

Chapter 2: Birth to Five

The time is long past when anyone could call learning and development before the age of five a relatively unimportant period. We know now that every aspect of early human development, from the brain's evolving circuitry to the child's capacity for empathy, is affected by environments and experiences encountered in a cumulative fashion, beginning early in the prenatal period and extending throughout the early years. In fact, 85% of a person's intellect, personality and social skills are developed by age 5.⁴

New York has a history of services and supports for children and families, being the first jurisdiction in the nation to regulate early childhood programs. In 1965, New York became one of the earliest states to offer a Head Start-like program to its disadvantaged preschoolers through its state-funded Targeted Prekindergarten program. In 1997, the state enacted the Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) program. Together these programs serve one-third of the state's four-year-olds. At the same time, there has been a major expansion of publicly-funded child care services.

Supports and services for children are currently housed in different state agencies: the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) oversees child care regulations, child care licensing and home visiting; the New York State Department of Health (DOH) supports children's health insurance, some home visiting programs and Early Intervention, while the New York State Education Department (SED) oversees and provides funding for Preschool Special Education, Targeted Prekindergarten and Universal Prekindergarten.

In the last five years, children's advocates, health and education experts, and practitioners have mapped out the broad outlines of a comprehensive system of supports and services for children birth to five, entitled *New York's Action Plan for Young Children and Their Families*. This proposal calls for a system in which:

- All young children have access to the early care and education services that they and their families need.
- Every community offers an array of family supports and services, responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity, that they need to raise healthy children.
- Every early care and education program—in schools, early childhood centers, family child care homes—meets rigorous quality standards, promotes inclusion and is accountable for its performance.
- Every early care and education professional is well prepared, has access to ongoing professional development and is well compensated.

The services include home visiting, Head Start and Early Head Start, subsidized child care, Universal Prekindergarten, Early Intervention, special education, Family Paid Medical Leave, and health and mental health services for young children and their families.⁵

Children are born learning. Their social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth unfolds at breakneck speed in the first five years of life, and these years set the stage for later learning and life success.

The return on investment to early learning is extraordinary. It is essential that New York State take advantage of these important years and support high quality, early learning programs so that children can grow up to succeed in tomorrow’s global economy.

FINDINGS

State funding for child care has stalled. In 2004-05, 186,900 children received subsidies, but child care subsidies still served only 44% of children estimated to be eligible. The state has fallen behind estimated demand for child care among working families, even though we know that quality child care provides proven benefits for young children and frees parents to be more effective workers.

Many components of good early care and education are in place in New York State. The Universal Prekindergarten program brings together child care and public early education that often function in isolation. Subsidized child care brings full day services to low-income children. Federally funded programs are also an essential part of the early care and education delivery system. In 2004-05, 49,719 children were in Head Start programs and Early Head Start provided services to 5,219 more children. New York State, however, falls far short of the need for services for infants, toddlers and their families.

One-third of New York’s four-year-olds are served in Universal Prekindergarten and Targeted Prekindergarten programs. However, Universal PreK has yet to become “universal” in New York. For years, research has shown that investment in high quality preschool programs more than pays its way—leading to fewer dropouts, special education referrals and more on-time high school graduations. Since there is a direct correlation between quality early learning and successful high school completion, clearly New York must move forward by providing our children more early learning opportunities to close the achievement gap.

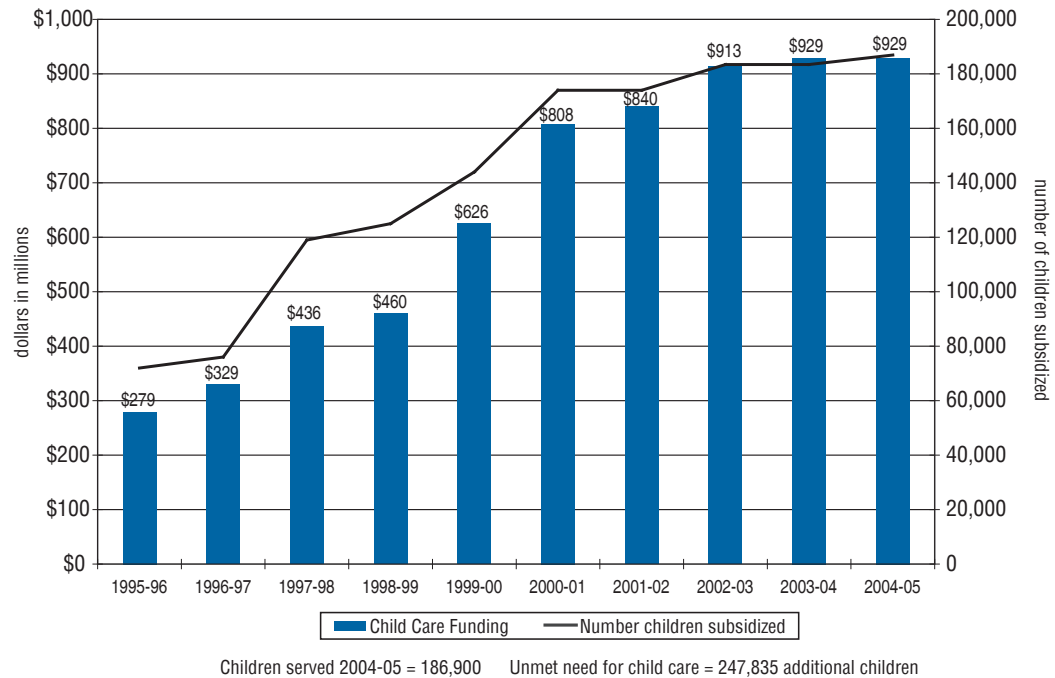
The number of young children birth to three with disabilities receiving early intervention services has more than doubled over the last decade, while children ages 3 to 5 receiving preschool special education services has grown by one-third. This trend shows that more children are being identified early as needing services and both DOH and SED believe starting early is the best way to support and nurture children with cognitive, physical, and emotional developmental delays.

The Cost of Child Care

• Average annual fee paid for full-time care for an INFANT (up to 12 months old) in a center in 2005	\$11,887
• Average annual fees paid for full-time care for a CHILD AGE 4 YEARS in a center in 2005	\$ 9,391
• Average tuition and fees paid for STATE COLLEGE IN 2005	\$ 5,300

Source: *NYS Child Care Fact Sheet*, NYS Child Care Coordinating Council, <http://www.nysccccc.org>

Government Subsidized Funding in Child Care



Definition: This chart shows the number of children receiving care that is fully or partially funded with a government child care subsidy. Child care subsidies can be used for care in a child day care center, group and small family child care homes and other licensed facilities as well as in settings not regulated and legally exempt from licensure.

Significance: The surge in subsidized child care capacity over the last decade represents one of the most important reforms in state children’s policy. Yet a wide gap remains between availability and need. As of 2005, state child care subsidies served only 44% of children estimated to be eligible.

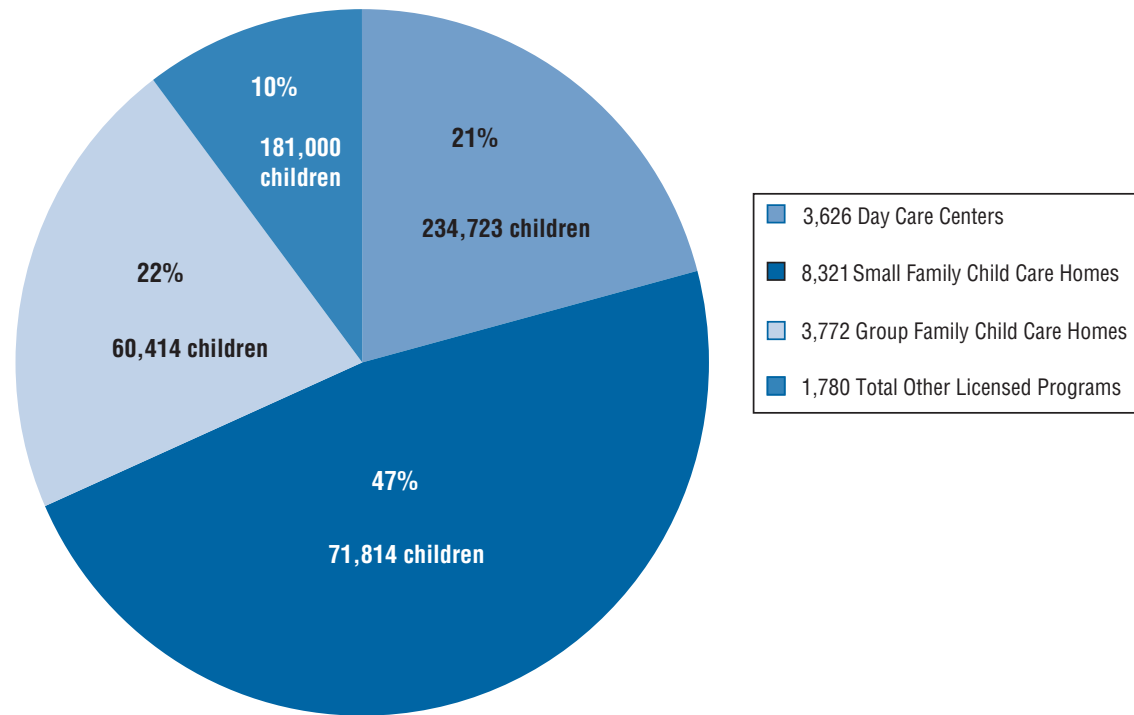
The State Office of Children and Family Services provides overall regulation and supervision of child care. However, counties determine eligibility levels and co-payments. This county-administered system

results in dramatic disparities. In Nassau County, for example, a family of three with an income of \$33,200 would pay 17.5% of its income over poverty level for child care, or \$2,905, while in neighboring Suffolk county the same family would pay 25%, or \$4,150— a difference of more than \$1,000 annually.

Source: Estimating Unmet Need and Costs of Child Care in New York State, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA), February 2004.

Division of the Budget source material for subsidy numbers and funding 1995-2005.

Licensed Child Care Programs



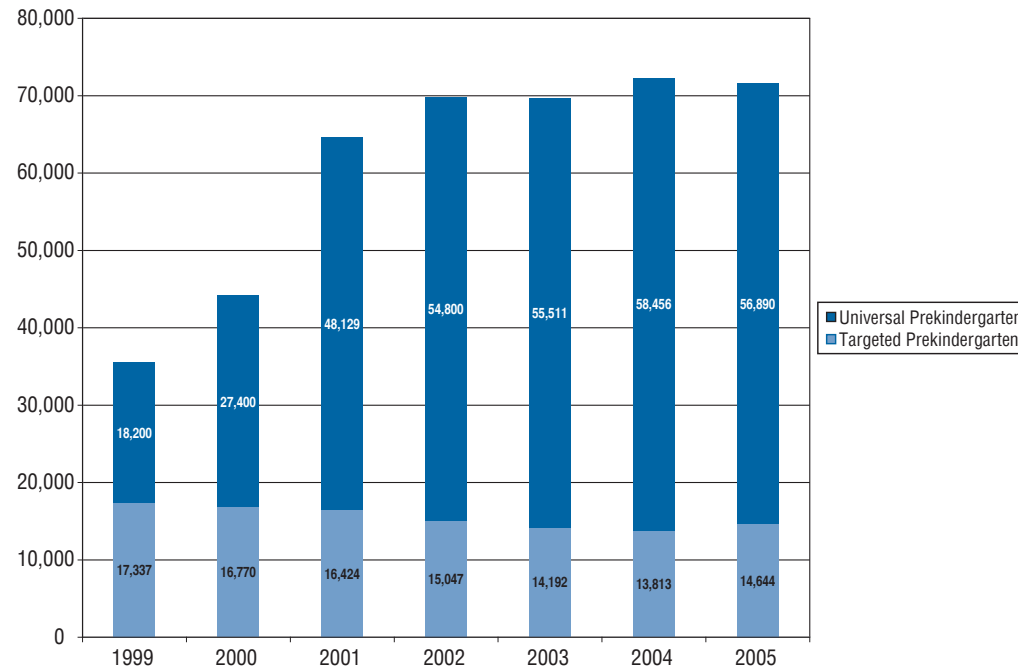
Definition: This chart identifies the types of facilities providing licensed child care and the numbers of children that can be served. Other licensed programs include school-age child care. It is important to note that these data reflect only licensed facilities, and not informal arrangements or homes not required to be licensed.

Significance: Although no data is available on the numbers of children served in informal/non-regulated child care, it is estimated that the number is greater than those served in regulated care. In New York, more than two-thirds of mothers with children younger than age 18 (71%) are employed. Child care is a major issue for working families,

as they struggle to find child care arrangements with acceptable costs, schedules, safety precautions and nurturing environments. According to the most recent study of licensed child care facilities, such facilities have capacity to serve 547,961 children (0-13) in 17,499 licensed homes and centers.

Source: *The 2005 Child Care Licensing Study*, National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) and the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), 2005.

Students in Prekindergarten Programs



Definition: This chart shows the growth in the numbers of children being served in state-funded Universal Prekindergarten and Targeted Prekindergarten programs since 1998. Note that the State of New York tracks this indicator by school year rather than calendar year.

Significance: For years, research has shown that investment in high quality preschool more than pays its way—leading to fewer dropouts, special education referrals and more on-time high school graduations. Universal Prekindergarten, a half-day program provided in public schools and community-based organizations, was established in 1997 with the aim of making prekindergarten accessible to all 4-year-olds in the state by 2002. The state fell far short of the mark, and only 200 out of 700 school districts have been eligible to participate. Enrollment leveled off in 2002 due to stagnant funding.⁶

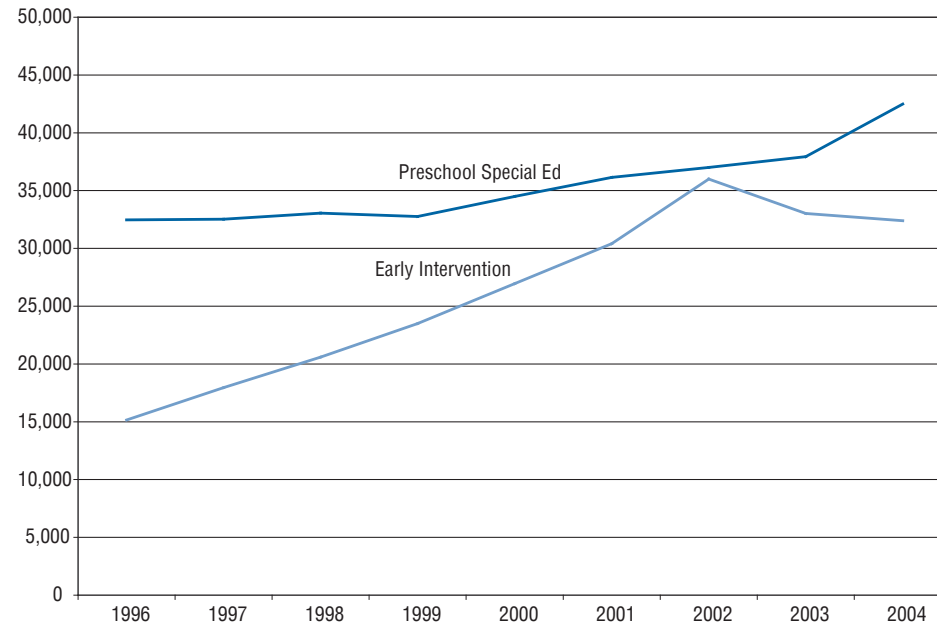
The Targeted Prekindergarten program, created in 1966 as Experimental Prekindergarten, supports a half-day program that provides an array of social services, a meal and snack, and family involvement opportunities. The program serves 3- and 4-year-olds in 96 districts and 80% of enrollees come from economically disadvantaged families.

Combined enrollment in the prekindergarten programs reached 71,600 in 2005. Based on estimates from other states, current enrollment reaches one-third of the parents who would choose to enroll in a fully funded prekindergarten program. Recent budget increases are projected to increase capacity by about 12,000 subsidized slots.

Source: New York State Education Department, www.emsc.nysed.gov.

New York State Education Department, TPK/UPK 05-06: Comparison chart by year.doc.

Programs for Children with Disabilities Ages Birth to Five



Definition: This chart shows the number of children with disabilities and developmental delays between birth to five receiving services funded by the New York State Department of Health, the New York State Education Department and counties.

Significance: The Early Intervention Program offers a variety of therapeutic and support services to eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, including home visits, speech pathology and audiology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, nutrition, social work, vision services, and assistive technology devices to children ages birth to three. Preschool special education provides similar services with an education rather than health focus.

From 1996 to 2004 the number of infants and toddlers receiving Early Intervention services more than doubled from 15,149 to 32,388 children. Children ages 3-5 receiving preschool special education

increased by 33% from 32,467 in 1996 to 42,791 in 2004. Both Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education services are serving more New York children because more children are being identified as needing services, and the responsible agencies seek to provide services as soon after diagnosis as possible.

The vast majority of children eligible to shift from early intervention to preschool special education in New York State are already receiving services by their third birthday.

Source: New York State Part B Annual Performance Report 2003-04, Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, New York State Education Department.