

6 things cheaper than the cost of child care ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access slideshow online ^[2]

EXCERPTS:

And you thought the cost of college tuition was bad. Even as college costs continue to rise, it turns out the greatest expense facing parents may be basic child care.

Parents in the majority of states last year paid more to leave their infant at a day care center than they would have paid for the child attend a public college or university, according to a recent report by Child Care Aware of America. The annual cost to provide center-based child care (as opposed to in-home child care) to an infant and a 4-year-old child rose by 2 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively.

The expense of child care is inescapable for parents who don't have anywhere else to leave their children while at work. Yet more and more low-income working parents are unable to meet their child care obligations and many quit their jobs or lose them because of unplanned absences, leading to increased dependency on welfare programs, The Huffington Post's Peter Goodman reported in April.

For single parents living in states at the higher end of the cost spectrum, child care is simply unaffordable. The average single mother of an infant in New York, Minnesota and Massachusetts would have to pay more than half of her income for day care at a center, according to the report.

Last year, the average cost of infant care was higher than \$10,000 per year in 19 states and Washington, D.C. Infant care was as high as \$15,000 in Massachusetts, and before- and after-school programs for school-age children cost \$11,000 on average in New York.

In some states, the child care costs were so high that they exceeded all other basic living expenses, including rent. Here are six major things that are cheaper than child care:

- Public college education
- rent
- groceries for two four-person families
- electric bills for eight households
- more than 5 years worth of gas
- a new car

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