

The Case for Action: Early Child Care and Education

High-quality early care and education is critical to growth and development



The earliest years of life are a time of rapid brain development.



Most achievement gaps and disparities in socio-emotional development are in place before kindergarten.



High-quality early education improves outcomes related to physical and behavioral health, poverty, lifetime earnings, and even incarceration rates.



These improved outcomes produce a societal return on investment of \$4 to \$16 for every dollar spent.

Families are struggling to balance work and child care commitments



The majority of families today no longer have a full-time stay-at-home caregiver.



58% of two-parent families with children have both parents working



69% of single mothers with children under 6 are employed outside the home

Families increasingly rely on the incomes of mothers to make ends meet.



2/3 of mothers bring home at least 1/4 of family earnings

More than **4 in 10** mothers are primary breadwinners



High costs are straining family budgets

U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services affordability standard for child care: **7%** of family income



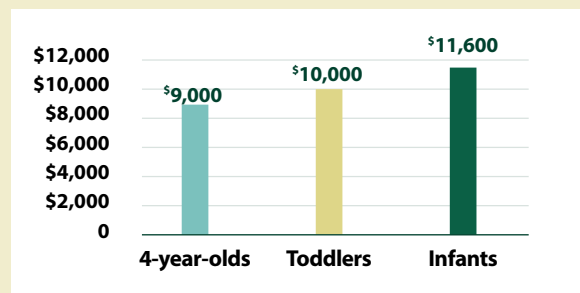
In reality, the average cost of early child care and education in the U.S. takes up:

10% of household income among married co-parents



One-third of income for average single-parent household

Average cost of early child care and education in the U.S.



Cost varies substantially by location, including disparities between urban and rural settings