

INEQUITABLE ACCESS TO CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES IN WASHINGTON

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The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) serves as the primary source of federal funding for states to help families with low incomes afford child care and to support broader child care quality.¹ However, limited federal investments, state funding constraints, and restrictive policies mean subsidy access is out of reach for far too many children and families. Finding affordable care can be especially burdensome for families with low incomes and even more so for those who experience compounding racial inequities such as those faced by Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American/Alaska Native, and other communities of color.^{2,3}

In 2020, CCDF subsidies only reached 16 percent of all potentially eligible children in Washington, based on state income eligibility, or 29,600 children.^{4,5,6} Overall subsidy receipt in Washington was higher than the national rate based on state income eligibility of 14 percent.⁷

WASHINGTON CHILDREN POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE A CCDF SUBSIDY⁸

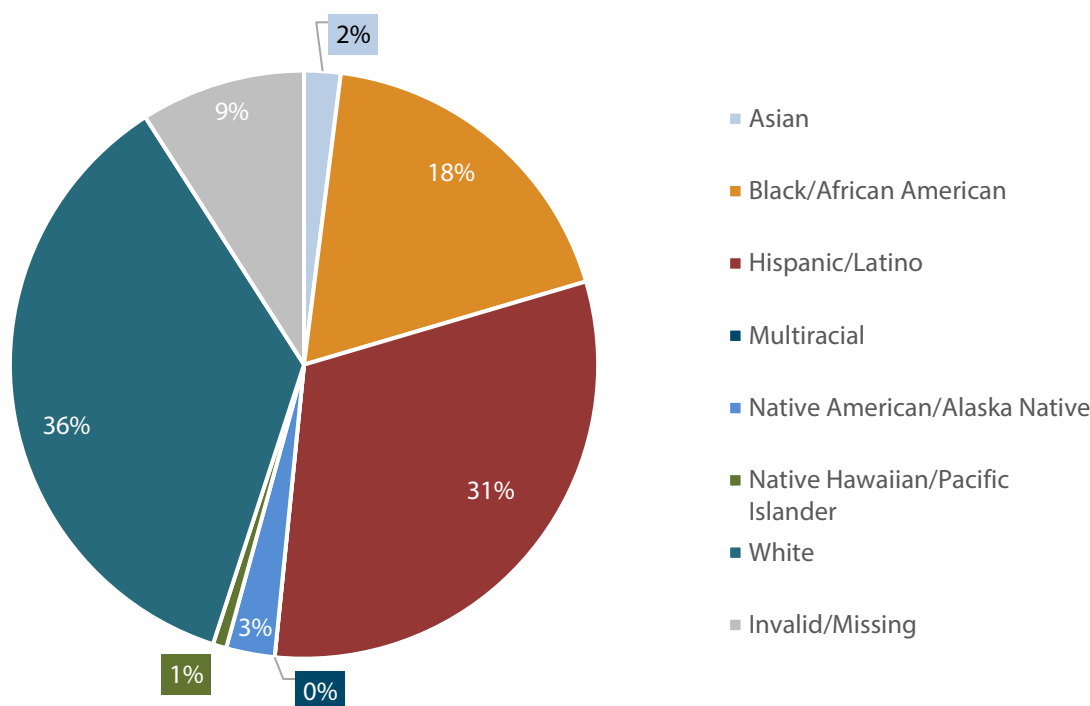
CLASP estimates that 1.2 million children ages 0-13 lived in Washington during 2020, and 15 percent of these children (181,401) were potentially eligible to receive a subsidy through CCDF based on state income eligibility limits.⁹ Like many other states, Washington sets its initial state income eligibility limit lower than the federal maximum income limit allowed by federal rules. The state's maximum allowable family income limit is lower than the federal limit, meaning an increase to the state's threshold would allow for 152,933 additional children to become potentially eligible, an 84 percent increase. Child care access is a critical support for economic stability and growth, especially for families with low incomes. And with more than one in seven children in Washington potentially eligible for CCDF, expanding subsidy access is critical to supporting those families as well as broader state economic growth.

WASHINGTON CHILDREN SERVED THROUGH CCDF¹⁰

In 2020, of the estimated 181,401 potentially eligible children in Washington, 16 percent were served through CCDF, for a total of 29,600 children served. This subsidy access rate is higher than the national average rate of 14 percent of children served based on state income limits. Black/African American children accounted for 18 percent of children served, Hispanic/Latino children accounted for 31 percent of children

served, and white children accounted for 36 percent of children served through CCDF. Asian, multiracial, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Native American/Alaska Native children in total accounted for just over 5 percent of children served.¹¹ Due to data limitations, including sample size limitations in the American Community Survey and/or missing and/or invalid CCDF data from the Administration for Children and Families, we were not able to conduct analyses on potential eligibility and CCDBG access for children by race and ethnicity in Washington.

Washington Children Served Through CCDF by Race/Ethnicity



Source: CLASP estimates of the number of children served by racial/ethnic category are based on “FY 2020 Preliminary Data Table 1 - Average Monthly Adjusted Number of Families and Children Served” (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/data/fy-2020-preliminary-data-table-1>) and “FY 2020 Preliminary Data Table 12a - Average Monthly Percent of Children In Care By Race and Ethnicity” (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/data/fy-2020-preliminary-data-table-12a>).

CONNECTING DATA AND POLICY, IMPROVING POLICIES, AND INCREASING INVESTMENTS TO CENTER EQUITY

These analyses show that overall access to CCDF was low in Washington, despite more than one in seven of all children under age 13 being potentially eligible. Due to data limitations, we could not conduct further analyses by race and ethnicity. However, broader systemic inequities rooted in racism and compounded by economic inequality have created increased need and additional access barriers for families of color. **When coupled with low overall access, this demonstrates a clear and immediate need for significant and sustained increases in federal funding to states, as well as policies that intentionally address compounding racial and economic inequities.** Both are essential to addressing the historic underfunding, present inequities, and ongoing recovery from COVID-19 that have created rippling instability and exacerbated need.¹²

ENDNOTES

¹ “Fundamentals of CCDF Administration: CCDF Funding Overview,” Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Technical Assistance Network, <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/ccdf-fundamentals/ccdf-funding-overview>.

² Maura Baldiga, Pamela Joshi, Erin Hardy, et. al., “Data-for-Equity Research Brief: Child Care Affordability for Working Parents,” Diversitydatakids.org, 2018, https://www.diversitydatakids.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/child-care_update.pdf.

³ Due to data limitations, including sample size limitations in the American Community Survey and/or missing and/or invalid CCDF data from the Administration for Children and Families, we were unable to conduct analyses on potential eligibility and CCDBG access for all racial and ethnic groups in Washington. Instead, this fact sheet outlines overall potential CCDF subsidy eligibility and receipt for children ages 0-13 in Washington. For more information, please see the data limitations and methodology document <https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/inequitable-access-2024/>.

⁴ In 2020, Washington set state income eligibility limits at 196 percent of the federal poverty limit (FPL). This income threshold represents initial eligibility limits—the maximum income families can have when they apply for child care assistance. Karen Schulman, “On the precipice: state child care policies 2020,” National Women’s Law Center, May 2021, <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/NWLC-State-Child-Care-Assistance-Policies-2020.pdf>.

⁵ “FY 2020 Preliminary Data Table 1 - Average Monthly Adjusted Number of Families and Children Served,” Administration for Children and Families: Office of Child Care, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, May 2022, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/data/fy-2020-preliminary-data-table-1>.

⁶ The number of potentially eligible children is based on CLASP analysis of American Community Survey 5-year (2017-2021), 1-year (2019), and 1-year (2021) data. Estimates are based on children under age 13, whose available parent(s) was working, with household incomes at or below 196 percent FPL.

⁷ Based on CLASP analysis of the total number of potentially eligible children, according to each state’s income eligibility limit, and the total number of children served through CCDF in 2020.

⁸ The number of potentially eligible children is based on CLASP analysis of American Community Survey 5-year (2017-2021), 1-year (2019), and 1-year (2021) data. Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

⁹ CLASP estimates based on analysis of American Community Survey 5-year (2017-2021), 1-year (2019), and 1-year (2021) data on children under age 13 and the proportion of those children whose available parent(s) was working, with household incomes at or below 196 percent FPL.

¹⁰ For the purposes of this analysis, children whose ethnicity was identified as Hispanic/Latino are analyzed together, regardless of their race (including children whose race was labeled as “some other race”). All non-Hispanic children are identified by their racial group (Asian, Black/African American, multiracial, Native American/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and white).

¹¹ CLASP estimates of the number of children served by racial/ethnic category are based on “FY 2020 Preliminary Data Table 1 - Average Monthly Adjusted Number of Families and Children Served” (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/data/fy-2020-preliminary-data-table-1>) and “FY 2020 Preliminary Data Table 12a - Average Monthly Percent of Children In Care By Race and Ethnicity” (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/data/fy-2020-preliminary-data-table-12a>).

¹² Pamela Winston, “COVID-19 and Economic Opportunity: Unequal Effects on Economic Need and Program Response,” Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning & Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/pdf/265391/covid-19-human-service-response-brief.pdf>.