



EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Child Care

Access to affordable child care is essential for fostering healthy child development.

The Child Care Crisis

More than two-thirds of children under age 6 (69% or 51,000) have all parents in the workforce and need child care.¹¹

These parents need access to reliable, affordable care to stay in the workforce, but challenges with affordability, availability, the child care workforce, and care quality leave parents with a lack of viable options. The lack of accessible child care forces many parents, especially women, to reduce their work hours or leave the workforce entirely. This reduces household income and contributes to gender inequality in the workplace.

Improving access to affordable and high-quality child care is not only critical for supporting working families but also for promoting economic equity, allowing parents to fully participate in the workforce. Additionally, investing in and supporting the child care workforce through better pay, training, and resources is essential to ensure these providers can offer the quality care that children need to thrive.

Cost and Affordability

Child care is often unaffordable for families, consuming a significant portion of household income. This forces many families to make difficult financial sacrifices, often forgoing other essential expenses just to cover the cost of childcare.

The most expensive annual cost of child care is for infants.

Average annual cost of child care in Maine by age group and care type as a share of median family income (2022)

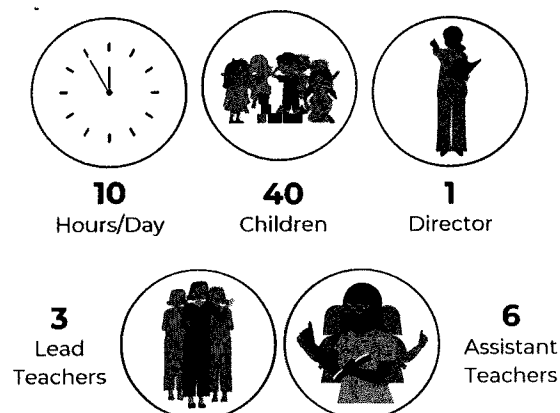
Age	Child Care Center	Family Child Care Provider
Infant	\$12,560 (14%)	\$9,690 (11%)
Toddler	\$11,590 (13%)	\$9,040 (11%)
Preschool	\$10,610 (12%)	\$8,520 (10%)
School	\$8,990 (10%)	\$7,850 (9%)

Note: Child care cost estimates were rounded to the nearest ten.

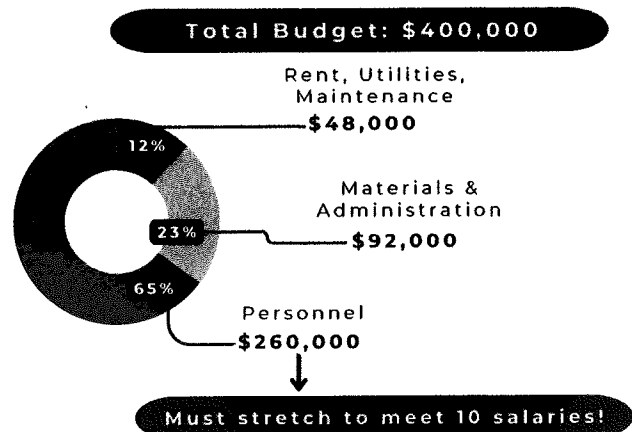
Source: United States Department of Labor (2022)

WHY DO PARENTS PAY SO MUCH FOR CHILD CARE WHEN EARLY EDUCATORS EARN SO LITTLE?

Imagine a child care center...



...where parents pay an average of \$10,000 each



Graphic adapted for book from Center for the Study of Child Care Employment