

# Parental Need for Child Care Assistance

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## Overview

**Many low-income working parents rely on subsidized child care.** The program supports qualifying families to work or attend school, many of whom may be unable to afford market-rate child care. Examining parents' income and employment patterns can guide policymakers to optimally structure subsidized child care to support sustained employment and improve program engagement. This brief series focuses on the work, school, and child care engagement of Illinois families enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). It examines parent employment, earnings, and school attendance when their family initiated participation in subsidized child care.

## What We Did

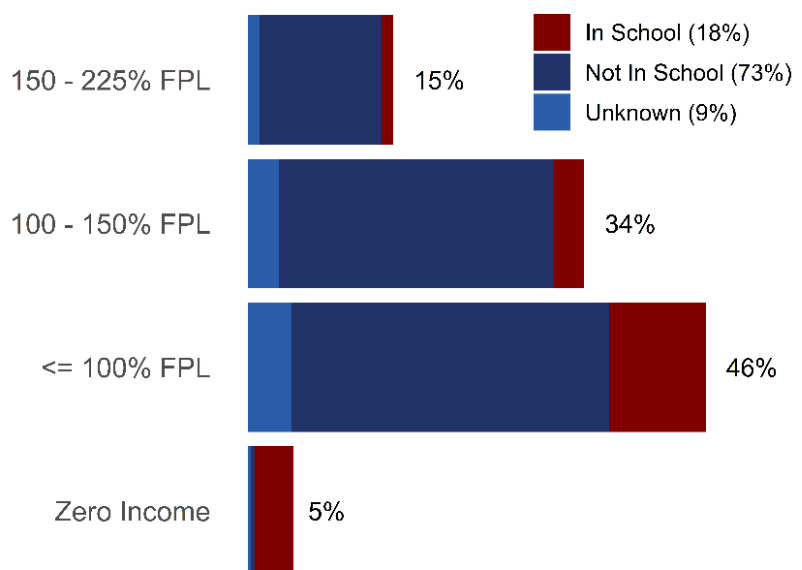
We analyzed the income, labor market participation, and school attendance of parents with subsidized child care cases that opened in the first quarter of 2019. We restricted analyses to households that had not participated in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) in the prior 2 years. We used CCAP data from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Management System (CCMS) to examine the employment and school enrollment status and distribution of household income, relative to the Federal Poverty Line, at the time of entry into subsidized child care.

## What We Found

The majority of families, 85%, reported household income at or below 150% of Federal Poverty Line (FPL; \$31,995 for a family of 3 in 2019) when they entered subsidized child care. Almost half of the families had income below 100% FPL and 5% of families had no income upon program entry.

One of five CCAP cases had at least one parent in school at program entry. Almost 80% of parents attending school were also working at the same time. School attendance can limit available work hours and income, with more than half of student parents at or below 100% FPL and a quarter of them without any reported income. Among households with zero income when they entered CCAP, 84% had a parent attending school.

### The Majority of Families Entering CCAP Have Incomes Below 150% of the Federal Poverty Line



Note: 2019 Q1. Household income as reported in Child Care Management System (CCMS) at time of CCAP application. Cases with household income above the 225% of Federal Poverty Line (FPL) threshold were excluded due to reporting restrictions for small sample sizes. A case is determined to be in school if any parent was in school at the time of CCAP eligibility determination.

## Learn More

[Follow along](#) for technical details and methodology, and additional study findings on parental employment within subsidized child care.

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## About CCAP

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) in Illinois provides childcare subsidies to low-income families in the state who participate in qualifying employment and educational activities. Eligibility for CCAP is restricted to families with children under age 13 whose household income falls below 225% of the federal poverty line at the time of application (or 275% of the federal poverty line at the time of eligibility redetermination). According to IDHS, in FY2020, Illinois CCAP served 193,715 children and 108,316 families, and distributed subsidy payments to 26,798 childcare providers.

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