

MAPPING THE GAP™

EXPLORING CHILD CARE

SUPPLY & DEMAND IN ALASKA

State Overview

The state of Alaska has 54,882 children under the age of 4. There are 253 center-based child care programs and 554 family child care homes in the state. These facilities provide 29,513 slots for child care, leaving a deficit of 25,369. Alaska has a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for child care centers called "Learn & Grow". The CCR&Rs of Alaska participate in QRIS to ensure centers meet standards related to coaching, training, monitoring, recruitment of new programs, community outreach, and data analysis and reporting. Only 2,431 slots of the 29,513 belong to centers participating in QRIS – 8.2 percent of all slots available. For more information on quality child care and early learning in your state, see our 2017 State Fact Sheet.

Child care in Alaska costs, on average, 10-12 percent of the household median income. Center-based child care is especially costly for single parents and parents living at the poverty line, who make 70.8 percent and 89.1 percent of the median income, respectively. The average annual cost for center-based child care in Alaska is \$11,700 and the average for home-based child care is \$10,101. The average cost of child care for an infant and four year old is \$22,464 for center-based child care and \$19,746 for home-based child care. For more information on the cost of care in your state, see our 2017 Parents and High Cost of Child Care Report.

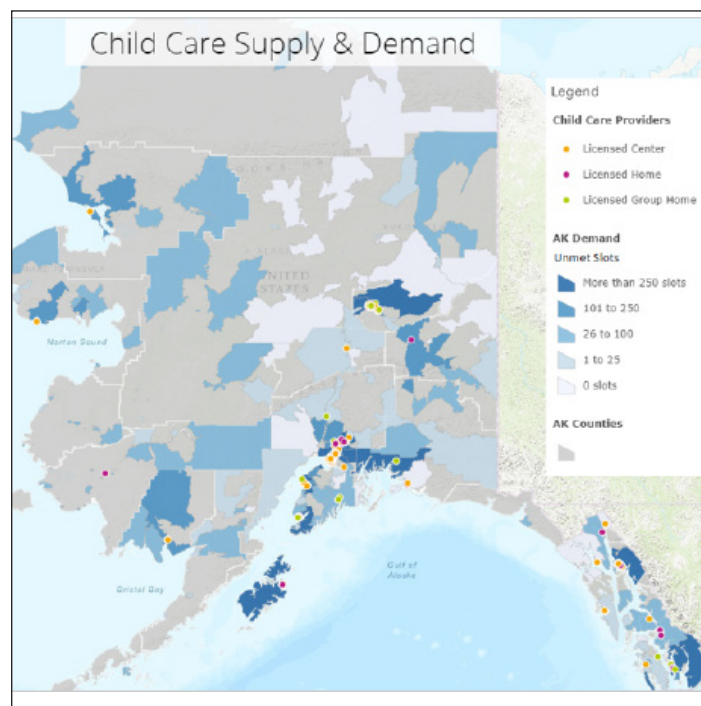
Mapping Child Care Supply and Demand Gaps

In Alaska, families with infants and/or toddlers really struggle to access child care. Our key stakeholders wanted to know in which areas of the state might families with very young children be struggling the most to find care for an infant or toddler.

We examined the locations of child care providers and children by zip code, including county boundaries for reference.

Data & Methodology

The number of children under the age of 6 in each zip code was obtained through the most up-to-date census data, specifically, the "U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year-Estimates, B23008: Age of Own Children Under 18 Years in Families and Subfamilies by Living Arrangements by Employment Status of Parents." The licensed child care programs and the number of slots per center were obtained using data from NACCRRAware with permission from the license holder in May 2017. *Note: The map below does not include Head Start, summer, or part-time programs.*



CONTACT

Phone: : (703) 822-7734
Email: learnmore@usa.childcareaware.org
Website: usa.childcareaware.org

ADDRESS

1515 N. Courthouse Rd.
 3rd Floor
 Arlington, VA 22201

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Overall Findings

The points on the map show licensed child care programs. The types of programs include child care centers, family child care homes, and family child care group homes. Each area of blue on the state map represents a different zip code. The darkest blue areas represent the zip codes with the largest gap of unmet need (the difference between the number of children living in that area and the child care slots available). The gray areas indicate areas with no available data. These are largely rural areas, national parks or wildlife preserves.

In Alaska, there are nearly 40,000 children under the age of 6 with all parents in the labor force. As mentioned earlier, there are 253 center-based child care programs and 554 family child care homes in the state, providing 29,513 licensed child care slots. Working families in Alaska face a deficit of 9,835 child care slots across the state. **This means nearly 1 in 4 children in Alaska are left without access to licensed child care when their parent or parents go to work.**

Child care programs in Alaska are largely located near more populated, urban areas, which can leave substantial gaps in more rural parts of the state. However, even in urban areas, working families may be struggling to find care. Explore this map more by zooming in and examining supply gaps.

Supply & Demand Spotlight: Juneau, AK

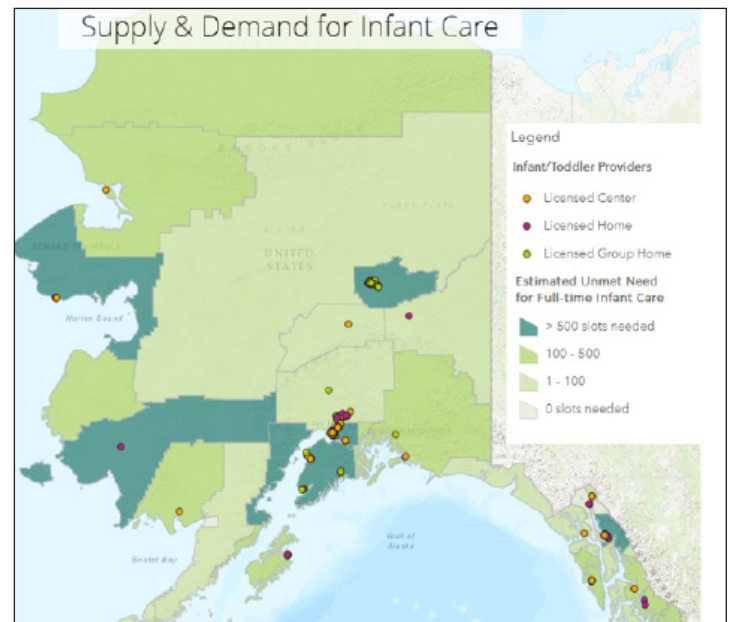
Juneau is the capital of Alaska and the majority of residents are employed by either local, state, or federal government offices. About 60 percent of the city's economy is government-related. In addition, since Juneau is surrounded by a mountain icefield and the ocean, it is often referred to as an island community requiring transportation via air or water to reach. For this reason, residents of Juneau strictly rely on child care available on the island. Despite the 919 licensed child care slots in this area, Juneau has one of the largest supply and demand gaps in Alaska; there is an unmet need of approximately 650 slots. Two in five children in Juneau do not have access to licensed child care while their parents are at work.

Mapping Infant and Toddler Child Care Supply and Demand Gaps

There are approximately 20,000 children under the age of three living in Alaska. Whether these little ones live in a rural or urban setting, we know many of these infants and toddlers lack access to licensed child care programs!

In this map, we looked at unmet need for licensed full-time and part-time care. The analysis found a potential deficit of over 16,000 licensed slots needed for full-time

care and 18,000 slots needed for part-time care across the state. This means approximately 82% of infants and toddlers do not have access to licensed full-time care across the state.



Data Collection

Supply:

Our partners at the [Alaska Child Care Program Office](#), within the Department of Health and Social Services, analyzed the licensed capacity of programs who accept infants and toddlers (based on existing regulations and borough-level data knowledge) to determine the approximate number of infant/toddler slots per borough or census area.

Demand:

To determine approximate demand, we used the Census table "B13012: Women 16 to 50 Years Who Had a Birth in the Past 12 Months by Marital Status and Labor Force Status, 5-Year Estimates." Using estimates for years 2013-2015, we approximate the number of children under 3 years old in a given borough. This table was used to approximate the data because the census does not provide data on for children under 3 years old with parents in the workforce.

Findings

When estimating the unmet need for full-time care, we see large gaps in every corner of the state. While the largest gaps are in large population centers, like Juneau and Anchorage, keep in mind that Alaska is an extremely rural state. Supply and demand gaps, large and small, can put a huge strain on families in both rural and urban communities.

The programs on the map help illustrate how far parents may need to travel to access licensed child care programs for their infants or toddlers – several

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boroughs have no providers at all.

The gradients of teal indicate the unmet need for infant care (the gap between the estimated supply of infant slots and the demand for infant care).

Policy Recommendations

Like families in many states, those in Alaska are struggling to find child care. Gaps between licensed child care supply and demand for working families exist across the state. For working mothers in Alaska, gaps in infant and toddler child care supply can be extreme, especially for families in our spotlight areas of Juneau and Anchorage. Many working families in Alaska may not have a safe place to take the youngest Alaska natives when they go to work.

For federal policy recommendations that support child care and working families, see Child Care Aware® of America's 2018 Policy Agenda.

In order to address these gaps and help working families, some next steps should include:

- **Funding designated for early childhood education** – As some areas of Alaska are exploring city-level or county-level taxes in order to support public services, it is important to earmark funding for early childhood education. Nearly one and four children in Alaska do not have access to licensed care, leaving working parents without a safe place to take their children while they are at work.

- **Workforce support and recruitment** – Quality education begins early! Child care providers have a tough, but extremely important job caring for the youngest Alaska natives. Workforce recruitment, supports, and retention efforts should be targeted toward areas where the gap between supply and demand are greatest.
- **Monitor the issues** – These maps are a baseline to get a better understanding of what is happening across Alaska. Demand for infant and toddler care may be far out-pacing the current supply. As policy, strategy and funding changes, this unique issue, as well as overall child care supply in Alaska, should be re-visited to best serve Alaskan families.

Child Care Resource & Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) are uniquely positioned to support the study of and address child care supply and demand issues across the state. In fact, CCR&Rs are specifically called out in the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 legislation to help identify supply and demand issues and share information with the state to help target funding to address the problem. An increase in funding for CCR&Rs to do this work is crucial. The network of CCR&R agencies and staff across Alaska possess a wealth of knowledge about the regional and statewide needs of families, as well as how best to support the provider workforce. However, without funding designated for early childhood education in the state, CCR&Rs may not have the bandwidth to recruit and retain quality, licensed providers.

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