High-quality child care plays an important role in promoting social and educational opportunities for children, fostering early learning and cognitive growth. Studies have found that children from disadvantaged backgrounds who attend quality preschool programs perform better in school, are less likely to enter Special Education, and have lower high school dropout rates. Several long-term studies have also suggested that participation in high-quality child care improves children’s future earnings, reduces the risk of becoming a welfare recipient, and decreases the risk of adolescent pregnancy, alcohol and drug use, and teenage crime. The demand for child care in Los Angeles County has increased over the past several decades, due in part to the rising number of single-parent households and families in which both parents work outside the home. Despite growth in the number of higher quality child care options for families in the county, availability has not kept pace with need, leaving many families without options. Results from the 2005 Los Angeles County Health Survey (LACHS) show that 32% of children (an estimated 288,000 children) from birth through age five years were in child care in Los Angeles County (Table 1). Child care was defined as any type of arrangement where someone other than the child’s parents cared for the child more than 10 hours per week on a regular basis. This definition included care provided educational programs, such as Head Start or Starr PreKindergarten, as well as center-based and family child care settings. Family child care providers included infant-toddler care and care for school-aged children, as well as homes.
The percentage of children in child care was highest (49%) among households with income 200%-299% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) than in households with income less than 100% FPL (18%). Participation in child care increased with age from birth to age three years, and then leveled off. More than half (64%) of the children attending child care had a mother who was employed full-time, and use of child care increased with higher levels of maternal education. Eleven percent of children were in child care for 11 to 29 hours per week, 5% for 30 to 39 hours per week, and 15% or more for 40 or more hours per week.

**Types of Child Care**

Among those children, 25% (82,000 children) were in Head Start or a State preschool program, 40% (138,000 children) were in another type of center-based program, 51% (201,000 children) were cared for in someone else’s home, and 33% (138,000 children) were cared for in their own home. (Note: Children could be in more than one type of care.)

Child care arrangements varied depending on the child’s age. Children ages 2 and younger were more often cared for in their own or someone else’s home, whereas children ages 3 to 5 years were more often enrolled in center-based care (Figure 1). Children who were in family child care were more likely to be cared for by relatives, either in the child’s home (49%) or an additional 5 slots per 1,000 children under age 6.

Among parents who reported using child care, in someone else’s home, only one-third reported that the care provided was licensed. While some parents may not accurately report licensure, these findings are consistent with assessments of the shortage of higher levels of maternal education. Eleven percent of children were in child care for 11 to 29 hours per week, 5% for 30 to 39 hours per week, and 15% or more for 40 or more hours per week.

**Difficulties Accessing Child Care**

Although Los Angeles County gained 82 center-based programs between 1996 and 2000, resulting in an additional 5 slots per 1,000 children, this expansion has not kept up with the pace of the overall child population growth. LACFS found that among parents who stated a need for child care, 36% reported it was somewhat or very difficult to get child care on a regular basis. Families living below 100% FPL were more likely than families living at or above 300% FPL to report difficulty finding child care.

Parents reported access to child care varied by race and ethnicity. Latino parents more frequently reported difficulty obtaining child care (45%) compared to African Americans (29%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (25%), and Whites (24%). A lack of child care centers in ethnic communities and language barriers may contribute to these differences. A previous study found that among Latinos, a bilingual environment facilitated importantly in the decision to enroll their child in a licensed child care center.

The percent of parents who reported difficulty obtaining child care varied by service Planning Area (SPA), ranging from a high of 47% in the South SPA to a low of 24% in Antelope Valley (Figure 3).

**Barriers to Finding Child Care**

The survey identified several major barriers to finding and keeping child care for families in Los Angeles County. Among parents who reported difficulty obtaining child care, 67% reported they could not afford it, 42% reported they could not find a provider with space available, 41% reported

Our findings of 41% of parents reported dissatisfaction with quality as a barrier to care is consistent with other studies. Parents’ concerns about quality may keep parents from enrolling existing child care services while their child’s cognitive, social, and emotional development can be significantly improved by increasing program quality (see SIEBEL). High-quality early childhood programs are expensive and often financially out of reach for LA County families.

Los Angeles county, in particular, experience challenges in finding high-quality, affordable child care. In 2004, the average cost of full-time center-based care for infants in LA County was $210 per week, and for preschoolers (age 2 to 5 years) was $150 per week. It is estimated that Low-income families in California spend approximately 24% of their earnings on child care.

Almost half the young children in child care in LA County are being cared for by someone in their home. Our results show that compared to White Latino, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and African American children are cared for in someone’s home. It is possible that the parents of these children choose this type of care for their own social or cultural preferences. In addition, Latino child care providers are more likely to be available during non-traditional work hours. However, most of these service providers are unlicensed and not licensed and may lack sufficient training or experience to provide children high-quality care.

The supply of licensed child care is inadequate and often financially out of reach for LA County families in California spend approximately 24% of their earnings on child care. The lack of high-quality programs for four-year-olds in Los Angeles, regardless of family income, LACFS utilizes the strong early care and education system, including Head Start and publically subsidized preschools, private preschools, Family Child Care homes and faith-based programs to respond to access needs of high quality preschool across LA County.

Los Angeles County Office of Child Care (OCC) serves income-eligible families seeking subsidized child care services. The OCC assists County departments in developing employee child care services, to expand access to high quality preschool across LA County.

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&RN) is a network of organizations that provides parents, and local communities in finding, planning, and providing affordable, quality child care. The CCR&RN provides free to the general public to help parents to find child care, and also assists County departments in developing employee child care services, to expand access to high quality preschool across LA County.

The OCC) provides quality child care resources and referral services to families in need of care. The OCC) also assists County departments in developing employee child care services, to expand access to high quality preschool across LA County. The OCC) also assists County departments in developing employee child care services, to expand access to high quality preschool across LA County.

Los Angeles County Office of Child Care (OCC) in many communities in the country, particularly in low income and Latino neighborhoods. OCC's mission is to promote the availability of, and quality child care that is accessible, affordable, and safe for children and families. OCC's mission is to promote the availability of, and quality child care that is accessible, affordable, and safe for children and families.

**Discussion**

Nearly one third of children ages 0 to 5 years in LA County spend time each day in some type of child care setting. Results from the 2005 LACFS showed that parents face many barriers in finding care, including the high cost of care, concerns about quality and reliability of care, lack of available space, flexible hours, and services for children with special needs.

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exemplar programs. The percentage of children in child care was higher in families with incomes at or above 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) than in households whose income was less than 100% FPL (18%). Participation in child care increased with age from birth to age three years, and then leveled off. More than half (60%) of the children attending child care had a mother who was employed full-time, and use of child care increased with higher levels of maternal education. Eleven percent of children were in child care for 11 to 29 hours per week, 6% for 30 to 59 hours per week, and 15% for 40 or more hours per week.

Types of Child Care

Among those in child care, 25% (82,000 children) were in Head Start or a State Preschool program. Many families in the county rely on center-based programs between 1996 and 2000, resulting in a licensed child care center. While some parents may not accurately report licenced, these findings are consistent with assessments of the shortage of higher levels of maternal education. Eleven percent of children were in child care for 11 to 29 hours per week, 6% for 30 to 59 hours per week, and 15% for 40 or more hours per week.


difficulties Accessing Child Care

Although Los Angeles County gained 82 center-based programs between 1996 and 2000, resulting in an additional 5 per 1,000 children age 5, this expansion has not kept pace with the county's overall child population. LACHS found that among parents who stated a need for child care, 36% reported it was somewhat or very difficult to get a child on a regular basis. Families living below 100% FPL were more likely than families living at or above 300% FPL to report difficulty finding child care. 10

Reported access to child care programs varied by race and ethnicity. Latinos more frequently reported difficulty obtaining child care (43%) compared to African Americans (29%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (25%), and Whites (24%). As a lack of child care centers in ethnic communities and language barriers may contribute to these differences. A previous study found that among Latinos, a bilingual environment facilitated important in the decision to enroll their child in a licensed child care center to the insufficient supply of infant-toddler care, many may

The survey identified several major barriers to finding high-quality, affordable child care. In 2004, the average cost of full-time center-based care for infants in LA County was $210 per week, and for pre-schoolers (ages 2 to 5 years) was $150 per week. It is estimated that low-income families in California spend approximately 24% of their earnings on child care. Almost half the young children in child care in the county are being cared for in someone’s home. Our results show that compared to White children, Latina, African American and Latino children with special needs are cared for in someone’s home. It is possible that the parents of these children may feel more comfortable with their social or cultural preferences. The service is important to the family child care at home, there is a high quality early childhood programs are expensive for many of these service providers are license-exempt and can have other hours, and services for children with special needs.

One third of children age 5 to 7 years in LA County spend time each day in some type of child care setting. Results from the 2005 LACHS show that parents face many barriers in finding quality child care, including the high cost of care, concerns about quality and reliability of care, availability of affordable care, quality of care, and language barriers. The availability of available space, flexible hours, and services for children with special needs. The availability of quality child care is inadequate in many communities in the county, particularly in low-income and Latino neighborhoods. Income or income levels can greatly influence which child care options are available to families. Parents may be restricted to child care that is affordable, but parents may be restricted to child care that is affordable and does not meet their needs. The availability of quality child care is inadequate in many communities in the county, particularly in low-income and Latino neighborhoods. Income or income levels can greatly influence which child care options are available to families. Parents may be restricted to child care that is affordable, but parents may be restricted to child care that is affordable and does not meet their needs. The availability of quality child care is inadequate in many communities in the county, particularly in low-income and Latino neighborhoods. Income or income levels can greatly influence which child care options are available to families. Parents may be restricted to child care that is affordable, but parents may be restricted to child care that is affordable and does not meet their needs. The availability of quality child care is inadequate in many communities in the county, particularly in low-income and Latino neighborhoods. Income or income levels can greatly influence which child care options are available to families. Parents may be restricted to child care that is affordable, but parents may be restricted to child care that is affordable and does not meet their needs. The availability of quality child care is inadequate in many communities in the county, particularly in low-income and Latino neighborhoods. Income or income levels can greatly influence which child care options are available to families. Parents may be restricted to child care that is affordable, but parents may be restricted to child care that is affordable and does not meet their needs.
High-quality child care plays an important role in promoting social and educational opportunities for children, fostering early learning and cognitive growth. Studies have found that children from disadvantaged backgrounds who attend quality preschool programs perform better in school, are more likely to graduate from high school, and are less likely to engage in crime. Several long-term studies have also suggested that participation in high-quality child care improves children’s future earnings, health, and educational outcomes, and decreases the number of welfare cases or dependency on welfare and increasing their earnings income, and educational outcomes.

The demand for child care in Los Angeles County has increased over the past several decades, due in part to an increasing number of single parents, households and families in which both parents work outside the home. Despite growth in the number of child care providers, availability has not kept pace with need, leaving many families without options for finding quality, affordable child care.

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What Can Be Done?

Quality Improvement

Lack of comprehensive standards, insufficient staff training, poor compensation, and high staff turnover all contribute to the inadequate supply of quality child care. High-quality early childhood programs have smaller class sizes, lower child-adult ratios, culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula, and opportunities for parental involvement and support. Current efforts to promote improvement in early care include increasing compensation for child care providers to reduce staff turnover, employing more developmentally appropriate practices that meet performance standards, enhancing professional development and education of child care providers, and expanding collaboration with community agencies and policymakers to increase awareness of early childhood needs.

In Los Angeles County, efforts to improve the quality of child care include implementation of the Steps to Excellence Pilot Program (STEP), which will be rolled out in several communities. The program will provide licensed child care centers and family child care home financial incentives to improve the quality of their services, and will provide care providers and stakeholders reliable ratings of child care programs. Other efforts to improve the quality of child care include the county’s universal preschool initiative, a comprehensive approach to helping preschool children develop the skills and knowledge they need for lifelong learning.

High-quality child care plays an important role in promoting social and educational opportunities for children, fostering early learning and cognitive growth.

What Can Be Done?

High-quality child care can play an important role in promoting social and educational opportunities for children, fostering early learning and cognitive growth.

Studies have found that children from disadvantaged backgrounds who attend quality preschool programs perform better in school, are more likely to graduate from high school, and are less likely to engage in crime. Several long-term studies have also demonstrated that participation in high-quality child care programs improves children’s educational and social outcomes, including lower worker absenteeism, reduced turnover, improved productivity and increased morale. Employers, community leaders, and state and local child care organizations can assist working parents by ensuring access to quality, affordable child care.

In this issue:

The ABC’s of Child Care: Access, Barriers, Concerns

Key Features of Quality Child Care Programs

- Warm, sensitive caregivers who are committed to working with young children
- Plans for learning experiences for children
- Low child to staff ratios and small groups
- Adequate compensation for child care workers
- Low staff turnover
- Adequate facilities that are safe, provide ample space for learning, and provide appropriate materials and furnishings

(Sources: Center for Improving Child Care Quality)

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