

Child Care/Head Start

Early Childhood Development

Birth through age 8 is a critical period in the lives of children. An emerging body of evidence clearly indicates that a child's early years are the most critical in terms of brain development.

Children's brains show almost twice the activity of an adult brain until about the age of 10. Therefore, quality early education opportunities for young children are essential and need to be available to children in all of their environments, including child care outside of the home (Reed, S.,1998).

Child Care Ratios Worker/Child
Comparison of Current State Standards/U.S. Recommended Ratios/TN Proposed/Withdrawn Standards

Age Group	TN Worker to Child	U.S. Recommended Ratios	TN Proposed/Withdrawn Standards
Infant	1 Worker/5 Infants	*1 Worker/3 infants, 0-24mo.	1 Worker/4 infants(group size no larger than 8)
Toddler	1 Worker/7 Toddlers	*1 Worker/4 Toddlers, 25-30mo.	1 Worker/6 Toddlers (group no larger than 12)
Two-Year-Olds	1 Worker/8 Children	*1 Worker/5 Children, 31-35 Months	1 worker/7 Children (group no larger than 14)
Three-Year-Olds	1 Worker/10 Children	*1 Worker/7 Children	1 Worker/9 Children (group no larger than 18)
Four-Year-Olds	1 Worker/15 Children	*1 Worker/8 Children	1 Worker/15/ Children(group no larger than 24)
Five-Year-Olds	1 Worker/20 Children	*1 Worker/8 Children	1 Worker/16 Children (group no larger than 24)
Six-Year-Olds	1 Worker/25 Children	*1 Worker/8 Children	NA

*Developed by; American Public Health Association and American Academy of Pediatrics

Further studies indicate that the quality of child care is important because it is closely linked with children's social, cognitive, and language development. Children in high quality early childhood programs are more likely to be emotionally secure and self-confident, proficient in language use, able to regulate impulsive and aggressive inclinations, and advanced in cognitive development. Over time, these children may experience enhanced school achievement, higher earnings, and decreased involvement with the criminal justice system.

In contrast, children who experience poor-quality child care are at risk for poor long-term developmental outcomes, including apathy, poor school skills, and heightened aggression (Helburn, S.W., Howes,C., 1996).

A recent Carnegie Corporation study noted that the first three years of life are critical in the brain development of children and that brain development is far more susceptible to adverse effects than had been earlier realized. Specifically, "the quality of young children's environment and social experience has a decisive, long-lasting impact on their well-being and ability to learn."

What is Quality Care?

- ✓ A safe and healthy environment.
- ✓ Caregivers who are nurturing and knowledgeable about children's development and