



CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

## BASIC FACTS ON CHILD CARE IN MASSACHUSETTS

### Massachusetts's Child Care Assistance Policies

- **Income eligibility limit:** In February 2016, a family of three in Massachusetts could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$44,593 (221 percent of poverty level, 50 percent of state median income).<sup>1</sup>
- **Waiting list:** In February 2016, Massachusetts had 24,243 children on its waiting list for child care assistance.<sup>2</sup>
- **Parent copayments:** In February 2016, a family of three with an income at 100 percent of the poverty line (\$20,160 per year) receiving child care assistance in Massachusetts paid \$162 per month, or 10 percent of its income, in copayments. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of poverty (\$30,240 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$325 per month, or 13 percent of its income, in copayments.<sup>3</sup>
- **Reimbursement rates:** In February 2016, Massachusetts's reimbursement rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance were below the federally recommended level (the 75th percentile of current market rates, which is the level designed to give families access to 75 percent of the providers in their community).<sup>4</sup>
  - Massachusetts's monthly reimbursement rate for center care for a four-year-old in Boston was \$839, which was \$460 (35 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.<sup>5</sup>
  - Massachusetts's monthly reimbursement rate for center care for a one-year-old in Boston was \$1,247, which was \$390 (24 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.<sup>6</sup>
  - **Tiered reimbursement rates:** In February 2016, Massachusetts paid higher reimbursement rates for higher-quality care for infants and toddlers.<sup>7</sup>
    - The reimbursement rate for center care for a one-year-old in Boston at the highest quality tier was 3 percent higher than the rate at the lowest quality tier.<sup>8</sup>
    - The reimbursement rate for center care for a one-year-old in Boston at the highest quality tier was still below the 75th percentile of current market rates.<sup>9</sup>
  - **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In February 2016, Massachusetts allowed parents to qualify for or continue receiving child care assistance for up to 8 weeks while searching for a job.<sup>10</sup>

### Participation in Massachusetts's Child Care Assistance Program

- **Families and children:** In fiscal year 2015, 21,800 families with 29,500 children on average per month received child care assistance in Massachusetts through the Child Care and Development Block Grant program (the major federal child care program).<sup>11</sup>

- **Licensed and regulated child care providers:** In fiscal year 2015, 99 percent of children receiving child care assistance in Massachusetts were cared for by licensed or regulated providers, including 73 percent that received care in a child care center, 24 percent that received care in a group child care home, and 2 percent that received care in a family child care home.<sup>12</sup>
- **Child care providers legally operating without regulation:** In fiscal year 2015, less than 1 percent of children receiving child care assistance in Massachusetts were cared for by legally exempt providers, including 0.3 percent in the child's home (0.2 percent by relatives and 0.1 percent by non-relatives) and 0.5 percent in a family child care home (by relatives).<sup>13</sup>

### Child Care Needs of Mothers in Low-Wage Jobs

- Of working mothers with very young children in Massachusetts, 13.8 percent are employed in low-wage occupations.<sup>14</sup> Low-wage jobs often entail evening, night, weekend, and variable hours, so these mothers frequently struggle to find child care options flexible enough to accommodate their work schedules.

## AVERAGE COST OF CHILD CARE IN MASSACHUSETTS<sup>15</sup>

### Average annual cost of infant care in 2016:

- Center-based care: \$17,082
- Family child care: \$10,679

### Average annual cost of care for a four-year-old in 2016:

- Center-based care: \$12,796
- Family child care: \$10,012

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> KAREN SCHULMAN & HELEN BLANK, NAT'L WOMEN'S LAW CTR., RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT: STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES 2016, at 26-27 (2016), available at <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NWLC-State-Child-Care-Assistance-Policies-2016-final.pdf>. In February 2016, families already receiving assistance could continue doing so until their income reached \$75,808. For special needs care, the income limit to qualify for assistance was \$75,808, and the exit eligibility limit was \$89,185 in 2016. As of October 2016, for standard care, the income limit to qualify for assistance was increased to \$45,771 (50 percent of state median income), and the exit eligibility limit was increased to \$77,810 (85 percent of state median income), to adjust for the updated state median income estimate. *Id.* at 29.
- <sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 31-32. Massachusetts does not determine families' eligibility at the time they are added to the waiting list. Also note that families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and participating in the employment services program and families referred by the child welfare agency based on open cases of abuse or neglect are served without being placed on the waiting list.
- <sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 34-35, 37. Families receiving or transitioning from TANF, foster parents, guardians, caretakers, and families receiving protective services are exempt from copayments.
- <sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 38-41.
- <sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 40.
- <sup>6</sup> *Id.* The state has higher rates for higher-quality care for infants and toddlers; this is the base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level.
- <sup>7</sup> The state pays higher rates for higher-quality center care and family child care for children up to 2.9 years old.
- <sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 41, 43.
- <sup>9</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 46, 48. Parents receiving child care assistance may be allowed to continue to receive it while searching for a job for an additional 4 weeks (on top of the initial 8 weeks allowed within a 52-week period) if there are extraordinary circumstances.
- <sup>11</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERV., OFFICE OF CHILD CARE, FY 2015 PRELIMINARY DATA TABLE 1 - AVERAGE MONTHLY ADJUSTED NUMBER OF FAMILIES AND CHILDREN SERVED, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/fy-2015-preliminary-data-table-1> (last visited Aug. 7, 2017).
- <sup>12</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERV., OFFICE OF CHILD CARE, FY 2015 PRELIMINARY DATA TABLE 6 - AVERAGE MONTHLY PERCENTAGES OF CHILDREN SERVED IN ALL TYPES OF CARE, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/fy-2015-preliminary-data-table-6> (last visited Aug. 7, 2017). At the time of publication, Massachusetts had only submitted 9 months of ACF-801 data for FY 2015.
- <sup>13</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>14</sup> KAREN SCHULMAN, JASMINE TUCKER & JULIE VOGTMAN, NAT'L WOMEN'S LAW CTR., NEARLY ONE IN FIVE WORKING MOTHERS OF VERY YOUNG CHILDREN WORK IN LOW WAGE JOBS 5 (2017), available at <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Nearly-One-in-Five-Working-Mothers-of-Very-Young-Children-Work-in-Low-Wage-Jobs-2017.pdf>.
- <sup>15</sup> See generally CHILD CARE AWARE OF AM., STATE CHILD CARE FACTS IN THE STATE OF: MASSACHUSETTS (2016), available at <http://www.usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Massachusetts.pdf>.