

Campaign for Children

NYC's Early Childhood Education System Meets Only a Fraction of the Need

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Introduction

An analysis of the subsidized early childhood education system for children ages 0-4 in New York City reveals tremendous unmet need. **Notably, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is serving only 14% of income eligible infants and toddlers (up to age 3) in its early childhood system.**

The benefits of early childhood education programs are well known. High-quality programs have been shown to prepare children for kindergarten and help close the achievement gap, particularly for low-income children. Furthermore, early childhood education programs enable parents to participate in the workforce, which is invaluable to the economic stability of low-income families whose children participate in subsidized programs.

Despite these benefits, there is not only immense unmet need in the subsidized early childhood education system, but a risk of further shrinkage. Several centers have recently closed and additional centers may be at risk of closure, because their leases are ending or because the EarlyLearn rate paid to community based organizations is inadequate.¹

¹ For more information about the inadequacy of the EarlyLearn rate, please see the Campaign for Children's January 2015 report, *EarlyLearn Rate is Too Low to Sustain High Quality Early Education Programs in NYC*. <http://www.campaignforchildrennyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/EarlyLearn-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

Unmet Need: Gap Analysis

The gap analysis on the next page documents a clear need to serve more children, particularly infants and toddlers, in the City's subsidized early childhood settings. There are over 200,000 income eligible children ages 0-5 throughout New York City who are not served by the City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS), over 137,000 of whom are infants and toddlers. **Thus, only 14.4% of income eligible infants and toddlers can be served.**

Citywide Gap Analysis

	% of Eligible Children Served by ACS	Gap Between ACS Capacity and Eligible Children served	ACS Capacity (contract and voucher)	Number of Eligible Children (under 200% of FPL)
Infant (12 months and under)	16.4%	(41,831)	8,203	50,034
Toddler (13 months-35 months)	13.6%	(92,516)	14,502	107,018
Infant/Toddler combined	14.4%	(137,347)	22,705	157,052
Preschool (36 months-59 months)	40% ²	(68,764)	45,743	114,507
Total (under 5 years old)	25.7%	(203,111)	69,906 (68,448 plus 1,458 family child care slot of unknown age/location)	271,559

The gap analysis also shows that ACS only has the capacity to serve 40% of eligible pre-school children ages three and four. Additional income-eligible four-year olds are likely to be enrolled in prekindergarten programs administered by DOE, but are not included in this ACS data. It is important to note that these DOE programs only offer 6 hours and 20 minutes of care per day during the school year, while ACS programs provide care for the full 8- 10 hours per day as well

² It is important to note that there are eligible 4-year olds (under 200% FPL) who are being served in DOE full day pre-kindergarten programs that are not affiliated with ACS. ACS preschool data is not disaggregated by age (three-year old and four-year old). DOE data does not disaggregate by income and there is no income eligibility for DOE pre-kindergarten. Not that DOE pre-kindergarten is 6 hours and 20 minutes during the academic year. ACS pre-kindergarten programs include wrap-around child care, so provide 8-10 hours of care each day, including during the summer months.

as the summer months, and therefore better meet the needs of many low-income working families.

Data made available by the Administration for Children’s Services to Citizens’ Committee for Children and the Campaign for Children does not disaggregate three-year-olds and four-year-olds. This data is needed to better assess the unmet need for income eligible three-year-olds, since they are not served by the pre-kindergarten program.

The City’s expansion of pre-kindergarten will serve approximately 70,000 four-year-olds in time for the upcoming school year. Thus, by September 2015, between ACS and DOE, the City has said that it should have the capacity to meet the need of four-year-olds in pre-kindergarten during the school day, regardless of income. However, the City will still need to address the part of the workday not covered by DOE pre-kindergarten for four year olds, summer programming for four-year olds, and the acute shortage of care for three year olds.

The large unmet need, particularly for infants and toddlers, exists in all five boroughs, but is most dire in Queens and Staten Island: in Queens, only 9% of eligible infants and eligible toddlers can be served; in Staten Island, only 6%. While the Bronx and Manhattan appear to have smaller gap, they still can only serve about 20% of the eligible infants and toddlers.

ACS Child Care Capacity Gap and Percentage of Eligible Children Served by Borough						
	Infant		Toddler		Preschool	
	<i>Gap</i>	<i>% of eligible children served</i>	<i>Gap</i>	<i>% of eligible children served</i>	<i>Gap</i>	<i>% of eligible children served</i>
Bronx	(9,629)	23.2%	(23,712)	17.0%	(11,404)	54.0%
Brooklyn	(16,750)	15.2%	(35,190)	13.1%	(27,865)	40.6%
Manhattan	(3,985)	20.9%	(8,000)	19.6%	(6,392)	53.0%
Queens	(9,662)	9.5%	(20,602)	9.1%	(20,650)	19.7%
Staten Island	(1,805)	11.5%	(5,012)	6.1%	(2,453)	29.1%
Citywide	(41,831)	16.4%	(92,516)	13.6%	(68,764)	39.9%

Please see Appendix 1 for a Map of Unmet Need by Community District.

Findings and Recommendation:

By revealing that only 14% of infants and toddlers can be served in early education programs, this analysis documents the need to expand the capacity of the subsidized child care system, particularly for our city’s youngest children aged 0-3, so that more low-income children and their parents can access the immense benefits of early education.

In April 2008, Mayor de Blasio, then Chair of the City Council General Welfare Committee, held a hearing on efforts to preserve child care centers. He said, “My bottom line is the closing of one child care center is one too many, and we have to look at these as absolute precious resources. We have to understand that when there is a closure, it affects the children, it affects the parents, it affects the people who work at the center and it affects the broader community. And then this precious resource is lost, we don’t get it back, and that’s my fear...So we can’t eliminate slots, we have to find a way to preserve them and in fact build our capacity going forward.”³

In Fiscal Year 2010, the first year combined child care and Head Start enrollment data is available from ACS, 120,809 children received subsidized child care through EarlyLearn contracts and vouchers.⁴ In March 2015, 98,269 children were enrolled in ACS EarlyLearn programs or receiving a voucher.⁵ We have clearly lost ground in meeting the needs of NYC’s children ages 0-3.

New York City must take immediate steps to preserve the child care capacity it has, by halting the closure of child care centers or ensuring that a new program is opened in the same community. Concurrently, capacity for infants and toddlers must be expanded to meet a greater portion of the demand. Finally, additional analysis must be conducted with regard to capacity and need for three-year olds.

Background and Methodology:

The City’s subsidized early childhood system is administered by the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). It includes both a voucher system and a contracted system known as EarlyLearn NYC. EarlyLearn contracts are for child care and Head Start, and include both center-based and licensed family and group family care. Vouchers are for children ages 0-13 and can be used in centers, licensed family care, or informal family, friend or neighbor care.

Citizens’ Committee for Children (CCC), a member of the Campaign for Children steering committee, has used data provided by ACS to determine capacity, and data provided by the Census Bureau to calculate the number of children eligible.

For the purposes of this analysis, CCC has used families earning under 200% of poverty to define eligibility. This is the income eligibility the City uses for low-income family eligibility for

³ City Council General Welfare Hearing Transcript. April 10, 2008.

⁴ Mayor’s Management Report Fiscal Year 2014, at 158.

http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr2014/2014_mmr.pdf. (In Fiscal Year 2009 when Mayor de Blasio made that statement 104,275 children were enrolled in child care and 18,561 children were enrolled in Head Start. Mayor’s Management Report Fiscal Year 2009.

http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr2009/2009_mmr.pdf

⁵ Administration for Children’s Services Monthly Flash April 2015.

http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/downloads/pdf/statistics/Flash_April_2015.pdf.

subsidized child care. There are additional ways families can be eligible such as having an open child welfare case and transitioning off of public assistance.

CCC is defining the subsidized system's early childhood capacity in the following manner:

Total Capacity = Voucher capacity + Contracted capacity

- Voucher Capacity
 - The number of children enrolled in child care with a voucher in December 2014. For this analysis, only vouchers for children 0-5 were used.
- Early Learn Contracted Capacity
 - Total available capacity in the center-based system in January 2015.
 - Total family and group family enrollment as of December 2014.⁶

In total, ACS had the capacity to serve approximately 101,159 children in December 2014/January 2015 in its entire system. For the purposes of the remaining analysis, however, there are 1,447 family child care slots for which there were children enrolled that CCC cannot include, because we do not know the age of the child nor the location of that capacity. Note also that 31,272 vouchers were for school-age children (ages 5-13) and are not part of the early childhood education gap analysis.

In addition, CCC grouped the capacity to serve children based on the age groups provided by ACS: infant, toddler, preschool and school age. It is important to note that ACS preschool includes both three-year-olds and four-year-olds. There are income eligible four-year-olds who are not served by ACS but who are enrolled in the City's free pre-kindergarten program, which has no income test and is open to all four-year-olds. We are unable to capture those four-year-olds in this needs analysis because DOE does not disaggregate pre-kindergarten enrollment data according to family income. Furthermore, since we are unable to disaggregate three-year-olds from four-year-olds, we are unable to document what is likely a much higher need for three-year-old capacity than what currently exists in the system.

⁶ Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC) needed to use enrollment for contracted family child care in this analysis because while we know the total number of family child care slots available we do not know the age or specific location for mapping for the family child care seats that did not have children enrolled as of January 2015. In total, this is 1,458 additional slots.

Appendix 1: Unmet Need by Community District

CCC and the Campaign for Children believe that every community in New York City needs access to high-quality subsidized early childhood education. We know that even in areas of New York City that gentrified, there are pockets of poverty with thousands of families in need of child care so that parents can work and children can succeed. In addition, we know that not all parents choose to use child care centers near where they live, but instead prefer programs near where they work.

With all of this in mind, we offer a map showing the gap between children ages 0-4 living under 200% of poverty compared to subsidized child care capacity for children by community district:

