



Mapping the Gap: Exploring Child Care Supply & Demand in Massachusetts



State Overview

The average cost of child care in the state of Massachusetts is greater than 12 percent of median household income, and percentages are even higher for single-parent households and for those living at the poverty line. The average annual cost of infant child care in the state is \$17,082 for center-based care and \$10,679 for family child care homes. The average annual cost of child care for a four-year-old is \$12,796 for center-based care and \$10,012 for family child care homes. Find more information on the cost of care in your state in our [2016 Parents and High Cost of Child Care Report](#).

In Massachusetts, we examined three key issues around child care supply and demand: overall supply of child care slots compared to the number of working parents across the state; whether Child Care Development Fund subsidies mirror the demand for those subsidies; and the availability of licensed care for parents working nontraditional hours, or shift work, in Massachusetts.

Mapping Child Care Supply and Demand Gaps

We examined the availability of child care during nontraditional hours, based on a recommendation from key stakeholders in Massachusetts who wanted to know whether the infrastructure existed to support the planned opening of three large casinos in Massachusetts. For each topic, 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. Please note that these maps do not include summer camps; public pre-school programs, which are part-time; Head Start Centers, which are funded differently; or school-age child care.

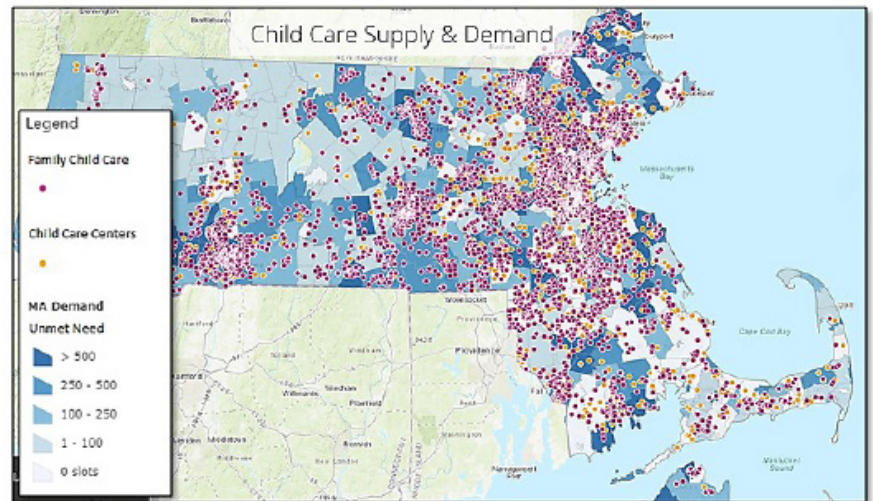
Overall Findings

The state of Massachusetts has more than 300,000 children under the age of 6. The state has 1,746 center-based child care programs and 5,893 family child care homes. Combined, these licensed child care offerings provide 251,438 slots for children – a deficit of 128,118 slots. This means that when licensed programs are full, **nearly 2 in 5 Massachusetts children in working families is left without access to child care.**

Each blue-colored area represents a single zip code. The darkest blue areas are zip codes that have the largest gaps of unmet need (the difference between number of children living in that area and number of child care slots available). Child care programs of each type are spread throughout the state of Massachusetts, but even with so many programs, there are still gaps where working families may be struggling to find care.

Supply & Demand Spotlight: Boston, MA

Overall, the preschool-age population is most concentrated in the Boston region and becomes less dense as you move west to more rural areas of the state. Looking at the placement of the child care centers, the highest concentrations are found in the same areas where the child population is most dense. Areas like Boston have a high number of child care slots; however, there are still not enough. Boston is an area of high unmet need, meaning more child care slots are required to accommodate the population of children. **In Suffolk County, home to the city of Boston, nearly 2 in 5 children under age 6 in working families do not have access to licensed child care.**

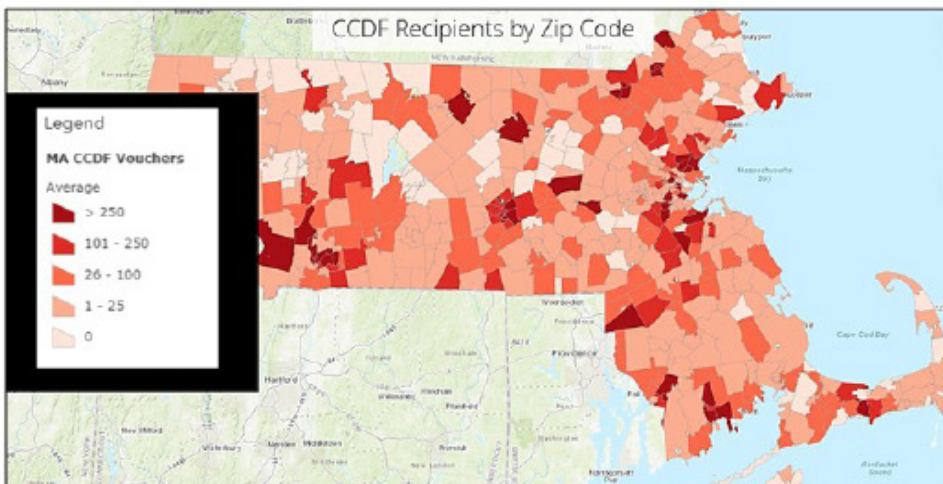


Child Care Development Fund Voucher Subsidies

Center-based child care costs 149 percent of the median income for married families with two children living at the poverty line, and family child care costs 103 percent of the median income. Assistance in the form of CCDF vouchers helps provide families access to high-quality child care that is among the most expensive in the country.

CCDF Voucher Spotlight: The Cape & Islands

On Cape Cod, nearly 55 percent of children under 6 in working families are left without access to licensed child care. **In neighboring Dukes and Nantucket Counties, nearly 49 percent of children under 6 are without access to licensed child care.**



CCDF Waitlist

The number of children receiving vouchers was obtained by taking the average of the number of monthly vouchers used per zip code from July 2016 to April 2017. The number of children on the waitlist for vouchers was obtained from our contacts within the state who requested the data from state offices. There is no duplication between the voucher list and waitlist. **As of June 2017, there were over 25,000 families**

on the CCDF waitlist. Cities with the highest number of families on the waitlist include Lawrence, Brockton, Lynn, Quincy, and Lowell--each with a waitlist of over 500 families.

CCDF Waitlist Spotlight: Brockton, MA

We chose to spotlight Brockton, MA, because there is a high concentration of families who need child care subsidies but are not receiving them. There are currently 807 children on the waitlist. The Boston area also encompasses a high number of children who use CCDF vouchers to access child care; however, the waitlist in this area is much shorter and the distribution of vouchers is high. While there is a definite need for subsidies in and around Boston, these numbers suggest that the need is being met. However, that is not true of other communities across the state.

Mapping Access to Child Care During NonTraditional Hours

The state team was interested in mapping the availability of child care slots that cater to workers needing care during nontraditional hours. For the purposes of this map, we define nontraditional hours as before 6 a.m., after 6 p.m., or on weekends.

Data & Methodology

This map highlights three locations of interest: Plainridge Park Casino in Plainville, MA (a slot parlor built in 2015), Wynn Boston Harbor in Everett, MA (a casino/resort expected to open in 2019), and MGM Springfield in Springfield, MA (a casino/resort expected to open in 2018). According to MGM Springfield's official website, there will be approximately 3,000 "direct jobs" with the casino, many of which will be jobs with nontraditional hours and/or irregular, unpredictable hours.

The existence of casino jobs in the state will provide economic benefits and more job opportunities for the communities in which they reside. However, casinos and businesses in the area are often open very late--sometimes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Workers with young children will need quality child care past 6:00 p.m., throughout the night, early morning, and on weekends. The state team wanted to determine if the current supply of child care meets the projected need in each of the communities and if not, where they should target their resources to support the workforce.

Nontraditional Hours Spotlight: Springfield, MA



The map highlights the number of child care providers open during nontraditional hours within a 10-mile radius of the incoming casino in Springfield. There are only six child care providers open on weekends, with a combined capacity of 54 children. There are only seven child care providers who are open after 8:00 p.m., with a combined capacity of 64 children. **In Hampden County, where Springfield is located, half of children under 6 do not currently have access to licensed child care, regardless of the hours they are open.**

Considering the number of workers MGM Springfield expects to employ, if even a fraction of employees have children and work on weekends, it is incredibly unlikely that the fifty-four available licensed slots will be enough to meet the demand for weekend child care. As this map shows, there needs to be an

increase in the number of licensed child care facilities in Springfield and the surrounding area to address the future need for care during nontraditional hours.

Policy Recommendations

Despite the more than 8,000 licensed child care providers across the state, Massachusetts – like so many other areas across the country – is facing a child care crisis. A gap exists between the supply of child care slots and the demand of working families across the state, particularly for those featured in the preceding section on Nontraditional Hours. The result is that many working families in Massachusetts, particularly those working nontraditional shift work, do not have a safe place to take their kids when they go to work.

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

- **Increased funding** – An increase in funding may help to address gaps in subsidy disbursement and reach a greater number of eligible families throughout Massachusetts. In addition, funding increases can help support provider recruitment to build the child care supply, and workforce supports can help retain qualified, established providers.
- **Community/business partnerships** – Building relationships with affected communities and with businesses looking to staff up, like the casinos, can be one way to bring attention to the need for a qualified provider workforce. Without a safe place to take children, parents cannot go to work, and employers are left without the resources to operate. Hampden County, home to Springfield, MA, is just one example; overall, nearly half of children in working families in the county do not have access to child care during the regular work week.
- **Monitor the issues** – These maps are a baseline to get a better understanding of what is happening in Massachusetts. As policy, funding, and the population in Massachusetts changes, the data and the maps should be re-visited to inform new policies and best serve families. Data visualizations like maps help to demonstrate areas of need; although 2 in 5 children across Massachusetts are left without access to licensed child care, the maps illustrate that supply and demand gaps are much worse in areas like Cape Cod and Nantucket, where nearly half of children may not have access to child care.

Child Care Resource & Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) are uniquely positioned to address each of these areas. CCR&R staff possess a deep understanding of child care needs throughout the state, are responsible for collecting data specific to

these needs, and are in touch with the pulse of the provider community. In fact, Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies are specifically called out in the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 legislation to help identify supply and demand issues and share information with the state of Massachusetts to help target funding to address the issues. An increase in funding for CCR&Rs to do this work is crucial, as they provide a greater bandwidth in efforts to support Massachusetts, working families and child care providers.

Acknowledgments. The Massachusetts state team collaborated with CCAoA staff to create customized child care desert maps below which tell stories about the state of child care in Massachusetts. Special thanks goes out to Kim Dion (Program Director, Seven Hills Foundation), Corrine Corso (Network Coordinator, Child Care Circuit), Kelly Graceffa (Director, Child Care Choices of Boston) and Yoely Javier (Co-Director, The Community Group, Inc.) for their assistance.