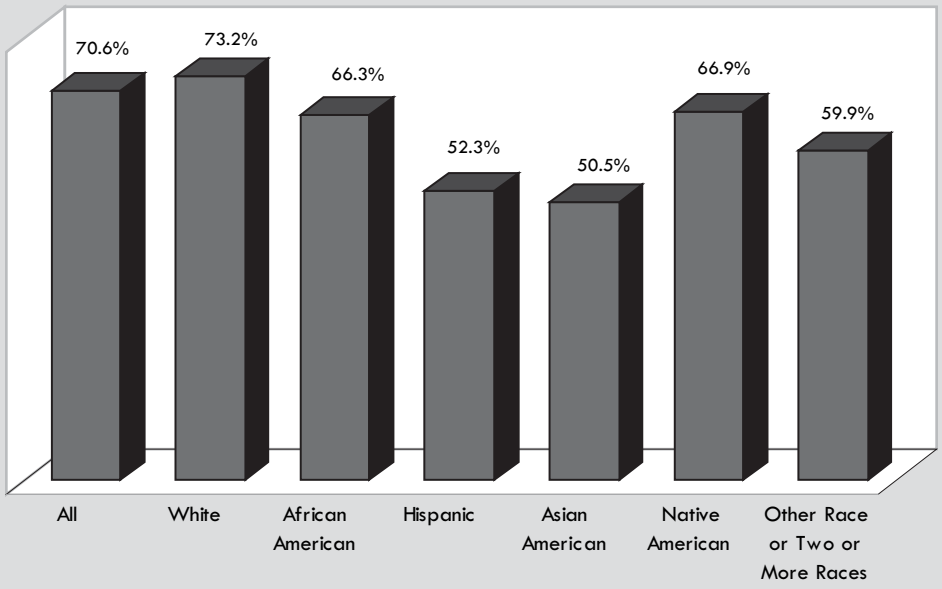
(Table 2 continued on next page)

Table 2 *(Continued)*: **Labor Force Participation Rates for Women with Children <18 and <6 by Race/Ethnicity, 2000**

	ASIAN AMERICAN		NATIVE AMERICAN		HISPANIC	
	Percent of Women with Children under 18 in the Labor Force	Percent of Women with Children under 6 in the Labor Force	Percent of Women with Children under 18 in the Labor Force	Percent of Women with Children under 6 in the Labor Force	Percent of Women with Children under 18 in the Labor Force	Percent of Women with Children under 6 in the Labor Force
State						
Alabama	51.5%	49.7%	57.9%	53.0%	49.9%	40.8%
Alaska	57.5%	56.7%	60.6%	61.1%	62.4%	60.2%
Arizona	55.9%	52.5%	51.4%	50.0%	50.3%	45.9%
Arkansas	60.6%	57.7%	54.6%	45.6%	50.7%	44.5%
California	54.1%	52.3%	61.9%	60.6%	50.8%	47.9%
Colorado	57.1%	53.2%	64.3%	57.6%	57.6%	53.9%
Connecticut	55.0%	50.8%	71.9%	N/A	59.1%	56.3%
Delaware	58.5%	58.3%	N/A	N/A	55.1%	51.6%
Dist. of Columbia	53.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	61.5%	60.3%
Florida	58.1%	54.8%	64.3%	55.7%	56.3%	53.4%
Georgia	52.7%	45.5%	68.7%	64.7%	49.8%	46.5%
Hawaii	63.0%	60.5%	N/A	N/A	61.2%	59.7%
Idaho	61.5%	N/A	72.8%	71.7%	53.4%	49.9%
Illinois	56.8%	50.9%	67.1%	66.3%	53.5%	50.2%
Indiana	58.6%	50.9%	73.3%	N/A	55.0%	50.3%
Iowa	60.1%	56.3%	49.4%	N/A	57.8%	55.9%
Kansas	59.1%	58.4%	67.5%	66.3%	55.8%	50.3%
Kentucky	59.8%	54.9%	69.0%	N/A	48.5%	45.4%
Louisiana	51.2%	41.5%	49.0%	47.0%	52.4%	45.5%
Maine	68.4%	N/A	61.7%	N/A	61.1%	N/A
Maryland	57.4%	52.4%	65.6%	N/A	59.7%	55.4%
Massachusetts	55.7%	51.0%	70.2%	N/A	56.7%	54.2%
Michigan	53.6%	47.7%	70.7%	70.7%	60.2%	57.6%
Minnesota	56.6%	54.5%	64.9%	63.8%	59.7%	54.8%
Mississippi	50.8%	48.8%	63.3%	N/A	55.7%	57.0%
Missouri	57.0%	53.4%	65.0%	59.1%	59.1%	54.5%
Montana	N/A	N/A	60.1%	60.8%	57.3%	65.6%
Nebraska	63.7%	62.8%	72.4%	72.2%	56.6%	54.0%
Nevada	61.8%	58.8%	65.0%	64.7%	52.2%	48.1%
New Hampshire	72.6%	59.6%	N/A	N/A	67.8%	63.9%
New Jersey	54.4%	49.6%	68.3%	N/A	56.7%	54.4%
New Mexico	52.4%	42.7%	53.2%	50.6%	58.7%	56.5%
New York	48.9%	44.0%	58.6%	52.6%	49.9%	48.0%
North Carolina	54.9%	52.6%	59.8%	56.7%	51.3%	45.8%
North Dakota	N/A	N/A	55.5%	51.2%	55.2%	N/A
Ohio	57.5%	53.5%	58.3%	49.8%	61.1%	59.0%
Oklahoma	54.1%	49.7%	62.6%	60.1%	53.7%	46.4%
Oregon	59.4%	52.6%	64.3%	65.2%	58.2%	54.7%
Pennsylvania	52.0%	46.7%	55.5%	54.5%	54.9%	53.0%
Rhode Island	55.0%	49.8%	N/A	N/A	49.3%	47.5%
South Carolina	58.0%	55.0%	59.7%	66.0%	57.0%	52.5%
South Dakota	N/A	N/A	57.4%	57.6%	58.9%	N/A
Tennessee	55.7%	47.8%	58.2%	60.4%	51.4%	45.1%
Texas	54.7%	48.1%	60.0%	54.7%	50.8%	47.3%
Utah	58.5%	53.9%	56.5%	53.4%	60.8%	54.7%
Vermont	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Virginia	56.9%	52.4%	71.9%	70.6%	60.3%	57.6%
Washington	57.6%	51.7%	63.4%	62.8%	58.7%	54.9%
West Virginia	54.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	51.8%	N/A
Wisconsin	**54.8%**	**50.5%**	**67.5%**	**66.9%**	**58.5%**	**52.3%**
Wyoming	N/A	N/A	71.2%	68.2%	67.9%	68.6%
United States	***55.1%***	***51.4%***	***60.2%***	***57.7%***	***52.6%***	***49.4%***
Puerto Rico	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	38.8%	41.6%

N/A=Not applicable due to small sample sizes.
Source: Urban Institute 2004.
Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Figure 1.
Labor Force Participation Rates for Women with Children under the Age of 6 in Wisconsin, by Race and Ethnicity, 2000



Notes:
Hispanics may be of any race or two or more races. Racial categories (Whites, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Other/Two Plus) do not include Hispanics.Source: Urban Institute 2004.
Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

As paid work among women has grown, so has the use of paid child care. Unfortunately, despite growing need for child care, the price of private preschool and child care programs can be prohibitive to many families. Child care expenditures use up a large percentage of earnings, especially for lower-income mothers. For example, the child care expenses for single mothers with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty line consume an average of 19 percent of their earnings (Institute for Women's Policy Research 1996).[3]

Access to reliable forms of child care is of particular importance to the economic security and stability of single-parent, low-income families. Former welfare recipients using formal child care arrangements nearly triple their likelihood of retaining employment after a period of two years, compared with those who have no care or use other sources, and single mothers with young children are 40 percent more likely to retain their jobs after two years when they receive assistance with child care costs (Boushey 2002).

Despite the high costs to families, the Census reported that 44.9 percent of Wisconsin's three- to five-year-olds were enrolled in nursery school or preschool in 2000, compared with 49.3 percent nationally (National Institute for Early Education Research 2004b). The reality of today's work and family balance is that the majority of single- and dual-parent families, in Wisconsin and nationally, need access to quality care and education. Recent polls reflect this need. According to a 2004 public opinion survey, registered voters ranked early care and education as the program they most wanted protected (Public Education Network and Education Week 2004). In a 2004 poll of registered Hispanic American voters, 76 percent of those polled agreed that the country should increase spending to ensure access to early care and education and services for all children, even if it required raising taxes (Zogby et al. 2004). Among infrequent women voters, an important demographic for the 2004 elections, support is also strong. When presented with a specific program, 64 percent of women surveyed in a poll by People for the American Way Foundation (2003) strongly favored implementing a federal program to provide a voluntary, comprehensive, quality preschool education program open to all four-year-olds that would offer learning opportunities and social-skills building. These women also said they would be willing to pay for such a program, even after learning the cost per child. Seventy-three percent of the women surveyed said they were willing to use additional federal taxpayer money to put these programs in their communities, even knowing it would cost $6,000 per child (People for the American Way Foundation

[3] The full cost of child care is typically much higher than what parents actually spend for that care.

Table 3: Labor Force Participation Rates for Women by State and Race/Ethnicity, 2000

	Percent of Women in the Labor Force					
	All	**White**	**African American**	**Asian American**	**Native**	**Hispanic**
State						
Alabama	53.4%	53.1%	53.9%	52.8%	57.3%	52.7%
Alaska	65.8%	67.6%	76.0%	58.8%	57.5%	66.8%
Arizona	55.0%	55.9%	65.6%	56.7%	49.0%	51.3%
Arkansas	55.1%	54.8%	57.3%	60.1%	52.9%	52.5%
California	56.0%	57.6%	59.9%	55.2%	59.8%	52.0%
Colorado	64.1%	65.4%	64.8%	59.6%	66.0%	57.4%
Connecticut	61.3%	61.2%	66.3%	58.3%	66.9%	57.9%
Delaware	60.7%	59.9%	65.0%	58.8%	60.5%	56.0%
District of Columbia	60.5%	73.2%	54.0%	65.9%	N/A	63.8%
Florida	53.4%	51.7%	61.3%	58.1%	60.5%	52.8%
Georgia	59.9%	59.2%	62.7%	56.8%	65.7%	53.7%
Hawaii	58.8%	60.3%	66.3%	56.5%	72.1%	61.8%
Idaho	59.6%	59.7%	N/A	57.1%	68.3%	55.3%
Illinois	59.9%	60.7%	59.4%	58.9%	62.2%	54.7%
Indiana	60.9%	60.9%	62.0%	57.9%	67.6%	57.9%
Iowa	64.2%	64.4%	62.7%	61.5%	59.3%	58.5%
Kansas	62.0%	62.3%	63.4%	57.8%	63.6%	56.3%
Kentucky	55.1%	54.7%	59.7%	57.8%	62.4%	53.0%
Louisiana	54.2%	53.6%	55.5%	53.8%	49.9%	53.6%
Maine	61.4%	61.3%	56.2%	68.7%	57.4%	62.8%
Maryland	63.4%	62.0%	67.0%	60.1%	64.8%	62.8%
Massachusetts	61.4%	62.0%	60.2%	57.9%	60.9%	55.4%
Michigan	59.1%	59.1%	59.3%	56.8%	64.0%	60.7%
Minnesota	67.3%	67.6%	67.5%	61.2%	64.0%	61.4%
Mississippi	54.3%	53.9%	55.0%	54.6%	56.2%	54.1%
Missouri	60.3%	60.1%	62.4%	59.0%	62.0%	59.5%
Montana	61.0%	61.3%	N/A	59.7%	57.2%	58.3%
Nebraska	65.5%	65.9%	64.1%	62.8%	65.4%	57.6%
Nevada	59.5%	60.2%	63.3%	60.6%	61.0%	53.4%
New Hampshire	65.7%	65.7%	69.1%	65.8%	62.2%	65.9%
New Jersey	58.1%	57.4%	62.9%	57.9%	64.3%	56.4%
New Mexico	55.1%	55.7%	65.5%	56.5%	50.7%	54.8%
New York	55.9%	57.2%	57.8%	53.9%	54.8%	49.4%
North Carolina	59.6%	59.4%	61.4%	57.7%	57.2%	55.3%
North Dakota	63.9%	64.1%	N/A	77.3%	57.4%	67.0%
Ohio	59.4%	59.4%	59.6%	58.3%	57.5%	61.4%
Oklahoma	55.9%	55.4%	60.4%	53.8%	57.7%	54.5%
Oregon	59.2%	59.0%	65.0%	61.1%	61.7%	59.4%
Pennsylvania	56.5%	56.4%	57.8%	54.8%	57.9%	53.5%
Rhode Island	59.4%	60.1%	62.1%	53.9%	51.2%	50.8%
South Carolina	58.3%	58.1%	58.9%	60.8%	55.4%	57.4%
South Dakota	65.1%	65.7%	N/A	56.4%	57.6%	66.4%
Tennessee	57.3%	56.7%	61.1%	55.9%	57.8%	55.8%
Texas	56.8%	58.5%	63.4%	56.8%	61.0%	50.7%
Utah	61.9%	61.9%	67.5%	60.1%	55.9%	62.0%
Vermont	65.8%	65.8%	N/A	59.9%	N/A	63.5%
Virginia	61.3%	60.7%	63.1%	60.1%	68.4%	62.3%
Washington	60.4%	60.3%	66.5%	58.1%	61.2%	61.1%
West Virginia	48.1%	48.0%	50.8%	51.1%	44.7%	53.6%
Wisconsin	**65.3%**	**65.7%**	**62.6%**	**57.7%**	**65.5%**	**60.2%**
Wyoming	62.3%	62.3%	N/A	74.1%	63.1%	59.6%
United States	**58.3%**	**58.8%**	**60.4%**	**56.5%**	**57.9%**	**53.0%**
Puerto Rico	33.9%	37.8%	32.5%	24.7%	N/A	33.9%

N/A=Not available due to small sample sizes.
Source: Urban Institute 2004.
Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

2003). Thus, public opinion suggests that early care and education is gaining the critical support needed to become a top priority among policymakers.

Opinions about how and where to invest in early care and education, however, differ. While there are some outstanding model programs, most programs fall short of meeting the complex needs of parents and children. Many child care programs serve the needs of working parents well, but do not focus enough on children's early development; conversely, while prekindergarten typically places a strong emphasis on quality, the months and hours of services are typically inadequate to fully support working families; and Head Start only serves children living at or below the poverty line. Many prekindergarten programs are open only two to three hours per day for part of the year, and it is estimated that just under 25 percent of programs are full-day (Barnett et al. 2003). To address these issues, some early care and education experts advocate for the integration of child care and prekindergarten, arguing that it could raise the quality standards of child care, provide families with a full-day care setting (Committee for Economic Development 2002a), and open up more prekindergarten slots to children in low-income working families (Schumacher, Irish, and Lombardi 2003). Some caution that early care and education providers must find a delicate balance between quantity and quality, as expanding too quickly, without sufficient funds and standards, will dilute the potential impact on child development, whereas focusing solely on quality may exclude children with the greatest need (Barnett, Brown, and Shore 2004). Clearly, expanding early care and education in a way that meets the diverse needs of today's children and families is a difficult endeavor. Moving forward will require significant investments, continued debate, and careful attention to expanding access while simultaneously improving the quality of existing early education programs.

THE BENEFITS OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Investing in children's early care and education has lasting, positive effects on children's well-being. Quality programs supplement the nurturing of children that begins in the home. One fundamental component of quality early care and education is the adequate training and education of teachers, although other factors[4] also contribute to overall quality (Stoney, Groginsky, and Poppe 2004).[5] Preschool-aged children who are stimulated by quality teachers and caregivers in a safe and nurturing environment are more likely to develop socially, emotionally, and cognitively (Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children 1994; Peisner-Feinberg et al. 1999; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network 2000). Access to such care is especially important for lower-income families.[6] Research shows a direct link between family income level and children's physical, social/emotional, and cognitive development (Gershoff 2003). Quality early care and education programs can provide an enriching environment that can help to counteract some of the negative effects of poverty (Barnett 1996; Campbell et al. 2002).

The first five years of a child's life are critical to brain development and important for the growth of linguistic, conceptual, and social abilities (Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children 1994; Peisner-Feinberg et al. 1999; National Research Council 2000). Environmental influences in these early years affect children's social skills and performance in areas such as reading, math, and science when they reach school age (National Research Council 2000; Peisner-Feinberg et al. 1999). An expansion of quality early care and education programs and funding for such programs stands to improve the effectiveness of the public school system generally, by helping children build the fundamental skills needed to succeed in school.

Research has also demonstrated that quality early care and education programs yield broad societal benefits. A pivotal study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program evaluated the long-term benefits of participation in a high-quality preschool

[4] These include physical environment, curricula, nutrition, and family support services.

[5] Teacher training and education are the primary quality indicators addressed in this report.

[6] The National Center for Children in Poverty calculates that there are 27 million children living in families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty line, or nearly 40 percent of all U.S. children (Gershoff 2003).

program by three- and four-year-olds from low-income, African American families in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and found that by their late twenties, those who had participated in the preschool program were less in need of special education, less likely to receive welfare, less likely to commit crime, and had higher earnings and more wealth than their peers who did not participate in early care programs (Barnett 1996). The study also estimated the monetary benefits of the preschool program for taxpayers, concluding that every dollar of investment in high-quality preschool programs would yield a $7.16 return to the public (Barnett 1996).[7] Another seminal study in North Carolina analyzed the outcomes of African American children of low-income families provided with full-day, year-round care from infancy through five years, compared with a control group with otherwise similar profiles. Researchers found that the experimental group performed better in school, completed more years of education, were more likely to attend a four-year college or university, and were less likely to become parents in their teenage years (Campbell et al. 2002).

In Wisconsin, monitoring of the Wausau School District's four-year-old-kindergarten program by the district's Special Education Department found that, over a five-year span, the Wausau School District experienced a 25 percent reduction in the number of elementary students identified with learning disabilities; these results are attributed to participation in the four-year-old-kindergarten program, as well as to other early intervention efforts such as SAGE (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education),[8] Reading Recovery, and balanced literacy instruction (Governor's Taskforce on Educational Excellence 2004; Burmesch 2004).

Some researchers have also argued that the market would produce too few educated workers if the local, state, and federal governments did not fund public education, urging that the same public investment and attention that has been applied to K-12 education be applied to early childhood development programs (Rolnick and Gruenwald 2003). While advocates differ in opinion about how and where to invest in early childhood development, there is general agreement that society gains when its members are better prepared, when the children of low-income families are given an equal opportunity to succeed and live above poverty, and when all children benefit from the supplemental care and nurturance provided by early care and education programs.

ACCESS TO EARLY EDUCATION

Although a substantial proportion of three- and four-year-olds receive care in some type of setting outside the home, the accessibility of full-day, full-year affordable care is very limited. Nearly eight million three- and four-year old children live in the United States (National Institute for Early Education Research 2004b), and approximately 138,000 live in Wisconsin (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 2000). These preschool-age children are enrolled in a variety of programs: Head Start, child care centers, nursery schools, public schools, state-funded prekindergarten programs, and family child care homes. According to the National Household Education Survey (NHES), parents report that 46 percent of three-year-olds and 69 percent of four-year-olds across the nation were enrolled in a center-based early care and education program[9] in 1999 (National Institute for Early Education Research 2004a).

Such estimates provide a general sense of where three- and four-year-olds are served. But, because there is no unified national data reporting system for early care and education, as there are for K-12 education and post-secondary education, states do

[7] This study's estimate of the economic return yielded by investment in early care and education in Ypsilanti, Michigan, is based on the program's impact on low-income children. Results would vary for children of different socioeconomic backgrounds, and for programs with different quality standards.

[8] The SAGE program provides five-year state grants to school districts with at least 50 percent low-income enrollment for the purpose of decreasing class size to 15 pupils per class in grades kindergarten through third grade and to extend building hours every day to make educational, recreational and community services available (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2003).

[9] These figures come from the NHES, which classifies Head Start, nursery schools, day care centers, and prekindergarten as preschool or center-based care.

not systematically collect enrollment or other data. Thus, there is no way to know exactly how many children of what ages are in which programs and for how long. Determining service details is complicated because many children are enrolled in more than one program, particularly if they have working parents who need full-day, full-year arrangements. Available data are reported primarily by the funding source of the program. The following are estimates for program participation of three- and four-year-olds in Wisconsin (although they are not unduplicated counts):

> 13,515 three- and four-year-old children in Wisconsin were in federal Head Start in fiscal year 2003 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families 2004b). Another 1,393 children were served through the Wisconsin Head Start State Supplement (Haglund 2004).
>
> 16,051 four-year-old children were in four-year-old kindergarten programs in the 2002-03 school year (Haglund 2004).
>
> For the 2003-04 school year, 189 school districts, out of a total of 416 elementary districts, reported operating four-year-old kindergarten programs (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2004; Haglund 2004).
>
> During the 2001-02 school year, 5 percent of Wisconsin's three-year-olds and 7 percent of its four-year-olds participated in preschool special education programs (Barnett et al. 2003).

The number and proportion of children served by state-funded prekindergarten programs[10] and Head Start vary greatly from state to state. Only nine states provided state-funded prekindergarten programs to 20 percent or more of their four-year-olds in the 2001-2002 school year (Table 4),[11] and only two states, Massachusetts and New Jersey, served more than 10 percent of their three-year-olds through such programs that year. In the school year 2001-2002, Wisconsin was ranked 11th of 50 states by serving 19.1 percent of its four-year-olds through the state-funded four-year-old-kindergarten program (Table 4). However, in 2002-2003, this number increased to 24 percent of the state's four-year-olds (Barnett et al. 2003).

Unfortunately, Wisconsin provides no state-funded prekindergarten to the state's three-year-olds (Table 4). Some states, including Wisconsin, however, supplement federally funded Head Start programs with a Head Start State Supplement (Barnett et al. 2003). In Wisconsin, these state-funded Head Start programs serve 1 percent of the state's three-year-olds and federal Head Start serves 8 percent of these children (Barnett et al. 2003).

For the 2003-04 school year, 189 out of 416 elementary districts[12] in Wisconsin had four-year-old kindergarten programs (Haglund 2004). The Department of Public Instruction indicates that the number of districts with four-year-old kindergarten programs has steadily increased each year and this trend is expected to continue (Haglund 2004). Funding for Wisconsin's four-year-old kindergarten (public preschool) is built directly into the state school aid formula (Doyle 2004). However, the current public school state aid formula is based on average enrollment over three years, and thus school districts starting public four-year-old kindergarten programs do not receive full funding until the fourth year of the program, forcing them to pay for most costs through local revenue (Doyle 2004). As a result, Wisconsin still lags behind Oklahoma and Georgia, the two states with the highest proportion of four-year-olds participating in state-funded prekindergarten programs, with 60 percent and 55 percent, respectively, of all four-year-olds enrolled in their programs in 2002-2003 (Barnett et al. 2003).

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[10] State-funded prekindergarten includes preschool initiatives that primarily serve three- and four-year-olds, that focus on child development, that operate two or more days per week, that are distinct from child care subsidy programs, and that are not designed primarily to serve children with disabilities (Barnett et al. 2003). State-funded prekindergarten may also include Head Start if the state's Head Start program were expanded to serve a greater number of children (Barnett et al. 2003).

[11] These states include: Oklahoma, Georgia, Texas, South Carolina, New York, West Virginia, Kentucky, Illinois and New Jersey.

[12] Of the 426 school districts in Wisconsin, 416 have elementary schools.

Table 4: Indicators of Early Care and Education Access, Quality, and Spending

Access Rankings and Percent Enrolled in State Prekindergarten, 2001-2002 (a)****					State Prekindergarten Quality Standards, 2001-2002 (a)****		Spending Per Child, State-Funded Prekindergarten , 2001-2002 (a)****	
State	**Access for 4-Yr-Olds Rank**	**% of 4-Yr-Olds in Prek**	**% of 3-Yr-Olds in Prek**	**% of 3- and 4-Yr-Olds in Prek**	**Teacher Req. to Have B.A.***	**Teacher Req. to Have Spec. Training in ECE***	**State Spending Rank**	**Dollars**
Alabama	35	1.3	0.5	0.6	Yes	No	16	$3,175
Alaska	50	0.0	NA	0.0	***	***	50	$0
Arizona	28	5.6	2.0	2.8	No	Yes	9	$4,559
Arkansas	24	6.1	0.0	4.3	Yes	Yes	30	$2,028
California	13	14.2	0.0	9.7	No	Yes	18	$3,080
Colorado	14	14.0	5.1	7.6	No	Yes	23	$2,682
Connecticut	17	9.5	0.0	6.4	No	Yes	3	$6,727
Delaware	20	8.0	5.9	4.1	No	Yes	5	$5,078
Dist. of Columbia	****	44.0	20.0	*	Yes	Yes	****	$8,643
Florida	*	*	*	*	**	**	*	*
Georgia	2	53.4	0.0	26.9	No	Yes	10	$3,721
Hawaii	21	7.7	0.0	3.9	No	Yes	19	$3,059
Idaho	50	0.0	0.0	0.0	***	***	50	$0
Illinois	8	22.0	7.6	14.9	Yes	Yes	17	$3,094
Indiana	50	0.0	0.0	0.0	***	***	50	$0
Iowa	31	4.1	3.5	2.7	No	No	13	$3,291
Kansas	25	5.8	2.6	3.0	Yes	No	31	$2,018
Kentucky	7	23.9	7.3	15.7	No	Yes	21	$2,776
Louisiana	29	5.3	0.0	2.7	Yes	No	27	$2,389
Maine	16	9.7	11.8	4.9	Yes	No	36	$451
Maryland	12	15.1	0.9	7.6	Yes	Yes	32	$1,751
Massachusetts	15	11.6	1.2	11.7	No	No	8	$4,826
Michigan	10	19.1	0.0	9.7	No	Yes	14	$3,205
Minnesota	*	*	*	*	No, No[d]	Yes, Yes[d]	*	*
Mississippi	50	0.0	0.0	0.0	***	***	50	$0
Missouri	30	4.9	0.0	4.2	No	Yes	26	$2,407
Montana	50	0.0	0.0	0.0	***	***	50	$0
Nebraska	34	1.5	0.0	1.0	Yes	Yes	22	$2,708
Nevada	37	1.1	0.4	0.7	Yes	Yes	20	$2,950
New Hampshire	50	0.0	0.0	0.0	***	***	50	$0
New Jersey	9	20.4	11.2	15.9	Yes, Yes[e]	Yes, No[e]	1	$10,088
New Mexico	27	5.6	2.5	3.8	No	No	35	$782
New York	5	24.6	2.3	13.7	Yes, No[f]	Yes, No[f]	11	$3,622
North Carolina	36	1.2	0.0	0.6	Yes	Yes	4	$5,242
North Dakota	50	0.0	0.0	0.0	***	***	50	$0
Ohio	19	8.3	5.3	7.1	No, No[g]	Yes, No[g]	6	$5,015
Oklahoma	1	55.6	0.0	27.8	Yes	Yes	25	$2,428
Oregon	26	5.7	0.0	4.1	No	Yes	2	$7,463
Pennsylvania	33	1.7	1.1	0.9	Yes	No	*	*
Rhode Island	*	*	*	*	**	**	*	*
South Carolina	4	29.4	0.7	15.2	Yes	Yes	33	$1,473
South Dakota	50	0.0	0.0	0.0	***	***	50	$0
Tennessee	32	2.3	1.4	1.7	Yes	Yes	28	$2,226
Texas	3	39.2	6.1	22.8	Yes	No	29	$2,186
Utah	50	0.0	0.0	0.0	***	***	50	$0
Vermont	18	8.6	3.3	7.0	Yes	Yes	34	$1,379
Virginia	23	6.3	1.7	3.2	No	No	15	$3,194
Washington	22	6.6	0.0	4.2	No	Yes	7	$4,908
West Virginia	6	24.2	8.7	16.6	Yes	Yes	24	$2,486
Wisconsin	**11**	**19.1**	**0.0**	**10.1**	**Yes, No[h]**	**No, Yes[h]**	**12**	**$3,518**
Wyoming	50	0.0	0.0	0.0	***	***	50	$0
Average of 50 States		14.8	3.0	9.0	21 Yes	29 Yes		$3,455

Notes:

N/A=Not Applicable. State does not have master teachers.

*State did not provide data or had a prekindergarten program that was not comparable to those in other states.

**State initiatives are not comparable to those in this table.

***State does not have a prekindergarten initiative.

****Data for the District of Columbia was not included in rankings, tallies, or averages, or was unavailable.

[d] First entry refers to Head Start, second entry refers to Minnesota School Readiness Program.

[e] First entry refers to Abott Preschool Program, second entry refers to Early Childhood Program Aid.

Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Table 4 *(Continued)*: **Indicators of Early Care and Education Access, Quality, and Spending**

	Percent of Children Eligible under State Law Receiving CCDF Child Care Subsidies, 2001 (b)		Child Care Teacher Quality Standards, 2004 (c)		Income Eligibility Limit for CCDF Child Care Assistance for a Family of 3, FY 2002-2003 (a)	
State	Rank	Percent	Preservice ECE Req.of Teacher	Preservice ECE Training Req. of Master Teacher	Eligibility Limit as Annual Income	Eligibility Limit as % of State Median Income (SMI)
Alabama	18	21.9%	No	N/A	$19,020	43.0%
Alaska	14	22.8%	No	Yes	$53,772	85.0%
Arizona	40	13.6%	No	N/A	$24,156	54.0%
Arkansas	46	10.3%	No	N/A	$23,520	60.0%
California	44	12.0%	Yes	Yes	$35,100	75.0%
Colorado	16	22.4%	No	N/A	$32,916	62.0%
Connecticut	48	8.1%	No	Yes	$47,592	75.0%
Delaware	11	23.6%	Yes	N/A	$29,280	80.0%
Dist. of Columbia	1	48.5%	Yes	N/A	****	****
Florida	38	13.7%	No	Yes	*	53.0%
Georgia	29	17.5%	No	N/A	$42,828	85.0%
Hawaii	41	13.4%	Yes	N/A	$39,288	80.0%
Idaho	9	29.3%	No	N/A	$20,472	51.0%
Illinois	8	29.3%	Yes	N/A	$21,816	39.0%
Indiana	7	29.5%	No	Yes	$26,484	57.0%
Iowa	10	24.6%	No	N/A	$22,680	47.0%
Kansas	34	16.5%	Yes	N/A	$27,060	49.0%
Kentucky	5	30.6%	No	N/A	$24,144	55.0%
Louisiana	23	20.7%	No	N/A	$24,924	60.0%
Maine	51	4.4%	No	N/A	$36,456	85.0%
Maryland	24	20.3%	Yes	N/A	$25,140	40.0%
Massachusetts	31	17.2%	Yes	Yes	$28,968	50.0%
Michigan	33	16.6%	No	N/A	*	*
Minnesota	43	13.3%	Yes	N/A	$42,012	75.0%
Mississippi	49	5.6%	No	N/A	$30,156	85.0%
Missouri	3	37.6%	No	N/A	$17,784	42.0%
Montana	19	21.8%	No	N/A	$21,948	51.0%
Nebraska	13	23.4%	No	N/A	$25,260	53.0%
Nevada	50	5.4%	No	N/A	$37,476	75.0%
New Hampshire	32	17.1%	Yes	Yes	$31,776	62.0%
New Jersey	17	22.0%	Yes	Yes	$36,576	61.0%
New Mexico	26	18.8%	No	N/A	$29,256	78.0%
New York	6	30.4%	No	Yes	$29,256	61.0%
North Carolina	22	21.0%	No	No	$34,224	75.0%
North Dakota	28	17.7%	No	N/A	$29,556	69.0%
Ohio	21	21.7%	No	N/A	$27,060	57.0%
Oklahoma	4	32.1%	No	No	$23,232	53.0%
Oregon	25	19.5%	No	Yes	$27,060	60.0%
Pennsylvania	27	18.1%	No	Yes	$29,256	58.0%
Rhode Island	38	13.7%	Yes	Yes	$32,916	61.0%
South Carolina	30	17.5%	No	N/A	$21,948	47.0%
South Dakota	15	22.6%	No	No	$21,948	44.0%
Tennessee	2	42.1%	No	N/A	$24,324	56.0%
Texas	35	15.6%	Yes	N/A	$38,052	85.0%
Utah	37	13.8%	No	N/A	$26,928	56.0%
Vermont	36	14.9%	Yes	Yes	$31,032	77.0%
Virginia	47	9.2%	No	N/A	$23,400	43.0%
Washington	11	23.6%	No	N/A	$32,916	64.0%
West Virginia	45	11.0%	No	No	$28,296	75.0%
Wisconsin	**41**	**13.4%**	**Yes**	**N/A**	**$27,060**	**51.0%**
Wyoming	20	21.8%	No	N/A	$27,060	58.0%
Average of 50 States		18.3%	14 Yes	13 Yes	$28,267	60.3%

Notes: *(Continued)*

[f] First entry refers to Experimental Prekindergarten, second entry refers to Universal Prekindergarten.

[g] First entry refers to Ohio Public School Preschool Program, second entry refers to State-funded Head Start Model.

[h] First entry refers to Four-year-old Kindergarten, second entry refers to State-funded Head Start Model.

Sources: (a) Barnett et al. 2003; (b) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families 2003; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Unpublished Tabulations; (c) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Child Care Information Center 2004.

Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

THE QUALITY OF CARE AND EDUCATION

Respected research organizations such as the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences recommend that every group of children in a preschool education program have a teacher with at least a bachelor's degree, with specialized education related to early childhood (National Research Council 2000). Still, there is a good deal of variation in the quality of care and education in these programs. Only about 15 percent of center-based child care programs in the United States (and only 10 percent of home-based programs) are rated as good or better on observational rating scales (Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team 1995). A study of subsidized child care centers in Wisconsin, conducted by the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, found similar results, with 11 percent of the child care centers in the study determined to be of "less than minimal" quality and 15 percent as providing good or excellent care in 2001 (Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership 2002). The remaining 74 percent of child care centers in the study were found to be of mediocre quality (Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership 2002). The lack of adequate teacher training in child care settings is due in large part to low wages, which make it difficult to attract well-educated workers and generally lead to high turnover (Park-Jadotte, Golin, and Gault 2002). In 2000, the mean wage for child care workers in the United States was $7.86 per hour (Center for the Child Care Workforce 2002). Teacher quality in child care settings also suffers because child care centers rely substantially on parents' payments for revenue (Mitchell, Stoney, and Dichter 2001), and families are unable to shoulder the extra burden of the increased investments necessary to pay for well-qualified teachers.

Wisconsin is one of 14 states,[13] however, that require teachers in licensed child care centers to have at least some preservice early childhood training or experience (Table 4). The level and amount of training required also vary by state, ranging from eight days of preservice training in Texas to a child development associate (CDA) credential and 1,560 hours of experience in Minnesota (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Child Care Information Center 2004). Wisconsin only requires two preservice courses, credit or noncredit, in early childhood education and 80 hours of experience for teachers.

Children enrolled in Head Start have teachers with higher training standards. To teach in Head Start programs, all teachers must have at least a credential in child development and at least half of all teachers in each program must have an associate's degree or higher in early childhood education. The vast majority of Head Start programs meet this standard.

As with child care, prekindergarten programs funded by the states also vary in the required qualifications for teachers. As of 2001, 29 states required teachers in their prekindergarten programs to have specialized training in early childhood education; 21 states required prekindergarten teachers to have bachelors' degrees (Table 1; Table 4). Just 13 states require both, thus meeting the recommendation of the National Research Council. Wisconsin requires its four-year-old-kindergarten teachers to hold both a bachelors' degree and obtain a teaching license in early education (Barnett, et al. 2003).

THE COST OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

The Committee for Economic Development (2002b) estimated that in the year 2001, public and private costs for all center-based child care and education programs for children from birth to age five in the United States amounted to between $50 and $55 billion. Families currently bear the largest share of the costs for center-based programs, covering 50 to 55 percent of the cost for all center-based programs (Committee for Economic Development 2002b). The federal government pays about

[13] These states include: California, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

25 to 30 percent and state and local governments contribute 15 to 20 percent of the total cost (Committee for Economic Development 2002b). The national average spent by states per child on state-funded preschool in 2001 was $3,455 (Table 4). Wisconsin ranks 12th in state spending on prekindergarten, with annual spending at $3,518 per child, just above the national average (Table 1; Table 4). The costs of system expansions would vary state by state, and would differ depending on state policies and population characteristics (Golin, Mitchell, and Gault 2004).

Over the past decade, Wisconsin has resisted a growing trend to cut funding for child care quality supports (Parrot and Wu 2003), but, like other states, it faced fiscal crisis in designing the 2003-2005 biennial budget (Doyle 2003). The budget for regulation, licensing, and certification of child care providers has slowly increased over the past decade and was set at $14 million for the 2002-2003 fiscal year (Edie et al. 2003). Wisconsin has also supported efforts to inform and refer consumers, provide grants to help child care programs achieve accreditation, and sponsor model programs. These initiatives have had variable support, however, with initial increases in funding followed by decreases in recent years (Edie et al. 2003). Likewise, state funding for programs aimed at improving the qualifications of the child care workforce has significantly increased since funding began in 1999 (Edie et al. 2003). The budget level for incentive programs, including the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® WISCONSIN and R.E.W.A.R.D. Wisconsin programs, was set at $6 million in the 2002-2003 fiscal year (Edie et al. 2003). Unfortunately, these programs experienced a 50 percent reduction in funding in the biennial 2003-05 Wisconsin state budget (Wisconsin Early Childhood Association 2004).

As more low-income women are encouraged or required (due to welfare reform) to enter the labor force, the need for affordable early care programs for low-income families continues to grow. Nationally, in 2001, poor children were less likely to participate in early care and education programs than were middle- and upper-income children (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2002). Adequate child care subsidies for low-income children are essential to enable families to purchase quality child care. Currently, federal subsidies are available in all states and 1996 federal legislation allows states to set income eligibility limits up to 85 percent of state median income (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2003). Most states do not set their limits that high (Table 4), but even when they do, those states often fail to provide child care assistance to all families up to that income level (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2003). Many poor women and families do not receive the subsidies for which their children are eligible. Recent data show that nationally, only 18.3 percent of all children potentially eligible for child care subsidies under federal rules actually received subsidies under the federal government's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) in 2001 (Table 4). The percentage of eligible children receiving assistance among the states ranges from just 4.4 percent in Maine to 48.5 percent in the District of Columbia (Table 4).[14] While this indicator gives a sense of the disparities in child care assistance among the states, such disparities also may in part reflect the trade-off between quality and quantity. For example, some states reimburse child care providers at higher rates when they meet higher quality standards, and are left with fewer resources for expanding access. Other states may have high upper limits for income eligibility, and thus a larger eligible population, causing the proportion of eligible children served to appear smaller than other states with lower income eligibility limits.

In 2001, Wisconsin fell well below average, ranking 41st with only 13.4 percent of all eligible children receiving child care subsidies through CCDF (Table 4). However, this number does not provide a complete picture of access to child care subsidies in Wisconsin, as a significant portion of funding for subsidies in Wisconsin comes from TANF funds.[15] In 1997, Wisconsin boosted direct TANF spending on child care, combined funding streams for child care subsidies, and eliminated waiting lists for its child care subsidy program, Wisconsin Shares (Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development 2004).

Maximum annual income levels to qualify for child-care subsidies vary widely between states. Alaska is at the top of the list at $53,722, while Alabama is at the bottom at just $19,020 for a family of three (Table 4). When these figures are considered as a percent of state median income, a slightly different picture emerges. Alaska, Georgia, Maine, Mississippi, and Texas have the

[14] These percentages represent only CCDF funding, and do not include direct TANF spending on child care, private funding for early care and education, or Head Start. Also, these numbers are based on state eligibility rules as opposed to federal rules. In addition, significant state budget cuts have occurred since 2001 and are not reflected in these percentages. See wAppendix for further details on this indicator.

[15] In fiscal year 2002, Wisconsin's funding for child care was as follows: CCDF federal allocations, 25.7 percent; CCDF state Maintenance of Effort, 5.4 percent; CCDF state matching funds, 5.5 percent, TANF transfers to CCDF, 20.2 percent; and TANF direct spending, 43.2 percent (Barnett et al. 2003).

highest eligibility limit at 85 percent of the state median income, while Maryland comes in at the bottom with a limit of only 40 percent of state median income (Table 4). Wisconsin falls toward the bottom of this spectrum, with an income limit of 51 percent of the state median income, or $27,060 for a family of three (Table 1), or 185 percent of the federal poverty level (Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development 2004). However, once approved, families can retain their subsidies until their income levels exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty level (Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development 2004).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Wisconsin's child care and early education system has many important strengths and much room for improvement. The state has already implemented the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® WISCONSIN program to improve teacher qualifications and the R.E.W.A.R.D. Wisconsin program to boost the retention of professional teachers and care providers. From its inception in 1999 through fiscal year 2003, the T.E.A.C.H. program awarded 2,851 scholarships to 2,157 recipients in 65 of 72 counties, helping to create a more highly qualified workforce and providing benefits for teachers in the form of higher average incomes and higher retention rates (Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development 2003b). The state school aid formula provides funding for four-year-old kindergarten programs administered through the public school system, and Wisconsin provides grants to local government agencies providing matching dollars for child care purposes (Edie et al. 2003). These grants have funded community child care initiatives in more than 60 counties in an effort to improve the quality and quantity of child care programs and services (Edie et al. 2003).

However, despite its strengths, the data in this report demonstrate that Wisconsin needs to serve a greater number of three- and four-year-olds, and that its early care and education programs require continued efforts to achieve greater coordination in funding and administration (Edie et al. 2003).

A number of steps can be taken, however, at both the federal and state levels, to improve access to quality early care and education in Wisconsin. Services that are well-funded and -structured can both facilitate parental employment and contribute to good long-term outcomes for children. While a vast array of policy options might be undertaken, limited funds and the likelihood of continued funding shortages make simultaneous implementation of the potential strategies listed below unrealistic. In the face of insufficient resources for our early care and education system, opinions vary considerably about how those resources should be targeted: should public funds be allocated for comprehensive services for only the neediest families, or less comprehensive services that reach more families? To what extent should early care and education be integrated into our public education system? What role should the federal government, versus states, play in determining uniform standards in a variety of settings and measuring progress toward those standards? The United States and Wisconsin are far from implementing the types of universal systems available in many other industrialized nations that provide some help for all but with greater support to the economically disadvantaged. To achieve needed expansions, significant new federal investments will likely be required (Helburn and Bergmann 2002).

The following policy recommendations represent suggestions from advocates and leaders in the field for improving access to early care and education. These steps would bring us closer to a voluntary, universal, high-quality, well-integrated early care and education system in the state.

1. Improving Access to Quality Services:

Greater federal investments in early care and education have the potential to help states provide early care and education for all young children.

A) CCDF child care funding administered through Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program reaches only a fraction of those who are eligible. The Wisconsin Shares subsidy program should be structured to produce quality preschool

education and to provide access to all eligible children. The Wisconsin Shares subsidy should also continue to be used as a tool to encourage and promote high-quality child care programs by providing higher reimbursement rates to accredited child care facilities (Edie et al. 2003). Increased federal funding would aid Wisconsin in continuing to expand its child care programs without sacrificing its efforts to raise quality standards.

B) Head Start is a model program with performance standards that specify qualifications for staff and learning outcomes for children, and should be fully funded to ensure that it reaches all three- and four-year-old children living in poverty. The federal government should also expand the income eligibility limit beyond the poverty line to reach more low-income children.

C) The early childhood education needs of Wisconsin's three-year-olds are not currently being met (Table 4). Currently none of these children have access to state-funded prekindergarten programs (Table 4) and only 1 percent is served by state-funded Head Start (Barnett et al. 2003). To provide a full range of options to Wisconsin's three-year-olds and their families, Wisconsin should build upon quality child care initiatives by taking steps to improve access to state-funded Head Start for low-income three-year-olds and expand state-funded prekindergarten to include three-year-olds as well as four-year-olds.

D) Unlike other states, Wisconsin's state school aid formula includes funding for optional four-year-old kindergarten programs. However, school districts are often prevented from initiating a new four-year-old kindergarten program because the school aid formula does not provide full state funding for the program until the fourth year. This gap in funding forces local school districts to put forward all startup costs and prevents many districts from starting programs. Governor Doyle, in his recent report *Kids First: The Governor's Plan to Invest in Wisconsin's Future* (Doyle 2004), proposes a state grant program to help local districts offset the costs of starting four-year-old kindergarten programs. This kind of grant program, along with the involvement of Head Start and child care settings, is a necessary step toward the realization of universal kindergarten for four-year-olds in the state of Wisconsin.

E) The Federal government should continue and expand grants offered through the Early Learning Opportunities Act (ELOA). First enacted in fiscal year 2001, the original purpose of the Act was to make grants to local community councils to develop, operate, or enhance voluntary early learning programs to produce educational gains for young children below compulsory school age (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families 2004). Two of the 43 ELOA grants for fiscal year 2003 were awarded to localities in Wisconsin (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families 2004).[16] Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development and Department of Public Instruction should encourage the development of local councils within other counties in order to take further advantage of the ELOA grants to develop and improve preschool programs throughout the state.

F) The federal government should make available federal-to-state grants that help states fund experimental early care and education programs that are high in quality and affordable for working families. Such a new grant system should require cooperation across relevant agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and should incorporate quality standards recommended by experts in the early childhood development field.

G) The federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit should be made refundable to enable low-income families to benefit. This credit is designed to offset a portion of work-related child care expenses. It is the only federal financial assistance available to middle-income families and is modest at best; families earning less than $50,000 receive on average about $425 a year (Internal Revenue Service, Information Services Unpublished Data). Unlike other states, Wisconsin does not currently have a state dependent care tax credit (National Center for Children in Poverty 2004). To be helpful to low-income families that pay little or no taxes, a new Wisconsin credit should be made refundable. In other words, the full credit should be made available regardless of whether taxes are owed.

[16] Seven of the 43 grants were awarded to localities in California (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families 2004).

H) The federal government should provide assistance to states by demonstrating better ways to finance all types of programs so that they can meet higher standards and so that all families can afford high-quality programs. Wisconsin should also create significant financial incentives for school districts and communities to develop locally responsive systems of preschool education that include support services for working families (particularly in cases of part-day programs). Governor Doyle's plan sets forth an initiative to "offer financial incentives to communities that work to integrate and streamline early education services, including child care, Head Start, and 4-year-old kindergarten" (Doyle 2004). It is important to further develop a plan to implement and fund these incentives within and across education, Head Start, and child care funding sources to encourage the adoption of policies that will both promote preschool education and build a unified preschool education system that eases families' ability to utilize the programs, or combination of programs, that best address their needs.

2. Improving Quality:

Wisconsin and the federal government can take greater steps to improve the quality of care, including:

A) Setting per-child funding at levels sufficient to pay for the quality of programs that will produce the desired school readiness results in all types of settings

B) Increasing staff qualifications in state child care regulations, prekindergarten program regulations, and nursery school regulations to be equivalent to, or improve upon, kindergarten teacher licensing

C) Ensuring funding for the necessary infrastructure, such as personnel preparation and continuing professional development systems, so teachers can obtain early childhood degrees and teaching licenses and receive compensation commensurate with these qualifications

D) Developing and adopting consistent quality and regulatory standards at the federal level using a research-based approach, and providing incentives and guidelines to states for following such standards that would apply to early childhood programs in a variety of settings (e.g., programs with different lengths of service per day). Such standards would address the key elements of staff qualifications, class size, and curricula and would be based on research findings. Special attention would need to be paid to guidelines for improving the quality of home-based care without imposing unreasonable barriers to service delivery in those settings.

3. Improving Staff Compensation and Working Conditions:

Pay levels and working conditions for early care and education teachers must be improved across all settings, including center and home-based child care settings, Head Start and prekindergarten programs, and programs based in the public schools. The federal government and the State of Wisconsin should provide financial incentives for staff recruitment and retention initiatives that involve all sectors of early care and education. Effective initiatives will address the key problems of inadequate preparation, poor day-to-day working conditions, and low compensation, all of which currently undermine the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® WISCONSIN and R.E.W.A.R.D. Wisconsin are very important programs that do address some of the critical issues, but they have suffered a 50 percent funding cut in the biennial 2003-2005 Wisconsin state budget, seriously impeding the size and effectiveness of the programs (Wisconsin Early Childhood Association 2004). Returning funding for these programs to their prior levels, as recommended by the Governor's Taskforce for Educational Excellence (Doyle 2004), or to even higher levels, is extremely important to Wisconsin's ability to recruit and retain qualified staff. Other initiatives could include student loan forgiveness programs for all early childhood professionals, and wage ladders that tie compensation to experience and training (Park-Jadotte, Golin, and Gault 2002).

4. Promoting System Integration:

The federal agencies that administer Head Start, child care and other education programs should work together to develop and implement federal supports and incentives for states to create unified early care and education systems that build upon existing programs and that link with existing public education systems. To the maximum extent possible, the federal government should promote system integration and should itself be a model of the collaboration across sectors that is needed to create a unified system of early care and education in every state.

5. Improving Access to Information:

While there are ample national data about elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, we have very little reliable information about early care and education, which is critical for effectively distributing funding across programs. Information on who is being served, who needs services and is not receiving them, and the quality of service provided are all sketchy at best. Collecting data on such a disparate set of programs, most of which have weak infrastructure, is not easy, but it is needed. The federal government should plan and carry out a system for annual reporting on the status of early care and education. This effort must be interagency and cross-sector to be useful, and should focus on establishing an unduplicated, accurate accounting of program participation by preschoolers, which would include data on quality indicators such as teacher credentials and class sizes. Such a system should also measure children's outcomes through research on targeted samples of children (i.e., program evaluations like those on the Perry Preschool and the Abecedarian projects). It is important to note that this recommendation would not include widespread standardized testing of preschoolers. The federal government and Wisconsin should devote the necessary resources to collecting data that will help expand quality early care and education in Wisconsin.

CONCLUSION

Wisconsin's children and families would benefit from an integrated, comprehensive, and well-funded preschool education system. With such high rates of labor force participation among Wisconsin's mothers, the state's families would benefit from having a simpler system in which it is easy to access good programs for their children, while getting the support they need to be productive workers. For single mothers working for low wages and for those leaving welfare, the gains of affordable, quality early care and education can also mean greater stability in terms of work and economic well-being. A quality early care and education system would also allow families greater confidence in the care and education provided to their children, and would allow children positive preschool education experiences with peers of diverse characteristics and capacities in a variety of settings in their own community. Local communities and Wisconsin as a whole would benefit from implementing a systematic means of preparing children to succeed in school. Increasing access to early care and education would improve our economy by increasing the productivity of working families, and by providing the foundation for a responsible and well-educated citizenry that will become tomorrow's labor force. To achieve the benefits of widely accessible, quality, affordable early care and education, expanding the current systems must become a higher priority at both the state and federal levels.

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY, TERMS, AND DATA SOURCES

The Demand for Early Care and Education Policies

Women's Labor Force Participation in 2000 (proportion of the adult female population in the labor force): Percent of civilian noninstitutionalized women aged 16 and older who were employed or looking for work (in 2000). Source: Urban Institute 2004.

Indicators of Early Care and Education Access, Quality and Spending

Percent of eligible four-year-olds served by state-funded prekindergarten programs, 2000-2002: The percentages of children served in state preschool programs are provided separately for three- and four-year-olds for every state. Where states did not report enrollment separately by age, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) estimated age breakdowns based on the average proportion of enrollees at each age in states that serve three-year-olds and report enrollment by age. Total population numbers were obtained by NIEER from the Census 2000 for total state population at each age. Source: Barnett et al. 2003.

Spending per child enrolled in state prekindergarten program, 2001-2002: The dollar amount spent per child enrolled in a state prekindergarten program, calculated by dividing the total program funding figure by total enrollment. The figures do not include all money received from federal or local sources, and are not estimates of full program cost. Source: Barnett et al. 2003.

Bachelor's degree required of state-funded prekindergarten teacher, 2001-2002: This indicator reflects whether teachers in both public and private prekindergarten program settings are required to hold at least a B.A. Source: Barnett et al. 2003.

Specialized training in early care and education, 2001-2002: This indicator reflects whether the state requires preservice training in early childhood development of prekindergarten teachers. Such training might include a licensure/endorsement in prekindergarten, a degree, or credential in early childhood development. Source: Barnett et al. 2003.

State Child Care Policies

Percent of children eligible under federal law receiving child care subsidies: Average monthly number of children served by state through CCDF in 2001 (Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families 2003a) divided by average monthly number of children eligible by state, according to FY 2001 state rules, for CCDF child care assistance (Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Unpublished Tabulations). Percentages calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research. The average monthly numbers of children served and children eligible by state include only CCDF funding, and do not include direct TANF spending on child care assistance.

Income eligibility limit for child care assistance for a family of three, fiscal year 2002-2003: The maximum annual income figure a family of three cannot exceed in order to qualify for CCDF child care assistance. Source: Barnett et al. 2003.

Income eligibility limit for child care assistance for a family of three, fiscal year 2002-2003, as a percent of state median income: The percent of the state median income a family of three cannot exceed in order to qualify for CCDF child care assistance. Source: Barnett et al. 2003.

Preservice training in early childhood education of child care teachers: Minimum early childhood education preservice qualifications for child care teachers for child care center licensing. Source: National Child Care Information Center 2004.

Preservice training in early childhood education of child care master teachers: Minimum early childhood education preservice qualifications for child care master teachers for child care center licensing. Source: National Child Care Information Center 2004.

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