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Child care costs in NY among nation's worst

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A new study finds the **cost of child care** continues to rise, with New York designated as among the least affordable states for care.

The report by Child Care Aware of America says ongoing increases in child care costs are putting a strain on families across the country, rivaling what the average family pays for one year of college tuition at a four-year institution.

New York is ranked the No. 1 least affordable state for center-based care for a four-year-old care, and No. 3 least affordable for center-based infant care.

The report, 2015 Parents and the High Cost of Child Care, found that child care is often among the most significant expenses in a family budget, at times exceeding the cost of housing, college tuition, transportation or food.

According to the report, the high cost of child care doesn't affect just the family: U.S. businesses also pay the price for employee absenteeism due to child care breakdowns, losing approximately \$4.4 billion in 2014.

Here's some statistics on New York state:

- The average cost for center-based care can cost as much as \$14,144 annually for an infant or \$11,700 annually for a four-year-old. In Erie County, the cost for center-based child care for an infant is \$12,792, compared to \$6,470 for a year of tuition at a public college.
- The cost of a year of care in a center for an infant is nearly double the cost of a year of tuition at a public college, the widest gap of any state.
- For families living at or below the poverty level, full-time, center-based care for an infant is 70 percent of family income and for two children are in care.

"The costs we're finding are going up over \$700 a month and family income isn't going up like that," said Lynn Pullano, CEO at the Child Care Resource Network in Buffalo, a nonprofit agency that works to develop quality, accessible and affordable child care and early learning opportunities.

Erie County is home to about 27,000 licensed and registered child care providers, each providing three to 100 slots. That includes infant and pre-school age, as well as school-age programs including before- and after-school programs.

Pullano works with hundreds of those providers, and said the increases in costs are often tied in part to fears about the loss of child care subsidies, uncertainty about minimum wage rates for employees as well as implementation of state regulations.



Lynn Pullano, CEO at the Child Care Resource Network in Buffalo.

“The cost of business for child care centers is increasing,” she said. “People are trying to make sure they can maintain a solid business. About 75 percent of the cost is staffing, and we know the staff of child care centers are not paid well — the average wage is about \$7.50 an hour.”

The report’s authors call for empowering providers with a living wage and affordable professional development opportunities; helping families make good child care decisions with reliable and accessible information; and an investment from businesses, families, and state and local governments to create a seamless, affordable child care system that works for families.

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