



Do Parents Get Child Care Assistance for Education and Training?

A Look at State Data

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Access to affordable child care can be a major barrier for low-income parents who want to participate in education and training activities to gain skills or obtain employment (Adams, Spaulding, and Heller 2015). Child care assistance from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), the federal block grant that funds states to provide child care assistance to low-income families, can help alleviate this barrier and make it easier for low-income parents to participate in activities that improve their skills and lead to stable employment with adequate pay. However, the CCDF eligibility requirements and priorities for service are set at the state level, and states make different decisions as to how to allocate scarce CCDF resources, so access to and use of CCDF subsidies for parents seeking education and training varies across states (Minton et al. 2019).

An Urban Institute report released in 2014 examined states' CCDF policies related to education and training to understand how states were serving parents in these activities and what gaps existed in meeting these parents' needs (Adams et al. 2014). One component of the report assessed the extent to which states use the CCDF to serve families who need child care assistance to support any education and training activities. This brief updates the prior analysis and provides an overview of the proportion of families who receive CCDF subsidies, and the extent to which they receive subsidies to support education and training, in each state. The prior Urban report also examined how states treated education and training activities in their eligibility requirements for the CCDF, as these policies are set at the state level. That component of the report has also been updated in a separate brief, which

provides insights into state eligibility policies (Minton et al. 2019). While a separate paper, it provides useful context for the information in this brief and how it relates to the state data presented.

In this brief, we look at administrative data on CCDF recipients that states submit to the federal Administration for Children and Families. These data reflect patterns for an average month¹ in federal fiscal year 2016.² The data reported here reflect state information on the reasons parents need child care assistance. Specifically, states must select one of the following reasons when reporting on child care subsidies:

- employment
- education and/or training
- both employment *and* education and/or training³
- the child is in the care of protective services

Because this brief focuses on the needs of parents seeking child care to support education and training activities, we examine the data states provide about those families whose “reason for care” is either education and/or training only or both employment and education and/or training, as well as for a category that combines these two groups and is labeled “any education and training.”⁴ We also examine the data separately for families who are reported to be receiving payments from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, as these families often are prioritized to get subsidies to help them participate in required work-related activities.

A closer look at the data on the reasons families need child care assistance, and specifically the extent to which families receive child care assistance for any education and training, provides useful insights into both how CCDF serves families across the United States in any education and training and the variation across states. (See table 1 for state-by-state data on CCDF recipients and education and training.)

This brief is part of a larger project entitled “Bridging the Gap: Examining Child Care’s Intersection with Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development,” which focuses on elevating the child care needs of parents who need education and training to upskill and improve their earnings trajectory. For more information, visit <https://www.urban.org/bridging-gap>.

Key Findings

Nationwide in fiscal year 2016, 823,864 families received child care subsidies through the CCDF in an average month to help pay for the care of 1.37 million children. Of these families, 78 percent (642,695) received such assistance because they were working only, 7 percent (55,907) received it because they were working and in education and training programs, and 6 percent (52,545) received it because they

were solely in education and training programs.⁵ These totals include some (but not all) families receiving TANF.⁶

Below we explore the second and third categories above in more detail—namely, families who get child care assistance because they are in education or training only or in combination with employment. We first describe all families, then families not receiving TANF, and, finally, families receiving TANF.⁷ We disaggregate families by their TANF status because states have workforce development requirements for TANF recipients and often provide child care assistance to families who need it to meet their TANF work and training requirements. As a result, it is useful to also look at the extent to which states serve families who need child care for education and training activities even if they aren't receiving TANF, as that is an area of discretion for states and can be indicative of their active support for this population. The supportive data for all of these findings can be found in table 1.

Patterns for All Families, Including Families Receiving TANF

Looking first at the extent to which *all families*, including those who are receiving TANF, receive child care subsidies to support education and training activities, we find the following:

- **Nationally, 13.2 percent of families received CCDF subsidies for *any* education and training (either education and training only or a combination of employment and education and training).** This varied substantially by state, ranging from 70 percent in Virginia⁸ (followed by Tennessee at 49 percent) to less than 5 percent in Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Nevada, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.
- **Over 6 percent of families received CCDF subsidies to support *only* education and training.** This ranged from about one in five families in Vermont (19.7 percent) and Tennessee (18.9 percent) to less than 1 percent in Arizona, Kansas, Michigan, Nevada, Utah, and Wisconsin.
- **Almost 7 percent of families receive CCDF subsidies to support education and training *and* employment.** Though four states do not report this combined category, the proportion of families served for this reason by the remaining states ranged from almost 65 percent in Virginia⁹ (followed by Tennessee at 31 percent and Washington at 18 percent), to less than 2 percent in Connecticut, Georgia, Massachusetts, Nevada, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Vermont.

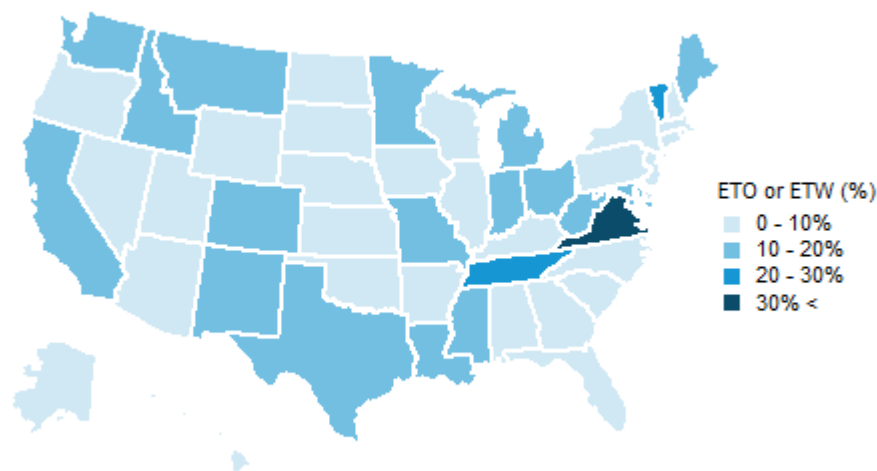
Patterns for Families Not Receiving TANF

Families who are not getting TANF have need for education and training to further their job skills and ability to obtain stable employment with adequate pay. With these families, we find that

- **Nationwide, about 82 percent (678,265) of families receiving CCDF child care subsidies did not report TANF income.** This ranged from 100 percent Iowa (followed by 99 percent in both Indiana and Wyoming) to less than 30 percent in the District of Columbia and South Carolina.

- **Of families who did not report TANF income, about 9 percent received child care assistance to participate in *any* education and training activities.** Again, states varied widely: almost 65 percent in Virginia¹⁰ and 26 and 21 percent in Tennessee and Vermont, respectively, but less than 3 percent of non-TANF families in Arizona, Connecticut, Iowa, Kansas, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Wisconsin, received child care subsidies to support any education and training activities.
- **About 4 percent of non-TANF recipients receiving child care assistance through the CCDF did so for education and training only.** Vermont had the highest proportion of families participating in education and training only (19.9 percent); eight states had less than 1 percent in this category (Arizona, Connecticut, Kansas, Michigan, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, and Wisconsin).
- **About 5 percent of non-TANF recipients receiving subsidies through the CCDF did so for a combination of education and training *and* employment.** Virginia¹¹ had the highest proportion of families participating (62.5 percent), followed by Tennessee (20.8 percent) and Ohio (15 percent). Seven states had less than 1 percent (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Vermont).

FIGURE 1
Proportion of Non-TANF Families Who Are Receiving Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Subsidies for Any Education and Training



Source: Unpublished data compiled by the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, FY 2016 CCDF Data Tables.

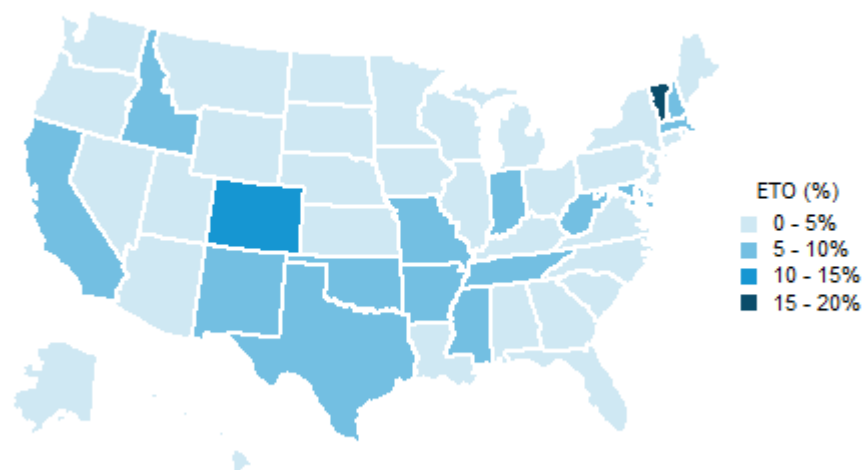
Notes: ETO = education and training only. ETW = education and training and work.

The data in this figure is for non-TANF families who are receiving care for any education and training, which is a combination of the groups education and/or training only *and* both employment and education and/or training.

The proportion of families in Virginia receiving CCDF subsidies for employment and education and/or training (ETW) significantly increased from FY 2014 to FY 2015 (13 to 60 percent). The cause for this is unclear, though in FY 2014, Virginia implemented a new statewide child care system and switched from reporting sample data to full population data.

Three states (Iowa, New Hampshire, and Wyoming) may have reported a zero value in the ETO or ETW categories because of state policies; guidance given to states in the [Technical Bulletin #3](#), which instructs states to “Enter the one-digit code indicating the reason for receiving subsidized child care. If more than one category applies, chose the primary reason”; or system limitations not capable of capturing multiple reasons.

FIGURE 2
Proportion of Non-TANF Families Who Are Receiving Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Subsidies for Education and/or Training



Source: Unpublished data compiled by the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, FY 2016 CCDF Data Tables.

Notes: ETO = education and training only.

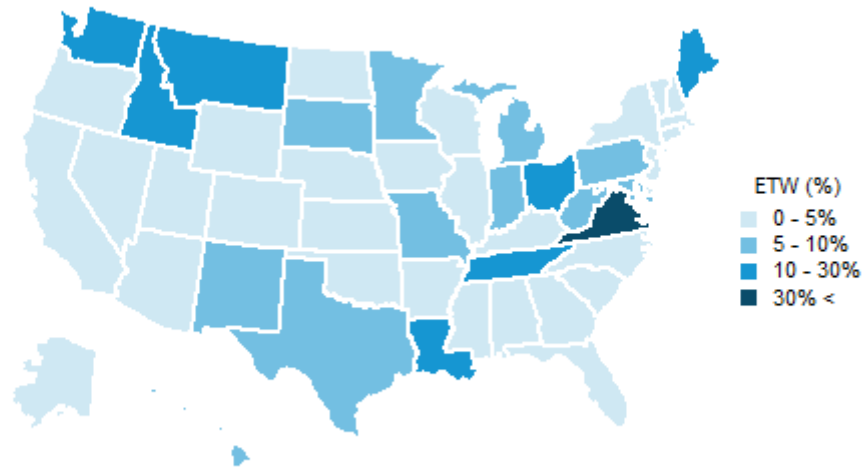
The data in this figure is for non-TANF families who are receiving care for education and/or training only.

The proportion of families in Virginia receiving CCDF subsidies for employment and education and/or training (ETW) significantly increased from FY 2014 to FY 2015 (13 to 60 percent). The cause for this is unclear, though in FY 2014, Virginia implemented a new statewide child care system and switched from reporting sample data to full population data.

Three states (Iowa, New Hampshire, and Wyoming) may have reported a zero value in the ETO or EW categories because of state policies; guidance given to states in the [Technical Bulletin #3](#), which instructs states to “Enter the one-digit code indicating the reason for receiving subsidized child care. If more than one category applies, chose the primary reason”; or system limitations not capable of capturing multiple reasons.

FIGURE 3

Proportion of Non-TANF Families Who Are Receiving Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Subsidies for Education and/or Training and Work



Source: Unpublished data compiled by the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, FY 2016 CCDF Data Tables.

Notes: ETW = education and training and work.

The data in this figure is for non-TANF families who are receiving care for both employment and education and/or training. The proportion of families in Virginia receiving CCDF subsidies for employment and education and/or training (ETW) significantly increased from FY 2014 to FY 2015 (13 to 60 percent). The cause for this is unclear, though in FY 2014, Virginia implemented a new statewide child care system and switched from reporting sample data to full population data. Three states (Iowa, New Hampshire, and Wyoming) may have reported a zero value in the ETO or ETW categories because of state policies; guidance given to states in the [Technical Bulletin #3](#), which instructs states to “Enter the one-digit code indicating the reason for receiving subsidized child care. If more than one category applies, chose the primary reason”; or system limitations not capable of capturing multiple reasons.

Patterns for Families Receiving TANF

Families who are receiving TANF also need child care to support the education and training they may need to further their job skills and ability to obtain stable employment with adequate pay, and to meet the TANF work requirements. Many states prioritize families receiving TANF for child care assistance; therefore, since education and training can be a key component of work requirements, the proportion of families receiving child care to support education and training is higher than for families who are not receiving TANF.

- **Nationally, approximately 13 percent (105,937) of families receiving child care assistance were receiving income from the TANF program.** This ranges from over 50 percent in Nevada, South Carolina, and Tennessee to less than 1 percent in Indiana, Iowa, Texas, and Wyoming.

- **A little over 40 percent of the TANF recipients receiving CCDF subsidies were supported to participate in *any* education and training activities.** However, the differences in this proportion across states were significant, with the share of TANF families receiving support for some education and training activities ranging from 100 percent in Mississippi to less than 1 percent in Utah.¹²
- **More than one in five (23 percent) TANF-recipient families were getting subsidies to support education and training alone.** This proportion also varied significantly across states, with six states (Georgia, Mississippi, New Jersey, Montana, Rhode Island, and South Dakota) having more than 50 percent of their TANF families getting child care subsidies to support education and training, and eight states (Arizona, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Nevada, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming) having less than 1 percent.
- **Eighteen percent of families receiving TANF were getting subsidies to support a combination of education and training *and* employment.** Again, these proportions ranged widely, with four states (Colorado, Florida, Oregon, and Virginia¹³) having 50 percent or more of their families receiving TANF getting child care to support these activities, and six states (Arkansas, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, Texas, and Vermont) having less than half of a percent.

Conclusions and Implications

The findings above provide a number of insights into the issue of providing child care assistance to parents in education and training programs.

First, while there are many reasons why states may vary so widely in the extent to which they provide child care assistance for parents who need it to support education and training, **the bottom line is that there are a number of states that devote relatively few CCDF resources to this population.** Seven states, for example, report that less than 2 percent of their caseload is getting child care assistance to support any education and training.

Second, it is also clear that **there are a number of states that have chosen to focus more resources on these families, with some states serving as much as half of their caseload to support education and training.** This is particularly interesting for states who have chosen to provide child care assistance to significant numbers of parents who are *not* receiving TANF but need education and training, as these are states who appear to have independently decided to provide these services, separately from the TANF work requirements.

Interviews with states with relatively higher levels of service for these families report a variety of reasons. For example, Vermont has historically seen the needs of parents seeking child care for education and training as an equal priority to those of families who seek it for employment, and placed value on providing assistance to support such parents' improved employment. Other states, like Tennessee, have more recently placed a higher priority on serving this population (Durham, Spaulding, Adams, and Gebrekristos 2019). While it is not possible to determine unmet need, it is interesting to

note that some states that have prioritized parents in education and training programs are serving sizeable proportions of their caseload for this purpose, suggesting that there could be significant numbers of parents who would use assistance for this purpose in other states as well.

Third, these findings provide a different perspective to echo research from a companion report that shows that states affect who is determined eligible for child care assistance by shaping eligibility rules that determine who has access (Minton et al. 2019). That study also finds significant variation across states in the extent to which parents are eligible and the kinds of conditions they must meet to qualify for child care assistance to support their education and training.

Taken together with this and other research, these findings suggest that whether low-income parents will be able to access child care assistance to allow them to go to school or get job training is highly dependent on the state in which they live. States can work to expand access to child care assistance to help reduce the challenges these parents face with enrolling in, and completing, the education and training they need to become employed (or better employed) to support their children.

In conclusion, the purpose of the CCDF program is to provide financial assistance for child care to low-income families so they can work or attend a job training or educational program. However, past research has shown that CCDF policies and implementation practices may make it difficult for families to access the subsidy (Adams, Snyder, and Banghart 2008; Henly et al. 2015). The data presented in this brief provide new insights into state activities in this area, as well as evidence both that states can invest in this important group of parents and that many states have not yet recognized the importance of this issue.

TABLE 1

Types of Families the Child Care and Development Fund Serves by Reasons for Receiving Care

State	Non-TANF Families				TANF Families				All Families Receiving Subsidies ^a			
	ETO (%)	ETW (%)	ETO or ETW (%)	Total non-TANF	ETO (%)	ETW (%)	ETO or ETW (%)	Total TANF	ETO (%)	ETW (%)	ETO or ETW (%)	Total all
AL	2.3	2.6	4.8	12,307	30.9	3.5	34.4	1,661	5.7	2.7	8.4	13,969
AK	2.4	4.7	7.1	2,287	8.5	9.9	18.4	38	2.5	4.8	7.3	2,325
AZ	0.1	1.3	1.3	14,228	0.1	33.1	33.1	1,200	0.1	3.7	3.8	15,428
AR	5.5	2.2	7.7	4,539	36.2	0.0	36.2	257	7.2	2.1	9.2	4,797
CA	6.0	4.5	10.6	62,295	25.2	5.6	30.8	9,224	8.5	4.7	13.2	71,519
CO	10.8	1.9	12.7	10,241	1.7	74.0	75.7	2,764	8.9	17.2	26.1	13,006
CT	0.2	0.0	0.2	7,986	30.7	16.5	47.2	781	2.9	1.5	4.4	8,767
DE	1.2	3.6	4.8	4,086	0.6	0.8	1.4	693	1.1	3.2	4.3	4,779
DC	4.7	10.7	15.5	240	3.9	31.3	35.1	303	4.2	16.8	21.0	880
FL	2.9	2.2	5.1	39,406	5.7	73.0	78.7	2,345	3.1	4.4	7.6	58,405
GA	3.4	1.1	4.5	29,899	58.5	5.7	64.1	995	5.2	1.2	6.4	30,894
HI	3.5	6.0	9.5	2,642	21.7	21.4	43.1	719	7.4	9.3	16.7	3,361
ID	6.0	11.4	17.4	3,270	22.2	4.8	27.1	61	6.3	11.3	17.6	3,331
IL	2.8	2.2	5.0	20,209	31.7	3.8	35.5	946	4.0	2.3	6.3	21,156
IN	5.6	7.2	12.8	17,313	29.8	2.0	31.9	91	5.7	7.2	12.9	17,404
IA ^b	2.2	0.0	2.2	9,545	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	2.2	0.0	2.2	9,545
KS	0.5	1.5	2.1	6,498	0.9	18.2	19.1	235	0.5	2.1	2.7	6,748
KY	2.6	2.4	5.0	7,334	14.5	1.9	16.4	147	2.8	2.4	5.2	7,481
LA	2.5	10.8	13.3	8,892	48.5	7.1	55.6	400	4.0	9.6	13.6	10,330
ME	2.8	10.8	13.6	2,039	11.6	5.0	16.7	64	3.1	10.6	13.7	2,104
MD	7.1	9.6	16.7	6,028	17.9	21.5	39.4	2,433	10.2	13.0	23.2	8,461
MA	5.0	0.2	5.1	17,746	45.1	0.0	45.1	1,616	8.3	0.1	8.5	19,362
MI	0.6	9.5	10.0	14,607	1.5	49.2	50.6	1,636	0.6	13.5	14.1	16,243
MN	3.5	9.9	13.4	8,000	7.5	11.4	18.9	2,043	4.3	10.2	14.5	10,043
MS	7.4	2.6	10.0	8,858	100.0	0.0	100.0	1,246	18.8	2.3	21.1	10,104
MO	6.4	7.0	13.4	16,483	38.9	6.8	45.7	1,098	5.9	4.9	10.9	24,934
MT	1.7	12.4	14.1	2,120	68.3	6.6	74.9	206	7.6	11.9	19.5	2,326
NE	3.1	4.7	7.8	4,730	5.4	9.2	14.6	782	3.4	5.4	8.8	5,511
NV	1.8	1.7	3.5	1,260	0.3	0.9	1.1	2,519	0.8	1.2	2.0	3,779
NH ^b	7.3	0.0	7.3	3,182	30.5	0.0	30.5	558	10.0	0.0	10.0	4,029
NJ	4.2	4.1	8.3	27,513	69.4	0.0	69.4	1,730	8.1	3.8	11.9	29,242
NM	8.6	8.2	16.8	9,370	30.3	8.3	38.6	977	10.7	8.2	18.9	10,347
NY	1.2	0.2	1.4	40,479	25.9	4.3	30.2	30,076	11.7	2.0	13.7	70,556
NC	3.6	2.7	6.3	27,634	15.2	6.5	21.7	1,099	4.1	2.9	6.9	28,734
ND	3.6	4.7	8.4	1,868	24.9	4.3	29.2	156	5.3	4.7	10.0	2,024
OH	1.9	15.0	16.9	19,793	2.9	21.4	24.3	6,171	2.1	16.5	18.6	25,963
OK	6.1	3.1	9.2	12,987	43.6	0.9	44.5	1,149	9.1	2.9	12.0	14,135
OR	2.4	0.5	2.9	6,778	9.8	50.8	60.6	1,453	3.7	9.4	13.1	8,231
PA	1.1	6.4	7.5	48,911	35.6	24.2	59.9	6,468	5.1	8.5	13.6	55,379
RI	0.5	0.0	0.5	3,609	63.5	10.4	74.0	359	6.2	1.0	7.2	3,968
SC	0.0	0.0	0.0	--	19.6	0.7	20.3	3,810	18.4	0.8	19.2	6,792
SD	2.5	7.3	9.8	2,198	72.3	0.9	73.3	132	6.4	6.9	13.3	2,330

State	Non-TANF Families				TANF Families				All Families Receiving Subsidies ^a			
	ETO (%)	ETW (%)	ETO or ETW (%)	Total non-TANF	ETO (%)	ETW (%)	ETO or ETW (%)	Total TANF	ETO (%)	ETW (%)	ETO or ETW (%)	Total all
TN	5.5	20.8	26.3	5,298	30.7	39.1	69.8	5,969	18.9	30.5	49.4	11,267
TX	9.0	6.1	15.2	54,309	30.0	0.0	30.0	3	7.7	5.2	12.9	63,898
UT	0.1	3.2	3.4	5,974	0.3	0.7	0.9	395	0.1	3.1	3.2	6,369
VT	19.9	0.7	20.6	3,087	7.5	0.3	7.8	40	19.7	0.7	20.5	3,127
VA ^c	2.0	62.5	64.5	7,764	10.3	67.8	78.1	4,631	5.1	64.5	69.6	12,395
WA	2.1	14.6	16.7	24,125	8.9	45.7	54.7	2,992	2.9	18.0	20.9	27,116
WV	5.2	7.5	12.6	4,386	17.6	10.9	28.6	302	5.9	7.6	13.5	4,687
WI	0.2	2.4	2.6	14,639	0.9	0.6	1.5	937	0.2	2.1	2.3	16,983
WY ^b	3.4	0.0	3.4	1,885	0.0	0.0	0.0	8	3.4	0.0	3.4	1,893
Total	4.0	5.4	9.4	678,263	23.0	18.0	41.0	105,937	6.4	6.8	13.2	823,864

Source: Unpublished data compiled by the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, FY 2016 CCDF Data Tables.

Notes: ETO = education and training only. ETW = education and training and work. Reasons for receiving care include education and training only, education and training and work, work only, protective services, and invalid or not reported.

^a Total numbers for the column “All Families Receiving Subsidies” account for all reasons of care (education and training only, education and training and work, work only, protective services, and invalid or not reported).

^b Three states (Iowa, New Hampshire, and Wyoming) may have reported a zero value in the E&T only or E&T and employment categories because of state policies, guidance given to states in the [Technical Bulletin #3](#) which instructs states to “Enter the one digit code indicating the reason for receiving subsidized child care. If more than one category applies, chose the primary reason,” or system limitations not capable of capturing multiple reasons.”

^c The proportion of families in Virginia receiving CCDF subsidies for employment *and* education and/or training (ETW) significantly increased from FY 2014 to FY 2015 (13 to 60 percent). The cause for this is unclear, though in FY 2014, Virginia implemented a new statewide child care system and switched from reporting sample data to full population data.

Notes

- ¹ All states submitted 12 months of data, except Texas (3 months submitted), South Carolina (6 months submitted), Rhode Island (9 months submitted), Georgia (10 months submitted), Louisiana (11 months submitted), and North Dakota (11 months submitted).
- ² These data are taken from the administrative data states submit monthly to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the US Department of Health and Human Services. The data are unpublished and were supplied to Urban Institute researchers through the Office of Child Care. These data cover the ACF's child care subsidy expenditures, including how many children and families were supported, the ages of children, whether the families were also supported by TANF, reasons for care, and the type of child care supported. The Administration for Children and Families uses these data to compile information about program participation for an average month. These data are from the fiscal year 2016 CCDF case-level administrative data reported by states to the federal Office of Child Care on the ACF-801 form. The figures provided in this brief have been calculated using the federal fiscal year 2016 ACF-801 data for an average month. They focus on (1) the total number of parents where the reported reason for receiving child care assistance was to support education and training (either alone or coupled with work) and (2) data on characteristics such as whether families are receiving TANF. Note that state definitions of education and training may differ.
- ³ Three states—Iowa, New Hampshire, and Wyoming—may have reported a zero value in the ETO or ETW categories because of state policies; guidance given to states in the [Technical Bulletin #3](#), which instructs states to “Enter the one digit code indicating the reason for receiving subsidized child care. If more than one category applies, chose the primary reason;” or system limitations not capable of capturing multiple reasons.
- ⁴ These data do not include parents receiving TANF whose child care is paid for directly by TANF, because they are not reported to the Administration for Children and Families; these data do, however, include parents receiving TANF whose care is paid for by TANF funds transferred to the CCDF. Teen parents are included in all analyses and are not presented separately.
- ⁵ Another 8 percent (68,284) of families received child care assistance because the child was in the protective services system.
- ⁶ These totals include all parents served with CCDF funds and funds transferred from the TANF program to the CCDF. These families are subject to the CCDF program's rules and regulations. However, they do not include parents receiving TANF whose child care is paid for directly by TANF without being transferred. No data are available about the number of families receiving child care assistance directly from TANF.
- ⁷ Seven states (Florida, Louisiana, Missouri, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin) and the District of Columbia reported more than 5 percent of families as “invalid/not reported” for the question as to whether the family was receiving TANF income.
- ⁸ The proportion of families in Virginia receiving CCDF subsidies for employment *and* education and/or training (ETW) significantly increased from FY 2014 to FY 2015 (13 to 60 percent). This increase might be the result of changes in state policy, reporting guidelines, or other reasons. In FY 2014, Virginia implemented a new statewide child care system and switched from reporting sample data to full population data.
- ⁹ See note 8.
- ¹⁰ See note 8.
- ¹¹ See note 8.
- ¹² These numbers also varied when breaking down who received child care to only support education and training, or for a combination of work and education and training. South Dakota had the highest proportion of families participating in education and training only at 84 percent, while Arizona had the fewest at less than 1 percent. Colorado had the highest proportion of families participating in education and training and employment at 74 percent, while six states had less than half of a percent (Arkansas, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, Texas, and Vermont).
- ¹³ See note 8.

References

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