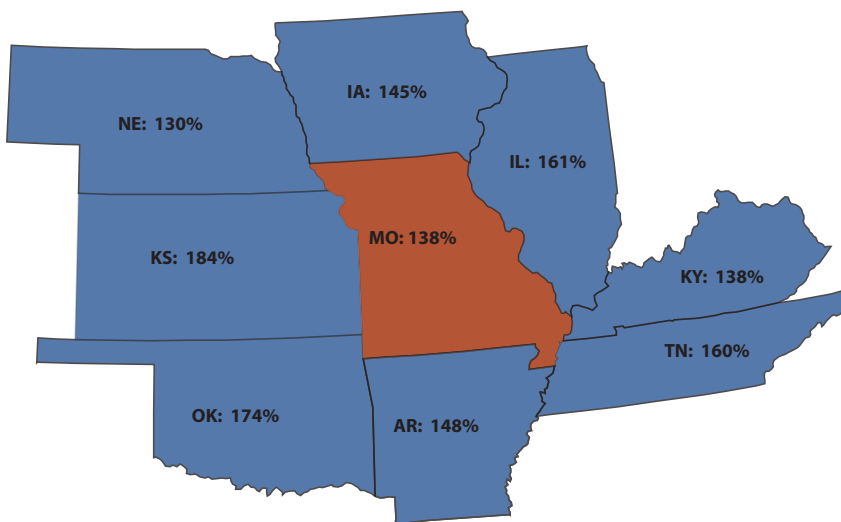


Children who receive quality early education do better in school, and as adults have higher incomes and better health outcomes than their peers. But high child care costs put quality affordable child care out of reach for many families struggling to make ends meet. In 2015 the average annual cost of full-time care for an infant in a Missouri child care center was nearly 40% of a single parent family’s income.¹

In order to help parents work and to provide children with safe, quality child care, Missouri provides child care assistance to qualifying families based on income. However, Missouri’s child care assistance is more restrictive than other states, making it difficult for working families to receive the help they need.

Continue to strengthen income eligibility levels for child care assistance and make improvements to Missouri’s payment structure for child care providers to help families offset high child care costs, and ensure kids are ready to learn when they start school

- Public investments in preschool and other early learning initiatives provide a significant return to taxpayers, resulting in as much as a \$7 return for every \$1 invested due to decreased public expense for remedial education, criminal justice and social services.²
- Missouri’s eligibility for child care assistance is well below the national average and most neighboring states, ranking 43rd nationally in 2016.³



- It is also very difficult for eligible families to find child care providers to serve their children.

- Reimbursement rates for providers who care for Missouri children through the subsidized child care program are well below market rates, averaging just 68 percent of the cost of care.⁴ Due to the low payment rates, many child care providers limit the number of children they serve through the child care assistance program, and

some centers altogether refuse to participate in the program, compromising access to quality early care for low-income families.

The Bottom Line: Improving Missouri’s payment structure for child care providers, and continuing to strengthen the income eligibility level for child care assistance, would bolster access to quality early education and boost the ability of families to succeed.

Notes

1. Child Care Aware of America, “Parents and the High Cost of Child Care,” 2016
 2. “Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy,” and “Four Big Benefits of Investing in Early Childhood Development,” by James J. Heckman, University of Chicago. www.heckmanequation.org, retrieved 9/27/2015
 3. National Women’s Law Center, “Red Light Green Light, State Child Care Assistance Policies 2016,” October 25, 2016. In Missouri, eligibility for full assistance ends at an income of 138% of the federal poverty level, or an income of just \$2,318 per month for a family of three.
 4. Missouri Department of Social Services
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