

New report paints bleak picture of California child care ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Only 25 percent of children 12 or younger in California with working parents have a licensed child-care spot available to them, according to a Nov. 19 report by the non-profit think tank KidsData and the non-profit California Child Care Resource & Referral Network.

In some counties that figure was even lower. Rural Alpine County in the Sierra Nevada mountains only has licensed child care for 13 percent of its children, and Fresno County in the Central Valley is at 18 percent. These figures do not include the informal non-licensed programs where many children spend their days. Such programs can range from parent co-ops to half-day programs that are exempt from licensing to kin care.

The report also evaluated the cost of care relative to median family incomes. Covering a preschooler in a center takes up 14 percent of the budget for a family earning the state's median income of \$64,828. An infant or toddler in a child-care home uses 13 percent of that budget.

And even in relatively well-off counties, like Alameda County, where the median income is \$95,352, having a preschooler in a center takes 12 percent of a family budget, where an infant in a child-care home takes up 10 percent. Having just moved from California, I can add anecdotally that Alameda County, home of cities like Oakland and Berkeley, is not considered particularly wealthy for the San Francisco Bay Area. Counties like Santa Clara, where the median family income is \$120,125 take that prize. (Enrolling a preschooler in a center there costs 10 percent of that income.)

Meanwhile, the figures for those making below the median income, of whom there are many, are even more stark. Statewide, a family with an annual income of \$42,216, the maximum income for receiving a state subsidy for child care, would spend 22 percent of its budget on paying for a child to attend a preschool center.

This is the 10th biennial report on California child care released by the Resource & Referral Network, which has local offices in each county of the state. The full report can be downloaded from their site.

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