**CHILD CARE IS ONE OF THE COSTLIEST ITEMS FOR FAMILIES**

Excerpt from the 2018 Report *US and the High Cost of Child Care*

Overall, working families across the country are paying a large percentage of their annual earnings to cover the costs of child care. Figure 1 is a regional breakdown of the average annual cost of full-time care in a center for two children (an infant and a 4 year old) compared to other household costs. Those costs include housing, transportation, food and health care. The comparison to college tuition is included in the chart because, in many states, the cost of a year's tuition and fees at a four-year public college is comparable to the average cost of child care.

In the Midwest, Northeast and South, the cost of full-time center-based care for two children is the costliest category of household expenses. In the West, the cost of child care for two children is surpassed only by the high cost of housing. In every region in the United States, the cost of housing and the cost of child care far outweigh other major household expenses.

The cost of child care for two children exceeds mortgage costs for homeowners in 35 states and the District of Columbia. Child care fees for two children in a child care center also exceed annual median rent payments in every state.

In all regions of the United States, average child care fees for an infant in a child care center exceed the average amount that families spend on food and transportation combined.

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### Figure 1: Average Annual Household Expenses by Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Child Care</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>College Tuition</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Health Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Midwest</strong></td>
<td>$20,605</td>
<td>$17,188</td>
<td>$9,872</td>
<td>$9,077</td>
<td>$7,076</td>
<td>$4,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West</strong></td>
<td>$20,960</td>
<td>$21,334</td>
<td>$8,460</td>
<td>$9,747</td>
<td>$7,978</td>
<td>$4,523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northeast</strong></td>
<td>$24,815</td>
<td>$21,140</td>
<td>$12,853</td>
<td>$8,574</td>
<td>$7,018</td>
<td>$4,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South</strong></td>
<td>$17,193</td>
<td>$16,741</td>
<td>$9,430</td>
<td>$9,447</td>
<td>$6,671</td>
<td>$4,271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Child Care is Unaffordable for Working Families

Families living at or below the federal poverty level are especially burdened with the high cost of child care. In 2017, the federal poverty level for a family of three in the continental United States was $20,420. Figure 2, Key Facts on Child Care Costs and Poverty shows where families who live at the poverty level would pay the highest and lowest percentages of their annual income on child care for an infant.

Figure 2 illustrates that a family of three in the District of Columbia that lives at the federal poverty level would not be able to afford center-based infant care, as it exceeds 100 percent of annual income. This same family would pay 82 percent of annual income for family-based child care for an infant.

The story is only marginally better for families who earn double the federal poverty threshold ($40,840 in the continental United States). A family of three who earns double the federal poverty threshold pays an average of 13 percent of income on center-based infant care in Mississippi and over 57 percent of income on the same type of care in the District of Columbia.

Go to usa.childcareaware.org/costofcare to read the full report.

Figure 2: Key Facts on Child Care Costs and Poverty

The Cost of Baby Food for One Year is Around $1,095
about the same as a month of infant child care in Massachusetts and D.C.

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Massachusetts
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A MONTH

District of Columbia
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