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Illinois Child Care Assistance Program

The Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provides low-income, working families with access to affordable child care that allows them to continue working and going to school. High-quality child care can contribute to the child's cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development.¹ CCAP funding for infants and toddlers is sometimes blended and braided with other funding sources, including Early Head Start and state 0-3 programs.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible, recipients must qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); be a teen parent enrolled full-time in elementary, high school or GED classes to obtain a high school degree or its equivalent; be a family with special needs children; or be a working family whose monthly income does not exceed 162% of the Federal Poverty Level for the family size. (When a state budget is passed, the eligibility threshold is supposed to return to 185% of the FPL, or \$44,964 for a family of 4. Under the federal rules, the state could choose to set the threshold as high as 85% of the state median income, or \$72,165 for a family of four in Illinois).

Major Funding Sources

Federal

- Child Care Development Block Grant
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant

State

- General Revenue Fund, Illinois Department of Human Services

Family

- Co-payments

Services Provided

CCAP can help families pay for care in center-based or home settings. Parents can choose the child care setting that best meets their needs and preferences. Centers and family child care homes are licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services. CCAP in Illinois also subsidizes care delivered in license-exempt settings, including care in the home of a relative. Parent co-payments are set on a sliding scale. CCAP funding also supports professional development for the workforce, a quality rating system, and a resource and referral network to help parents and providers.

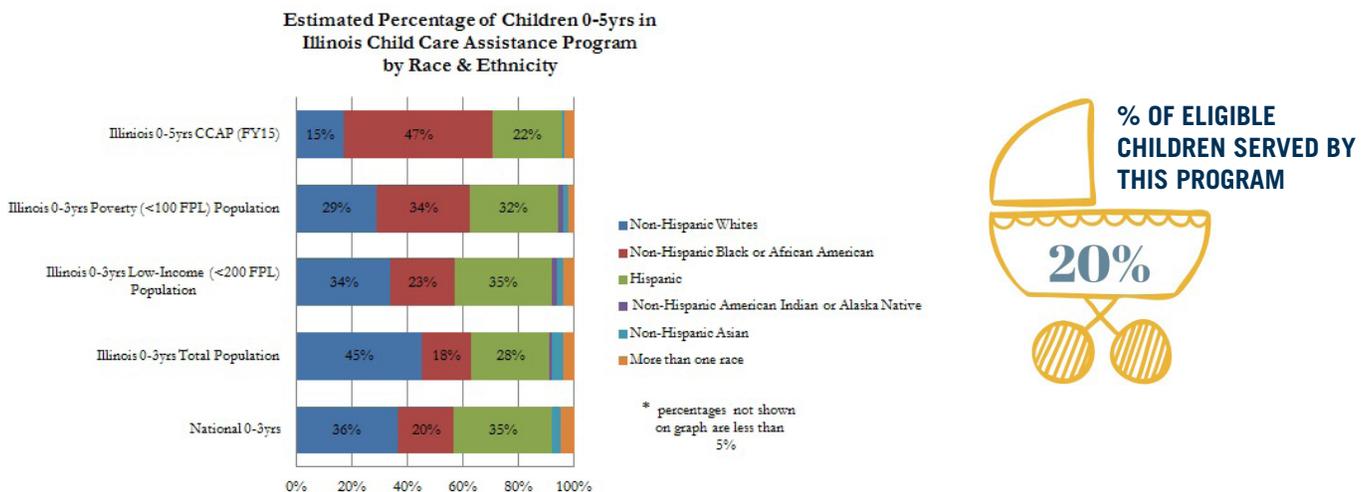
1. CLASP: *Policy Solutions That Work For Low-Income People (2015). Child Care Assistance: A Vital Support for Working Families.* Retrieved from: <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/CCDBG-Advocacy-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Effectiveness of Child Care Assistance Services

For two decades, the CCAP program has proven to be a critical resource for low-income families. Infant care is more expensive than care for school-aged children, with lower staff-to-child ratios required. In Illinois, infant care costs an average of \$1,080 per month, or more than 75% of a minimum wage worker's monthly income, and more than in-state college tuition.² Without CCAP, many low-income parents would be unable to afford safe care for their children, and could not remain in the workforce.

Research shows high-quality child care enables parents to work or go to school while providing children with early childhood education experiences needed for healthy cognitive, social and emotional development. Yet parents working in low-wage jobs often have non-standard work schedules and inconsistent hours, and so may not be able to access licensed care. Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) license-exempt care is used by 32% of CCAP families. Most child care workers in Illinois do not earn enough to afford the basic cost of living, and cannot afford quality child care for their own children.

In Illinois in FY2015, children zero to three years old accounted for about 27% of enrollment in CCAP, for an average enrollment of 45,419. On July 1, 2015 the state cut eligibility from 185% to 50% of the FPL and imposed additional requirements that discouraged families from applying for CCAP. Even after the state agreed to restore eligibility up to 162% in November, many who had been turned away did not reapply, and some providers closed their doors. Enrollments have continued to decline, and the most recent average monthly enrollment figure for FY2016 for children ages 0-3 was 36,237.



This graph shows that non-Hispanic Black families are accessing CCAP subsidies in greater proportion than other racial and ethnic groups, even relative to their overrepresentation in low-income and poverty populations. Data by child race and ethnicity and the quality rating of the child care setting is not currently available, whether for licensed centers, family child care homes, or licensed exempt settings. This suggests an area for further data analysis.

The state is in the process of implementing new rules prompted by the reauthorized federal Child Care and Development Block Grant that will improve continuity of care and increase monitoring and safety—but will also require additional funding to implement, even without adding additional families to the program.

Of the almost 209,000 low-income Illinois infants and toddlers, under 20% were served by CCAP in 2015, and fewer today.

2. CLASP: Policy Solutions That Work For Low-Income People (2015). Child Care Assistance: A Vital Support for Working Families. Retrieved from: <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/CCDBG-Advocacy-Fact-Sheet.pdf>