

Child Care Capacity

DEFINITION

This indicator measures child care capacity as the number of licensed child care slots for children under six years old per 100 children relying on non-relative care. Because New Hampshire has no comprehensive source for child care data, the information presented here does not provide the entire picture of child care needs and availability. In order to accurately assess child care needs for specific groups of children in New Hampshire, better data are necessary.

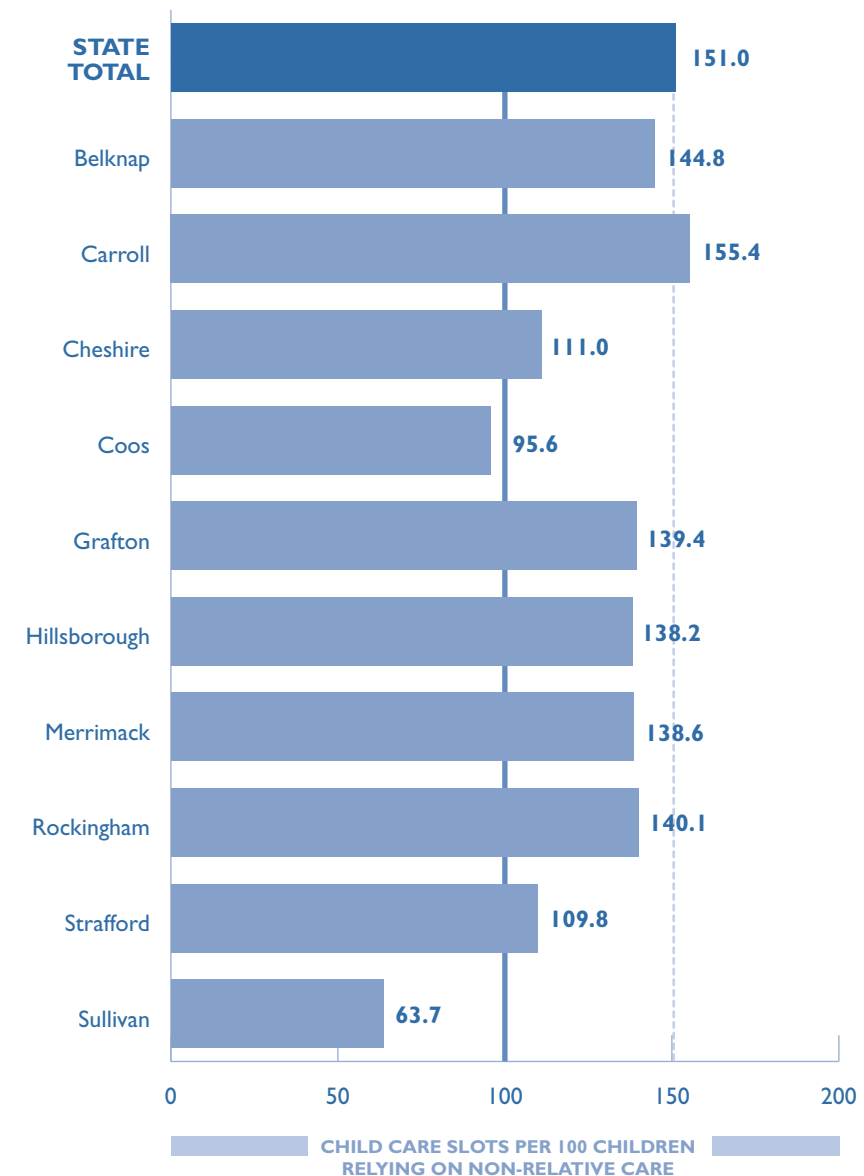
The data include licensed child care slots for providers who care for children in their homes, in child care centers and in preschool centers which accept children with income-based state scholarships. The data include 91 percent of these licensed centers. The state Child Care Licensing Unit licenses childcare programs that meet standards for safety, health, staffing and program content (NH DHHS 2011a). This report estimates the number of children under six who depend on non-relative care as 53 percent of all children under six with all caregivers in the labor force. A recent New Hampshire survey found 53 percent of working parents with young children relied on non-relative child care (Smith and Smith 2010).

There are several important caveats about the child care capacity data presented here: (1) the data do not include all child care available in the state, only licensed centers for which the state collects data; (2) just because a center is licensed for a particular number of slots does not mean that the center has staffing in place in order to fill those slots; and (3) some slots are in “school age child care centers” which accept children age 5 and older, and which are likely to be primarily filled by children over age 5, though our county estimates likely overstate the availability of child care for young children. See Appendix for a description of the methodology.

CONTEXT

As the percentage of young children with all parents working increases, so does the need for reliable, high-quality, affordable child care. Research shows key factors parents consider when choosing child care are safety, relationships with providers, convenience and cost. Nationally, almost half (47 percent) of working mothers rely on relatives, usually a father or grandparent, to provide child care; another 24 percent use a child care facility and 16 percent use a non-relative home care provider. The remaining 13 percent rely on some other arrangement for child care. Availability of financial assistance plays a major role in parents’ decisions about child care settings. Children receiving subsidies are most likely to receive center-based child care (U.S. DHHS 2010).

Child Care Capacity
By County, 2010



Child care slots are subsidized by funding from the State of New Hampshire through the federal Child Care and Development Fund for income-eligible New Hampshire families. The subsidy program is run by the Child Development Bureau in the Department of Health and Human Services. In 2010, the income limit for a family of three qualifying for a New Hampshire childcare scholarship was \$45,775 or 250 percent of the federal poverty level and 61 percent of New Hampshire's median family income (NH DHHS 2009b).

As the effects of recession linger, more New Hampshire families have difficulty affording child care. Demand for child care subsidies increased nearly 17 percent in the 17 months before the end of Fiscal Year 2009. With a flat budget from FY 2008 to FY 2010, the Child Development Bureau could not meet the growing demand likely fueled by the recession (Claffey 2009).

In September 2009, New Hampshire announced the state's first-ever waiting list for child care assistance. In December 2011, 1,955 children were on New Hampshire's wait list for childcare assistance with an average wait time of seven to nine months. Low-income families receiving state cash assistance are exempt from the wait list (NH DHHS 2009a). New Hampshire was one of 19 states which had wait lists for childcare assistance in 2009 and 2010 (Shulman and Blank 2010). As of February 2011, the wait list was suspended and all eligible families could again receive immediate assistance (DHHS 2011b). The Child Development Bureau expects to start another wait list on July 1, 2011 (NH DHHS 2011c).

NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

In two New Hampshire counties - Coos County in the North Country and Sullivan County in southwestern New Hampshire - the current child care capacity is insufficient to meet demands for child care for young children of working parents. Although our data suggests that there are more than 100 available slots per 100 children in the eight remaining counties in the state, the adequacy of child care is uncertain in these areas because of the data limitations described in the Definition section. (see chart on previous page)

In 2009, average full-time child care rates in New Hampshire ranged from \$164 per week for preschoolers (children ages 36 to 59 months), to \$196 per week for infant care (children ages six weeks to 12 months of age). Child care costs varied widely by region with highest rates in southeastern New Hampshire and lowest rates in the northern and western areas of the state. For example average full-time infant care rates ranged from \$136 per week in the Berlin area, to \$221 in the Portsmouth/Salem area (Kalinowski and Kalinowski 2010).

SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

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