



2024 Report on Child Care in Cook County



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**2024 Report on Child Care
in Cook County**

Fiscal Year 2023

(covering July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023)

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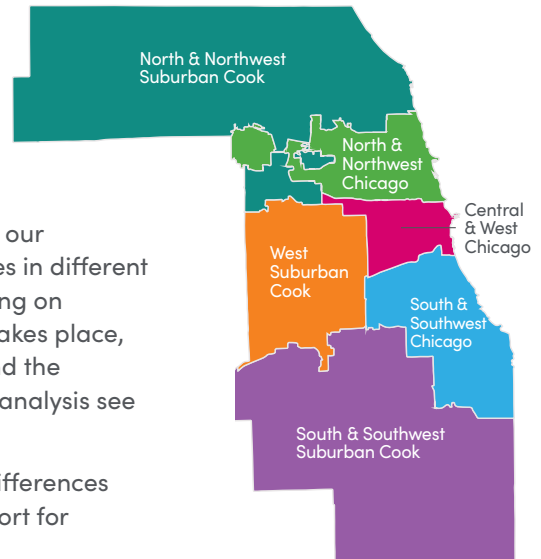
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Introduction: Families and Child Care in Cook County

Approximately 804,200 children under the age of 13 live in Cook County.¹ A large proportion, and perhaps a majority, of these children receive regular care from someone other than their parents or guardians: from a relative, a friend or neighbor, a family child care home, a child care center, or a park district or other after-school program.

This *2024 Report on Child Care in Cook County* is a brief version of our annual report that examines the availability of child care to families in different parts of Cook County. This report spans FY2023, with the year ending on June 30, 2023. We present the various settings in which child care takes place, the number of children that can be served in each type of care, and the fees that parents pay to different types of providers. For a deeper analysis see our 2023 Report.²

We divide Cook County into six regions to show how geographic differences can affect parents' success in finding child care. See our 2023 Report for detailed definitions of these regions.



Types of Child Care Available in Cook County

A family's ability to find quality child care is based on many factors including the types of care available where they live, the child's age and specific needs, the hours of care needed, the amount the family can afford to pay, and the parent's particular preferences. Below we outline the types of formal and informal child care options that are available to Cook County families.

Center Care

Most child care centers are licensed through the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), though a number connected to schools or religious institutions are exempt from licensing. Centers provide care for dozens or even hundreds of children and must employ a staff and establish formal operating rules. In June 2023, 1,314 full-time centers operated in Cook County.

Licensed Home Care

This is care offered in a person's home and regulated by DCFS. Licensed home providers may care for eight to twelve children. Providers with full-time adult assistants licensed as group homes can care for as many as 16 children. In June 2023, there were 2,427 licensed home providers in Cook County.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Care

This is care provided by friends, neighbors, and relatives in either the home of the child or the caregiver. FFN providers are permitted to care for up to three unrelated children at a time without a license. There is no registry of informal care providers and therefore the total number in Cook County is unknown. FFN providers are thought to be the most flexible about hours of care and payments. They are sometimes referred to as license-exempt home providers.

School-Age Care

In addition to school-age care offered through child care centers, before- and/or after-school care is offered by some schools, park districts, and programs such as the Boys and Girls Clubs. Most of these programs are exempt from licensing, making it difficult to get a complete count of them. In June 2023, 157 programs in Cook County listed with Illinois Action for Children.

¹ 2022 American Community Survey, five-year estimates.

² [Report on Childcare Cook County 2023](#)

Child Care Slots in Cook County Regions

The formal child care sector comprised of full-day child care centers, school-age programs and licensed child care homes has the capacity to care for approximately 143,900 Cook County children. Not all programs operate at capacity, however, for various reasons including staff shortages. As there are about 570,300 children birth-through-12 in Cook County with all parents working, we estimate that 25 percent of children potentially in need of child care can be served in formal settings. The remaining 75 percent of children in this category may be cared for by family, friend or neighbor providers, older siblings, license-exempt programs not listed with Illinois Action for Children, babysitters or nannies, public or private preschool programs, parents or guardians who work part-time or stagger their work schedules, or even self-care.

Table 1. Formal Child Care Slots in Cook County Regions
June 2023

	Formal Child Care Slots ³						Children potentially in need of child care ⁴		Slots as a percent of children with all parents working
	Full-day licensed center slots	Full-day license-exempt center slots	School-age only program slots	Licensed home slots	Licensed home extended-care school-age slots	Total slots	Total children birth through 12	Children birth to 12 with all parents working	
Cook County	101,815	6,167	11,775	19,879	4,489	144,125	804,262	570,291	25%
North & Northwest Chicago	19,147	836	1466	2,688	730	24,867	149,577	105,654	24%
Central & West Chicago	16,003	641	997	2,647	485	20,773	78,152	55,225	38%
South & Southwest Chicago	20,451	1,855	1653	7,737	1,812	33,508	164,467	117,743	28%
Chicago Total	55,601	3,332	4,116	13,072	3,027	79,148	392,196	278,623	28%
North & Northwest Suburban Cook	22,170	1,365	5,569	1,116	161	30,381	204,198	143,944	21%
West Suburban Cook	8,171	826	1,257	1,875	417	12,546	82,258	57,839	22%
South & Southwest Suburban Cook	15,873	644	833	3,816	884	22,050	125,610	89,885	25%
Suburban Total	46,214	2,835	7,659	6,807	1,462	64,977	412,066	291,668	22%

³ Slots represent daytime capacity. Licensed homes have the capacity to serve 14,818 children during evening hours if they choose to operate during these hours, while child care centers can provide an additional 5,462 evening slots. Additional license-exempt centers and slots may exist that are not reported to Illinois Action for Children, particularly those serving school-age children.

⁴ From the 2022 American Community Survey, five-year estimates.

Not all child care centers report their slots by age to Illinois Action for Children. Table 2 reflects the capacity of the 72 percent that do. Comparable data for licensed homes are not reported because home providers have more flexibility in the ages of children they can enroll and the ages they serve change frequently.

Table 2. Center Slots by Age in Cook County Regions⁵
June 2023

	Infants (6 weeks to 14 months)	Toddler (15 to 23 months)	2-year-old	3- to 4-year-old	5-year-old to kindergarten	Before & After School (full & part time)	School Age, Summer
Cook County	6,848	9,207	12,144	21,276	16,173	20,201	14,508
North & Northwest Chicago	1,117	1,562	2,104	3,506	2,696	2,534	3,051
Central & West Chicago	933	1,248	1,852	2,990	2,334	2,511	2,103
South & Southwest Chicago	1,543	2,058	2,643	4,605	3,763	3,823	3,427
Chicago Total	3,593	4,868	6,599	11,101	8,793	8,868	8,581
North & Northwest Suburban Cook	1,323	1,740	2,397	4,646	3,098	6,294	3,078
West Suburban Cook	568	749	1,053	1,889	1,450	2,168	1,092
South & Southwest Suburban Cook	1,364	1,850	2,095	3,640	2,832	2,871	1,757
Suburban Total	3,255	4,339	5,545	10,175	7,380	11,333	5,927

Price of Care in Cook County Regions

Each year, Illinois Action for Children’s Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) program surveys providers on the rates they charge parents. The tables below present the rates for both licensed centers and licensed homes for the regions of Cook County based on child age as of June 2023.⁶ The bottom row of each table shows the maximum weekly reimbursement rate the State will pay on behalf of families eligible to receive assistance through the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).⁷

For both center-based care and licensed home care, child care rates typically decrease as a child gets older because it generally costs less for providers to care for older children. In centers, the child-teacher ratio can increase as children get older. In licensed homes, providers are permitted to care for additional school-age children beyond the usual maximum capacity if they have a part-time assistant.

The cost of care also differs by geographic area. Following the patterns of supply and demand, care is least expensive in the least economically resourced parts of the county. This is true of center-based and licensed home care in the South and Southwest regions of both Chicago and Suburban Cook County, as well as for licensed home care in the Central & West region of Chicago. Child care is most expensive in the relatively affluent North and Northwest regions of both Chicago and Suburban Cook County.

⁵ Includes full-time slots in licensed and exempt child care centers and full- and part-time before- and after-school slots
⁶ The cost of family, friend and neighbor care is not reported because very little data are available on the rates they charge.
⁷ CCAP reimbursement rates in effect as of December 2022. The weekly rate paid to family, friend and neighbor providers was \$110.20 regardless of the child’s age, or \$22.04 per day.

Table 3: Average Weekly Rates: Full-time Child Care in a Licensed Center

	Infant (6 weeks to 14 months)	Toddler (15 to 23 months)	2-year-old	3- to 4-year-old	5-year-old to kindergarten	Before & After School	School Age, Summer
Cook County	\$354	\$336	\$289	\$255	\$251	\$224	\$239
North & Northwest Chicago	\$396	\$362	\$310	\$280	\$269	\$220	\$236
Central & West Chicago	\$371	\$351	\$302	\$266	\$262	\$231	\$243
South & Southwest Chicago	\$315	\$306	\$255	\$221	\$220	\$212	\$225
Chicago	\$348	\$331	\$280	\$246	\$243	\$217	\$232
North & Northwest Suburban Cook	\$412	\$380	\$346	\$308	\$305	\$248	\$282
West Suburban Cook	\$356	\$338	\$286	\$254	\$252	\$233	\$238
South & Southwest Suburban Cook	\$320	\$314	\$267	\$234	\$230	\$217	\$227
Suburban Cook	\$360	\$342	\$300	\$266	\$263	\$230	\$247
Maximum amount reimbursed by CCAP for full-time care	\$335		\$270	\$230		\$115 (<5 hrs/day) \$230 (5+ hrs/day)	\$230

Table 4: Average Weekly Rates: Full-time Child Care in a Licensed Home

	Infant (6 weeks to 14 months)	Toddler (15 to 23 months)	2-year-old	3- to 4-year-old	5-year-old to kindergarten	Before & After School	School Age, Summer
Cook County	\$238	\$236	\$223	\$207	\$206	\$203	\$206
North & Northwest Chicago	\$258	\$255	\$245	\$229	\$227	\$221	\$221
Central & West Chicago	\$234	\$232	\$218	\$200	\$200	\$198	\$203
South & Southwest Chicago	\$232	\$230	\$216	\$198	\$198	\$196	\$199
Chicago	\$238	\$236	\$222	\$205	\$204	\$201	\$205
North & Northwest Suburban Cook	\$276	\$272	\$269	\$262	\$263	\$259	\$253
West Suburban Cook	\$241	\$238	\$226	\$210	\$210	\$205	\$210
South & Southwest Suburban Cook	\$229	\$227	\$214	\$196	\$195	\$192	\$199
Suburban Cook	\$239	\$237	\$226	\$210	\$210	\$205	\$208
Maximum amount reimbursed by CCAP for full-time care	\$239.80		\$223.45	\$203.25		\$101.60 (<5 hrs/day) \$203.25 (5+ hrs/day)	\$203.25



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