



Challenges to Providing Quality Child Care For DC's Infants and Toddlers

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Many of the District's families rely on the city's child care subsidy program to access quality child care while they go to work or pursue education. However, many early care and education providers struggle to make ends meet because of a large gap between the costs of providing quality care and resources available from the city through its subsidy program. This creates an unsustainable business model, which threatens the ability of low- and moderate-income families to find a high-quality center for their children that is close to home or work.

These are a few of the findings in the new report jointly released today by DCFPI and DC Applesseed – [*Solid Footing: Reinforcing the Early Care and Education Economy for Infants and Toddlers in DC.*](#)

The study looks at the cost of providing quality child care for infants and toddlers in the District, based on interviews with providers serving families in DC's child care subsidy program. The report uncovered several important findings about the costs of delivering care and the experiences of early care and education providers, including:



1. Current child care subsidy rates from the District cover only 66 to 70 percent of the median cost per infant or toddler for care in an accredited environment. The programs receive other valuable government support in several ways in addition to tuition subsidies, but the support is not evenly distributed and does not fully cover the cost of meeting quality requirements and other operational challenges.
2. Some providers are located in areas of the District where few families have incomes that allow them to pay private tuition rates. As a result, these centers do not have a sustainable mix of revenues and often do not have adequate resources to provide the highest-quality care and make ends meet at the end of the year.
3. Many providers, even among a sample of the highest quality programs in the District, lack the business systems necessary to thrive in the fragile child care economy.

4. There is very little consistency across early care and education centers in terms of how resources are allocated and used. The only consistent pattern across business models is low wages for staff and the desire to pay them more.
5. Most centers serve children with developmental delays and disabilities, but, aside from children and staff receiving some government-sponsored support in the classroom, they are not compensated for the additional time and costs associated with providing such care.

To read the full report, click [here](#).