

Child care deserts: An analysis of child care centers by ZIP code in 8 states ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full report available online ^[2]

Introduction

For working parents with young children, the task of finding child care can be daunting. Across the country, parents report frustration when trying to find affordable, high-quality child care. While the cost of child care is certainly a barrier to child care access, less understood are the roles of supply and location. This report examines the location of child care centers across eight states, comprising 20 percent of the U.S. population younger than the age of 5, and uncovers another cause driving the child care crisis: 42 percent of children under 5 years of age live in child care deserts.

The term “child care desert” is not currently part of the American lexicon. However, lack of child care supply is a serious national problem that disproportionately impacts rural areas. The Center for American Progress is introducing a working definition of child care deserts, which borrows its terminology from the frequently studied problem of food deserts—what the government defines as communities in which residents do not live in close proximity to affordable and healthy food retailers. For the purposes of this study, a child care desert is defined as a ZIP code with at least 30 children under the age of 5 and either no child care centers or so few centers that there are more than three times as many children under age 5 as there are spaces in centers.

In order to assess how location might affect a family’s child care options, this report explores the geographic characteristics of center-based early care and education programs, including child care centers, Head Start, and public and private preschool programs. This study uses state administrative data and ZIP code-level census estimates to analyze differences in the presence and cumulative capacity of child care centers across eight states: Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia. This subset of states results from the fact that while the authors requested data from most states, many agencies did not respond or chose not to share administrative data. However, these eight states are generally illustrative of the state of child care across the country.

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: access ^[4]

supply ^[5]

location ^[6]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/16/11/child-care-deserts-analysis-child-care-centers-zip-code-8>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/16/11/child-care-deserts-analysis-child-care-centers-zip-code-8> ^[2]

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2016/10/27/225703/child-care-deserts/> ^[3]

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