

Child care deserts in New York State: Prekindergarten implementation and community factors related to the capacity to care for infants and toddlers ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpted from abstract

Access to high quality child care provides a valuable support to families and communities as it both enables parental employment and provides a safe and developmentally appropriate place for children. Yet, access to child care for children under age three is uneven, with some communities experiencing child care “deserts” (Jessen-Howard et al., 2018). This paper assesses the infant and toddler child care capacity – the proportion of age-eligible children for which there are available child care slots – of communities across New York State. Using data from the NY State Education Department (670 school districts in the most recent year of available data), the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (about 18,000 registered child care providers), and the National Center for Education Statistics definitions of locale, we examine how child care capacity relates to school district and community factors over 9 years (2007–2016). Using negative binomial regression, we see overall stability in capacity for infant and toddler child care in New York State, but important variation by demographic factors and geography. Non-urban communities and communities with greater levels of student poverty have less capacity for infants and toddlers. Urban communities, communities with publicly funded prekindergarten and greater levels of minority children are associated with greater capacity. Importantly, in non-urban communities only (and especially in rural communities), we find an interaction effect that documents significantly reduced capacity for infant and toddler child care in communities also implementing public prekindergarten.

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