



YMCA CHILDCARE RESOURCE SERVICE CHILDCARE DATA DASHBOARD

AFFORDABILITY

FOR FAMILIES

Finding affordable childcare is a major challenge, especially in California, where infant care ranks as the third most expensive in the nation. The high cost places a significant strain on household budgets, making it difficult for families to access high-quality care.

In most parts of San Diego County, there simply aren't enough infant care options. The majority of ZIP codes have **fewer than 3 licensed infant care slots** for every 10 infants. Only 7 ZIP codes have enough capacity to serve even half of the infants in their area.¹

In San Diego County, only **22% of children eligible for subsidized childcare are enrolled**, meaning just 1 in 5 families who qualify are actually receiving support.²

A typical single mother in California with two children earning **\$47,062 annually** is left with just **\$17,609 after paying for childcare**. With access to childcare subsidies, that same family could save **\$29,453 each year** to cover basic needs like housing, food, and transportation.²

Between January 2026 – June 2026, YMCA CRS successfully enrolled **917 families** and **1,241 children**. There are **3,138 families** currently on the waitlist.³

The high cost of childcare, coupled with the large number of eligible children who remain unenrolled in assistance programs, highlights the urgent need for greater access to affordable, high-quality care. Expanding financial support and ensuring families have the information they need are key to making childcare more accessible for all.

FOR PROVIDERS

Childcare rates are driven by market considerations rather than the true cost of quality care, resulting in a strain on both families and childcare providers.⁴

The price families pay for full-time care at a licensed child care center only covers **52% of the estimated true cost of high-quality care for an infant and 66% for a preschool aged child**.⁴

	Childcare Center Subsidy Reimbursement Rate ⁵	Family Child Care homes Subsidy Reimbursement Rate ⁵	The True Cost of High Quality Care ¹
Infant Care 	\$1,628.90 per month	\$1,051.24 per month	\$3,393 per child per month
Preschool 	\$1,198.54 per month	\$987.78 per month	\$2,326 per child per month
School-Age 	\$965.69 per month	\$744.18 per month	\$1,341 per child per month

While providers receive reimbursements for serving families enrolled in subsidy programs, these rates often fall short of covering the true and rising costs of maintaining high-quality care.

Read the latest report, "Understanding the True Cost of Child Care in California" by Prenatal to Five Fiscal Strategies [here](#).

1. University of San Diego & San Diego Foundation. San Diego County Child Care Landscape Analysis. April 22, 2022. Accessed July 21, 2025. https://www.sdfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/USD_Childcare_Report_042222.pdf

2. California Budget & Policy Center. Understanding California's \$1.8 Million Gap in Publicly Funded Child Care. Accessed March 17, 2026. <https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/understanding-californias-1-8-million-gap-in-publicly-funded-child-care/>

3. San Diego County Centralized Eligibility List. "January 31, 2024." Accessed July 1, 2026. <https://childcaresandiego.com/>

4. The Center for American Progress. "The True Cost of High-Quality Child Care Across the United States." Accessed June 30, 2025. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/true-cost-high-quality-child-care-across-united-states>

5. California Department of Social Services. "Reimbursement Ceilings for Subsidized Child Care." Accessed March 25, 2024. <https://rcscc.adm.dss.ca.gov/index.aspx>

ACCESSIBILITY

FOR FAMILIES

San Diego County is facing a childcare crisis with a lack of available licensed childcare slots in the region, leaving far too many families without access to childcare.

64% of children in San Diego County under age 5 have working parents. **48% of those families have no available licensed child care option.**⁶

Our [Interactive Child Care Supply Maps](#) offer insight into the local childcare landscape, pinpointing regions of opportunity where there is a gap between availability and need. The largest gaps are considered childcare deserts. **48% of San Diego County Census Tracts are considered a Child Care Desert for children 5 years and under. When broken down by age, 75% of San Diego County Census Tracts are considered a Child Care Desert for infants (children under 2 years) and 44% of San Diego County Census Tracts are considered a Child Care Desert for Preschool (children 2-5 years) highlighting a substantial need for more childcare slots across the region.**⁷

FOR PROVIDERS

Childcare supply is subject to change over time, as license capacities may increase or decrease and individual programs may open or close. The fluctuations that occurred between July 2025 and December 2025, resulted in:

15 fewer
Childcare
Centers

386 fewer
Childcare
Center slots

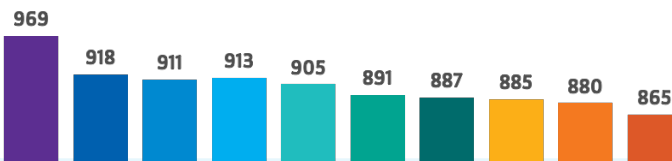
5 fewer
Family Childcare
Homes

116 additional
Family Childcare
Home slots

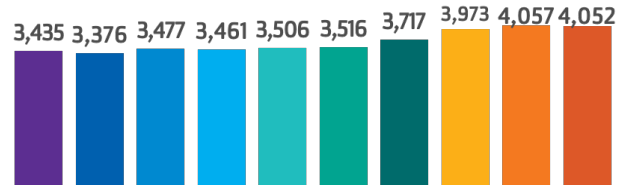
NUMBER OF LICENSED PROGRAMS⁸

JUN 2021 DEC 2021 JUN 2022 DEC 2022 JUN 2023 DEC 2023 FEB 2025 JUN 2025 DEC 2025 JUN 2026

Childcare Centers



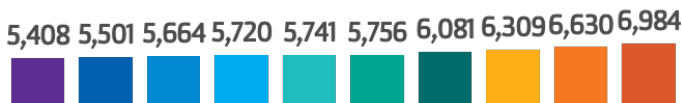
Family Childcare Homes



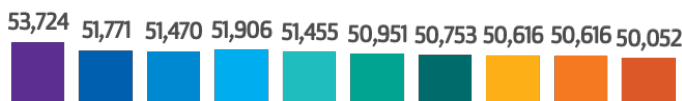
CAPACITY OF CHILDCARE SERVICES⁸

JUN 2021 DEC 2021 JUN 2022 DEC 2022 JUN 2023 DEC 2023 FEB 2025 JUN 2025 DEC 2025 JUN 2026

Licensed Childcare Slots at Childcare Centers

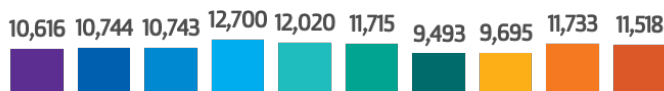


Childcare Center – Infants | 1:4 Ratio



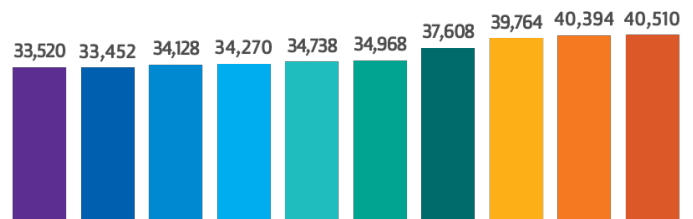
Childcare Center – Preschool | 1:12 Ratio

The toddler capacity for single license childcare centers has been divided 1/3 2/3 between infant and preschool slots to maintain total capacities by the three age groups.



Childcare Center – School-Age | 1:14 Ratio

Licensed Childcare Slots at Family Childcare Homes



Family Childcare Home

As of June 2026, there are **16 Childcare Centers** and **239 Family Childcare Homes** that are licensed but inactive and therefore not currently providing care. **Combined, they are licensed for 3,055 childcare slots** in San Diego County. They are included in the data provided on this dashboard because they are licensed. However, there is uncertainty if they will reopen again and the slots are not currently available.⁸

Accessibility data reflects known license supply as of the report date. Actual counts may vary, as updates are often received after the fact. Please consider this a point-in-time snapshot.

6. Tinkler, Tessa and a, Mehrnoush, "San Diego County Childcare Landscape: An Analysis of the Supply and Demand" (2022). Youth, Education, and Literacy. 5. <https://digital.sandiego.edu/npi-youth/5>
7. YMCA of San Diego County, Childcare Resource Service. "Child Care Supply Map of San Diego County." Accessed January 2026. <https://www.ymcasd.org/child-care-supply-map>.
8. YMCA of San Diego County Childcare Resource Service. "Resource and Referral Database." Accessed June 30, 2026.

WORKFORCE IMPACTS

TO PROVIDERS

Decades of underinvestment in the childcare system have left those who nurture and educate young children undervalued and underpaid. Childcare providers—primarily women of color—are among the lowest-paid workers in the country.

Despite the critical role they play, **the rates providers charge are 30% to 60% lower than the actual cost of care**, which includes staffing, supplies, and operations.⁹

Nearly **half of San Diego County's family childcare providers went without paying themselves at least once in the past year**.¹⁰

93% of childcare providers in San Diego County report trouble hiring qualified staff.⁶

In one of the most expensive regions in the country, early educators earn modest wages—**\$24/hour for lead teachers, \$20/hour for assistants, and \$18/hour for family childcare assistants**.¹⁰

Increasing pay and benefits for childcare providers is needed to sustain this essential workforce and strengthen the existing child care infrastructure.

YMCA Childcare Resource Service is supporting San Diego childcare providers with targeted business supports, including **financial aid, technical assistance, training, educational opportunities, and access to key resources**.

TO BUSINESSES

The lack of accessible childcare creates significant challenges for businesses, leading to financial strain and workforce barriers for parents. When families struggle to find affordable, reliable child care, many are forced to reduce their work hours or leave their jobs altogether. This not only impacts household stability but also affects businesses through decreased productivity, higher turnover, and talent loss.

Addressing the childcare crisis is essential—not just for working families but for building a strong, competitive workforce.

Each year, businesses in the U.S. face a staggering loss of **\$4.4 billion** due to childcare-related absenteeism.¹¹

The lack of accessible childcare makes it difficult for working parents, especially mothers, to remain in their jobs – contributing to the 25% gender gap in workforce participation between mothers and fathers in California.¹²

Based on a survey of families enrolled in childcare subsidies, **91% of parents report that subsidies improved their work experience**, including their availability, performance, and ability to contribute at work.¹³

YMCA Childcare Resource Service is partnering with local businesses and organizations to **assess employee childcare needs, connect families to suitable options, and, in some cases, provide financial assistance to help cover childcare costs**.

TAKE ACTION FOR CHILDCARE ACCESS

Childcare programs do more than support children—they enable parents to work, strengthening our economy and community stability. By maintaining free or reduced-cost childcare for families and providing essential support to providers, we are making a lasting investment in the well-being of children, families, and our workforce.

To build thriving communities, we must prioritize expanding childcare provider capacity, increasing access to facilities, and enhancing support for children's mental health. Your involvement is essential in making this vision a reality. Join us in advancing childcare solutions that benefit everyone.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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9. CaliforniaChild CareResourceCenter. 2023

10. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, UC Berkeley. "San Diego ECE Workforce Study (2025)." Accessed on March 17, 2026.

<https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/san-diego-ece-workforce-study-2025.pdf>

11. Forbes. "How Unreliable and Costly Child Care Keeps People Off the Job." 2018. Accessed March 25, 2024. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/aakashkumar/2018/03/08/how-unreliable-and-costly-childcare-keeps-people-off-the-job/?sh=ce0aad45e18a>

12. Public Policy Institute of California. "Labor Force Participation in California." February 2024. Accessed May 2, 2024. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/labor-force-participation-in-california/>

13. YMCA Childcare Resource Service.FSS Child Care Subsidy Experience Survey Results. (2026).