



Tracking Early Care and Education In Bucks County

Access to affordable, high quality, early care and education programs is a growing concern for families in Bucks County and throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania. Part of the reason for this is that the number of children under the age of six with parents in the workforce has grown significantly since 1990.

Large numbers of our youngest children spend all or part of their days in child care settings. How well are we supporting the needs of parents and children? Is child care affordable to parents? Is public investment in early childhood education growing? The following is a brief synopsis of the status of early care and education programs in Bucks County.

NEED:

This data set shows the number of children under age 5 living in Bucks County, the number of children under age 6 with both parents in the workforce and the percentage of children under age 5 living in poverty.

Children in Bucks County:

- 34,782 children under age 5^[1]
- 26,844 (62.8%) children under age 6 have both parents in the workforce^[2]
- 5.7% of children under age 5 live in poverty^[3]

AFFORDABILITY:

The cost of full-time child care is a challenge to all families and a particular burden to low income families.

Bucks County Cost of Care ^[4]	Median Household Income ^[5]	Cost of Care as % of Median Household Income	Cost of Care as % of 100% Poverty (\$22,050) ^[6]	Cost of Care as % of 200% Poverty (\$44,100) ^[7]
\$20,303	\$70,655	29%	92%	46%

SUBSIDIZED CARE:

Child Care subsidies are available to families that currently or formerly received Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), and to low-income working families earning up to 200% of poverty (\$44,100 for a family of four) at the time of enrollment.

Children 0-5 Enrolled in Subsidized Care ⁸	May 05	May 06	May 07	May 08
Center	985	1,316	1,560	1,725
Family	38	40	52	58
Group	10	20	22	30
Relative/Neighbor	194	236	252	221
Total	1,227	1,612	1,886	2,034

Informal Care

Rules for the state's child care subsidy program changed in 1999, making it easier for families to pay for relative and informal caregivers with public funds. This has had a negative impact on young children, as the percentage of low and moderate income children in informal settings (which are not required to meet basic health and safety standards) peaked in the middle of this decade. Since 2005 the percentage of children in Relative/Neighbor care has decreased by more than 4 percent, while the absolute number has increased somewhat.^[9]

Children 0-5	May 05	May 06	May 07	May 08
Percent of Children in Relative/Neighbor Care	15%	15%	13%	11%
Number of Children in Relative/Neighbor Care	194	236	252	221

There are not enough child care subsidies to meet the need in Bucks County and the waiting list continues to grow.

Waiting List for Subsidized Child Care	March 2005	March 2007	September 2008	December 2008
Bucks County	225	360	548	658

Other Early Care and Education Programs:

<i>Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Enrollment 2007-2008^[10]</i>	244
<i>Federally-Funded Head Start Enrollment (Includes Early Head Start) 2007-2008^[11]</i>	621
<i>Pennsylvania Head Start Supplemental Assistance Enrollment 2007-2008:</i>	15

QUALITY:

Bucks County is making progress toward meeting quality standards. Participation in the Keystone Stars program, a quality improvement system in the state, has increased since its inception in 2003. However, most participants are clustered below Star 3. Pennsylvania defines good quality as Star 3 and above.

Keystone Stars Participation ^[12]

Star Level	As of 6/07 # Providers Enrolled	As of 6/08 # Providers Enrolled
Start with Stars	20	28
Star 1	82	119
Star 2	21	23
Star 3	15	19
Star 4/Accred.	24	31
Total # enrolled	162	220

Indicators such as national accreditation and participation in Keystone Stars are proxy measures to designate programs that meet more rigorous standards, with better educated teachers, richer programs, and lower staff-child ratios.

^[1] Bucks County Pennsylvania, Selected Economic Characteristics: 2007, 2007 American Community Survey

^[2] Bucks County Pennsylvania, Selected Economic Characteristics: 2007, 2007 American Community Survey

^[3] Survey 1-Year Estimates Number of Children Under Five Years of Age Below Poverty: 2007, 2007 American Community Survey

^[4] Cost of care estimate based on maximum 2007 PA Department of Public Welfare daily subsidy rate for full time center-based care for an infant and a pre-school child for 50 weeks

^[5] Median Household Income: 2007 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

^[6] Estimate based on a family of four. 2008 Federal Poverty Income Guidelines, *Federal Register*, Vol. 74, No. 14, January 23, 2009, pp. 4199-4201

^[7] Ibid.

^[8] Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), May 2008

^[9] Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), May 2008

^[10] Pennsylvania Department of Education, OCDEL, Reach and Risk Report FY 2007-2008

^[11] Pennsylvania Department of Education, OCDEL, Reach and Risk Report FY 2007-2008

^[12] Pennsylvania Department of Education, OCDEL, Reach and Risk Report FY 2007-2008