

The history of child care in the U.S. ^[1]

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Excerpts

In the United States today, most mothers of preschool and school age children are employed outside the home. American mothers have invented many ways to care for their children while they work. Native Americans strapped newborns to cradle boards or carried them in woven slings; Colonial women placed small children in standing stools or go-gins to prevent them from falling into the fireplace. Pioneers on the Midwestern plains laid infants in wooden boxes fastened to the beams of their plows.

...

At the end of the nineteenth century, then, American child care had come to consist of a range of formal and informal provisions that were generally associated with the poor, minorities, and immigrants and were stigmatized as charitable and custodial. This pattern of practices and institutions provided a weak foundation for building twentieth-century social services. As women's reform efforts picked up steam during the Progressive Era, however, child care became a target for reform and modernization.

...

Although more public funds for child care were available than ever before, problems of supply and quality continue to limit access to child care for welfare recipients who are now compelled to take employment, and moderate-income families must cope with ever-rising costs for child care. For all families, the quality of child care is compromised by the high rate of turnover among employees in the field, in itself the result of low pay and poor benefits. Because of its long history and current structure, the American child care system is divided along class lines, making it difficult for parents to unite and lobby for improved services and increased public funding for child care for all children.

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: history ^[4]

child care reform ^[5]

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