



# HUMAN SERVICES POLICY CENTER

Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs ♦ University of Washington

*Forging a Brighter Future for Children and Families*

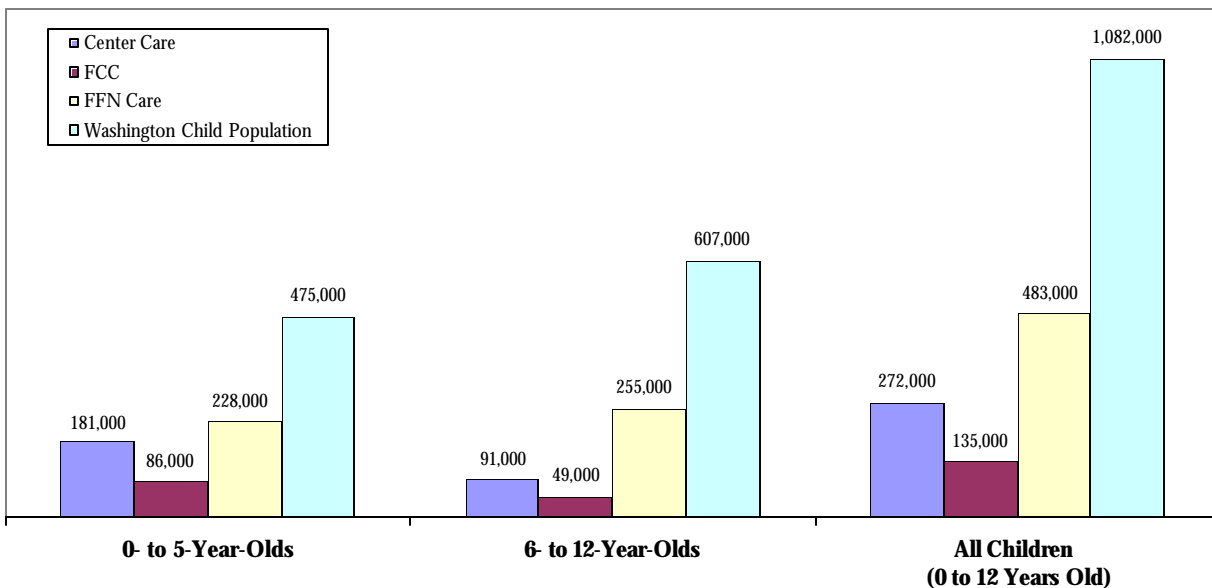
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## Parental Child Care Choices in Washington State\*

In 2001, we surveyed approximately 1,200 Washington families with children age 12 and younger to learn what types of child care parents choose, including:

- ❖ **Center Care (CC):** care at licensed centers, preschools, or nursery schools, including Head Start and the Washington Early Childhood Education Assistance Program.
- ❖ **Family Child Care (FCC):** care (licensed and unlicensed) provided by a non-relative in the caregiver's home.
- ❖ **Family, Friends, or Neighbor (FFN):** non-parental care (paid or unpaid) other than a licensed center or FCC home.

**Number of Washington Children in Each Type of Care\*  
by Age Group**



\*Categories are not mutually exclusive.

**Nearly half a million children in Washington – 45 percent of the 1.1 million children, birth to age 12 – are cared for each week by non-parental Family, Friends, or Neighbors (FFN).** Family, Friend, or Neighbor care is the most common form of non-parental child care for all children except preschoolers. Twenty-five percent of Washington children are in Center Care (CC) and 12 percent are in Family Child Care (FCC).

**The percentage of non-parental hours spent in different kinds of care varies according to the child's age.**

- ❖ Infants (birth to 1 year) spend a much greater proportion of non-parental care hours with Family, Friends, or Neighbors (65%) than in Center Care (21%) or Family Child Care (14%).
- ❖ For toddlers (age 1-2), FFN care also predominates, but its share of total care drops as the proportion of hours spent in CC and FCC increases.
- ❖ In preschool (age 3-5), Center Care use accounts for more than half of all hours in non-parental care.
- ❖ In the early school years (age 6-8), almost half of all non-parental child-care hours are spent with Family, Friends, or Neighbors.
- ❖ By the time children are 9-12 years old, 80% of all non-parental child care hours are spent with Family, Friends, or Neighbors.

**% of All Weekly Non-Parental Care Hours in Each Type of Care**

	Center Care	Family Child Care	FFN care
<b>Infant (0-1 year)</b>	21%	14%	65%
<b>Toddler (1-2)</b>	27%	28%	45%
<b>Preschooler (3-5)</b>	52%	22%	26%
<b>School I (6-8)</b>	34%	21%	45%
<b>School II (9-12)</b>	14%	7%	80%

**For all ages and all types of care, parents are most likely to report choosing care based on familiarity with the provider or personal recommendations. Depending on the child's age, additional factors affect care choices.**

- ❖ *For children age 0-5:* Many parents report choosing CC or FCC because of specific aspects of the quality of care or the nature of the program. Parents concerned with cost are more likely to choose FFN over CC and FCC.
- ❖ *For children age 6-12:* Location and convenient hours become more important for decisions about care for older children. Parents seeking a low child:adult ratio are more likely to choose FFN care than CC and FCC.

**Quality of care can affect the development of young children.** Children age 0-5 spend a median of 13 hours a week in CC, 16 hours a week in FCC, and 6 hours a week in FFN care (more than 10 hours a week for 1/3 of the children in FFN care). Many experts consider 10 hours a week sufficient for the quality of care to affect children's development.

*\*With support from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services' Division of Child Care and Early Learning, we took a multi-faceted approach to learning about the informal child care arrangements known as "family, friend, and neighbor" (FFN) care. Our approach included: (1) a survey of almost 300 individuals who care for other people's children on a regular basis but do not work in child care centers; (2) a focus group with FFN caregivers; (3) interviews with early care and education policy makers and professionals; (4) a survey of almost 1,200 households with children age 0-12; and (5) a forum of child care experts, caregivers, agency staff, advocates, parents, and others engaged in developing policy for early care and education.*

## **Human Services Policy Center**

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