



The Early Childhood Landscape in ARKANSAS

STATE DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to create efficient and effective early childhood systems, it is important that policymakers first understand the unique demographics and common risk factors facing the children of their states.

Questions To Consider

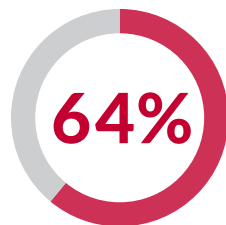
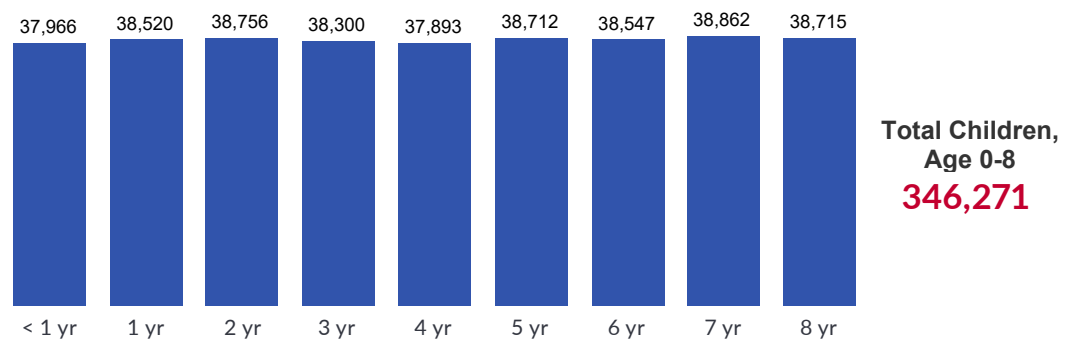
Are there specific risk factors likely to undermine the healthy and optimal development of young children? What is being done to address these disadvantages?

What steps are being taken to ensure equitable access to services among children and families with unique cultural and/or linguistic needs?

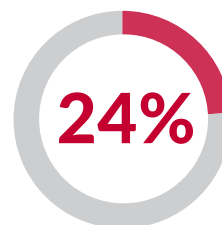
OVERVIEW

School readiness is shaped by many factors, each with the power to influence learning and development – both for better and for worse – from the days young children are born. For this reason, policymakers interested in promoting the long-term academic and life success of children must be prepared to consider their needs on a holistic basis – addressing not just access to high-quality early learning environments, but their health, safety, social-emotional development, and the economic and other stressors facing their families. While far from comprehensive, this state data profile is intended to provide a snapshot of both risk and reach. That is: what are the significant risk factors experienced by the children of my state, and how well are services reaching the children and families for whom they are intended?

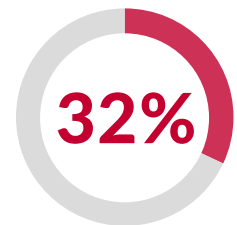
Number of Children Age 8 and Younger, 2017



**Children with All Available
Parents in the Labor Force**
Age 0-5 (2017)

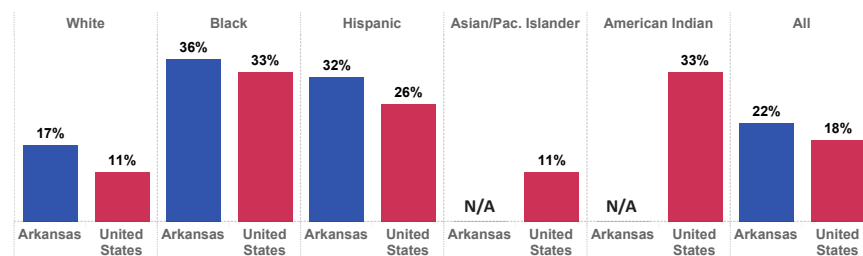


Children in Poverty*
Age 0-5 (2017)



**Children in Low-Income
Working Families***
Age 0-5 (2017)

Children in Poverty, by Race, 2017



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*The federal poverty level for a family of four was \$24,600. "Low income" is defined as having a family income less than twice the federal poverty level.



INFANT AND TODDLER SUPPORT

The first three years of life are a unique and critical period of development, during which up to 1 million new neural connections are formed in the developing brain each second. Infants and toddlers develop and learn at exponential rates as they explore and engage with the environments and adults around them. In order to best support their **health and development**, families need access to information and services.

Questions To Consider

Are women and children receiving health care services before and after birth?

Are families prepared for and educated about the needs of young children through home health visits, regular well-baby checks or both?

What areas of maternal and child health is my state focusing on?

Current Status of Infant and Toddler Well-Being

INDICATOR	ARKANSAS	NATION
Unintended Pregnancy ¹ (% of all pregnancies)	55%	45%
Prenatal Care Before 3rd Trimester ² (% of live births)	89%	87%
Home Health Visit ¹ (% of children ages 0-3)	10%	14%
Well-Baby Check ³ (% of babies)	92%	91%
Developmental Screening ² (% of children ages 10 months to 5 years)	26%	31%

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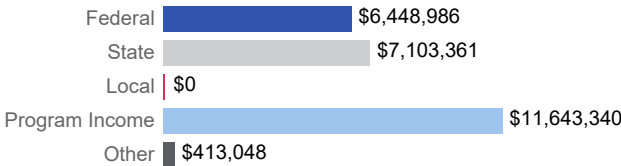
Maternal and Child Health Grant

The federal government allocates the Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant to states. **Arkansas** provides additional funding to the MCH program (as shown below).

The state has identified eight national performance measures to focus on:

- **Well-Woman Visits**
- **Risk-Appropriate Perinatal Care**
- **Breastfeeding**
- **Safe Sleep**
- **Injury Hospitalization**
- **Physical Activity**
- **Transition (Children with Special Needs)**
- **Adequate Insurance**

Arkansas MCH Funds by Source



Arkansas | MCH 2017 Expenditures

POPULATION SERVED	INDIVIDUALS SERVED	2017 EXPENDITURE
Pregnant Women	2,956	\$2,595,589
Infants	42,662	\$6,170,746
Children (Age 1-22)	281,860	\$5,649,058
Children with Special Needs	3,400	\$4,362,736
Others	122,591	\$6,554,802
Total	453,469	\$25,332,931

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INFANT AND TODDLER SUPPORT

Questions To Consider

Are disparities in access evident in your state’s data? What steps might be taken to increase access to - and utilization of - prenatal care by expectant mothers?

Are there racial/ethnic disparities evident in the teen birth data? What steps is my state taking to reduce teenage pregnancy?

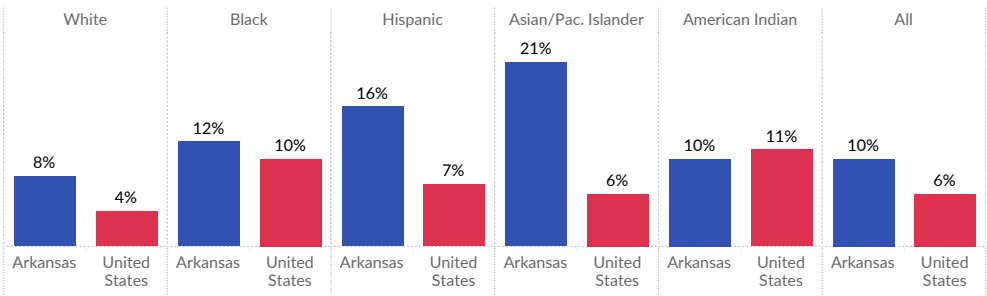
Are there disparities evident in the number of children born at low birthweight? What steps might be taken to reduce the prevalence of this outcome, particularly among high-risk populations?

Prenatal Care and Birth Outcome, By Race

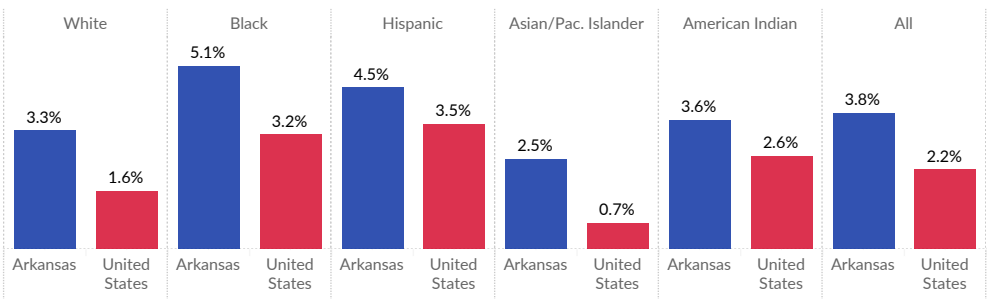
Receiving appropriate prenatal care helps reduce the likelihood of negative birth outcomes, including low birthweight and premature births, which are often linked to developmental delays and elevated rates of early school failure. Furthermore, births to teenage mothers increase risk for both children (increasing the likelihood of being born at a low birthweight and infant mortality) and their mothers (who are less likely to graduate from high school, maintain steady employment).

Often these outcomes vary significantly across demographic groups, which results in systematic inequities in infant and maternal health and well-being.

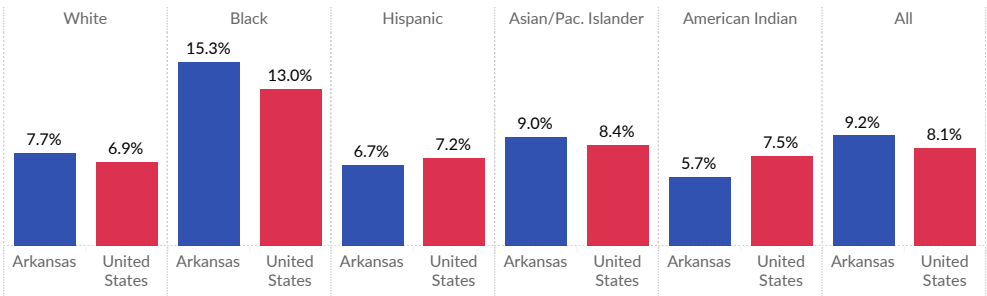
Births to Women Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care



Teen Births



Low Birthweight



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INFANT AND TODDLER SUPPORT

Questions To Consider

*What is the prevalence of paid family leave across the country?
Are conversations about paid family leave happening in my state?*

What percentage of at-risk families are able to access evidence-based home visiting programs in my state? Are post-partum home visits an MCH priority in my state?

What home visiting models is my state utilizing? Are these models recognized as evidence-based? How are different models used to support families' unique needs?

Paid Family Leave

Paid family leave policies support employees requiring time off to bond with a newborn baby, adopted or foster child – or to care for a seriously ill family member.

Arkansas does not have a statewide paid family leave policy.

States with Paid Family Leave Policies

State	First Year	# Weeks	Benefit (% Income)
CA	2004	6	Up to 70%
DC	2020	8	Up to 90%
MA	2021	12	Up To 80%
NJ	2009	6	Up to 66%
NY	2018	8	Up to 50%
RI	2014	4	Up to 60%
WA	2020	12	Up to 90%

Home Visiting

Home visiting is a type of service targeted to expectant parents and parents with children ages 0-5 to support healthy child development. Though models and programs vary, home visits typically allow trained experts to provide services, share best practices, and connect families to other resources all within the home setting.

6,274

Number of Families Served
Through Home Visits in 2017

129,675

Number of Home Visits
Provided in 2017

Arkansas uses the following evidence-based models for home visiting programs:

- **Early Head Start Home-Based Option**
- **Healthy Families America**
- **Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters**
- **Nurse-Family Partnership**
- **Parents as Teachers**

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INFANT AND TODDLER SUPPORT

Questions To Consider

Is the cost of high-quality infant care in my state affordable to low-income and working-class families?

What percentage of families have all available parents in the labor force? What does that mean for the demand for infant care?

What types of public support are available in my state for families seeking infant care? What percentage of eligible families are actually able to access these supports?

Cost and Affordability of Infant Care

\$5,995

Average Annual Cost
of Infant Care
in **Arkansas**

13%

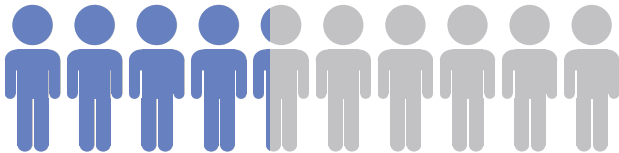
Infant Care Cost as a Share
of Median Family Income
in **Arkansas**

Licensed child care is delivered in both center-based and home-based settings. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this care is affordable if it costs no more than 10% of a family’s income, with efforts underway in some states to ensure subsidized child care costs are capped at no more than 7%

By the 10% standard, only

43%

of families in **Arkansas** can afford infant care.



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Public Support for Infant Care

PROGRAM	FUNDING SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF CHILDREN AGES 0-2 SERVED	% OF ALL CHILDREN 0-2
Early Head Start	Federal (with optional state supplement)	Funds early education programming for children ages 0-3 from low-income families in addition to health and family services.	2,638	2.3%
Child Care and Development Fund	Federal and State	Provides financial assistance to low-income families to access child care for children under age 13 so they can work or attend a job training or educational program. The majority of infants and toddlers are in center-based care, and approximately 30% are in some type of home-based care.	2,405	2.1%



THREE- AND FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

At ages three and four, children may be eligible to enroll in one or more types of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten. This includes state-funded pre-K, often delivered in both public and private settings, and Head Start, a federally-funded preschool program operated by local grantees. State funded pre-K programs generally incorporate child eligibility and provider quality requirements. These programs are typically not compulsory.

Questions To Consider

How many children are attending pre-K, public or private?

Are certain populations more likely to attend pre-K?

How expensive is child care for 4-year-olds?

Do the wages depicted for the early childhood workforce permit for the hiring and retention of highly-qualified early childhood educators?

Pre-Kindergarten Trends

10%

3- and 4-Year Olds Enrolled in **Head Start** Program
(Estimated **7,329** children)

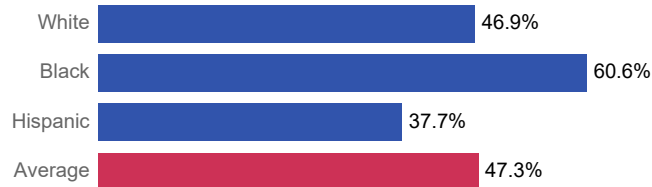
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25%

3- and 4-Year Olds Enrolled in **State Funded Pre-K** Program
(Estimated **19,120** children)

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Parent-Reported Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool, Public & Private by Race, Regardless of Funding Source



The following group(s) have enrollment rates in preschool programs that are below the state average: **Hispanic**

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Wages and Costs

\$19,640

Median Annual Wage
Child Care Worker
(2018)

62%

Median Wage for
Child Care Worker as Percent
of State Median Income (2018)

\$30,390

Median Annual Wage
Preschool Teacher
(2018)

95%

Median Wage for
Preschool Teacher as Percent
of State Median Income (2018)

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\$5,348

Average Annual Cost of
Child Care for 4-year-old

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THREE- AND FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

Questions To Consider

Does my state support pre-K enrollment? If so, for which children?

What are the funding sources for pre-K?

What requirements must providers meet in order to be eligible for the state pre-K program?

Pre-Kindergarten Policy

ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE/ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

ACCESS	Family Income - Eligibility	200% of FPL; Up to 10% of children can be above this threshold if they qualify with other characteristics
	Other Risk Factors - Eligibility	Child disability or developmental delay; Low parent education; History of abuse, neglect, or family violence; Homelessness or unstable housing; Home language other than English; Parental substance abuse; Risk child will not be ready for kindergarten; Teen parent; Low birth weight or other child health risk; Child history of foster care; Parent on active military duty; Other risk factor(s)
	Child Age	3 years old
	Required District Participation	Not required, but funding is awarded on a competitive basis
FUNDING	State Agency	Arkansas Department of Education; Arkansas Department of Human Services - Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
	Total Spending (2016-17)	\$156,104,760
	Funds by Source	State: \$103,500,000; Federal: \$11,204,760; Required local: \$41,400,000
	Dedicated Revenue Source for State Funds?	Yes: General Revenue of \$103,500,000
	Agencies Eligible to Receive Funding	Public schools, Head Start, Private agencies, Faith-based centers, Family child care homes, Education Service Cooperatives, University-related programs
	Permitted Subcontracting Agencies	Public schools
PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS	Minimum Daily Hours	7
	Minimum Days Per Week	5 days per week
	Annual Operating Schedule	School year or academic year
	Maximum Class Size	20
	Required Screenings	Vision; Hearing; Height/weight/BMI; Blood pressure; Immunizations; Psychosocial/behavioral; Developmental; Full physical exam



THREE- AND FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

Questions To Consider

Are pre-K standards aligned with goals of the K-12 system?

Does my state require pre-K teachers to have a certain degree? If so, what?

Has my state developed a system to assess the quality of pre-K and child care providers? Is participation mandatory for state pre-K programs?

ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE/ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS – CONTINUED

STANDARDS	Early Learning and Development Standards	Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 Months
	Year Revised	2016
	Alignment with College and Career Ready Standards for Early Grades	Yes
EDUCATORS	Teacher Degree	BA (public); AA beyond the first classroom at a site (nonpublic)
	Required Specialization in ECE	Teachers have options for specialization including ECE or Elementary Education
	Assistant Teacher Degree	CDA

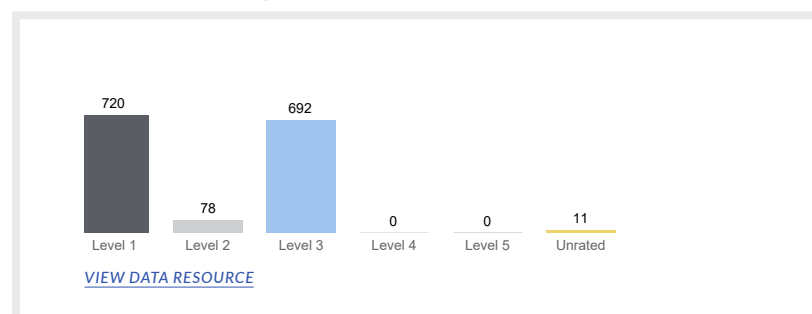
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Quality Ratings of Child Care Programs

In recent years, many states have designed Quality Ratings and Improvement Systems (QRIS) to provide parents with information about the quality of individual child care providers. The QRIS rating is often a reflection of various measures such as teacher-child interactions, classroom environment, family engagement, and staff educational attainment. Typically voluntary, QRIS systems are meant to help improve the quality of child care providers and help families choose the right provider for their children.

ACCOUNTABILITY	Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)	Better Beginnings	
	Provider Participation	Voluntary None	Mandatory All programs receiving subsidies must participate.
	Number of Levels	3	
	Tiered Reimbursement	Yes	
	Other Financial Incentive	Yes	

Child Care Providers By QRIS Level





FIVE- TO EIGHT-YEAR-OLDS

At age five, children are eligible to begin kindergarten—generally considered the start to their formal education. In these early grades, there is a strong focus on learning to read due to research indicating that 3rd-grade literacy is crucial for success in school and life.

Questions To Consider

Are districts required to offer full-day kindergarten?

At what age are children eligible to attend school? At what age is attendance compulsory?

How are children assessed in grades K-3? What are assessment results used for?

K-3 Policy

	K-3 COMPONENT	ARKANSAS
ATTENDANCE	Compulsory Age of Attendance ¹	5
	Kindergarten Entrance Age ¹	5 on or before 8/01
	State-Required Full-Day Kindergarten ¹	Yes
	State-Required Half-Day Kindergarten ¹	No
	Required Kindergarten Attendance ¹	Yes
STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS	Required Kindergarten Entrance Assessment (KEA) ²	The Department of Education shall develop guidelines for district to perform readiness testing for each child entering kindergarten.
	KEA Results Use ²	Results of the kindergarten readiness assessment must be provided to the student's parents.
	Dual Language Learner (DLL) Assessment	ELPA21
	Number of States Using DLL Assessment	7
	3 rd -Grade Reading Retention Law ²	None
EDUCATORS	Early Childhood Education License Required for Kindergarten Teachers ²	A pre-kindergarten to fourth grade certification exists.
	Science of Reading Test Required for Elementary Teachers ³	Yes
	Teacher-to-Student Ratio Requirement ²	1:20 or 1:22, with aide, for kindergarten. No more than 1:23 average for grades 1-3.

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