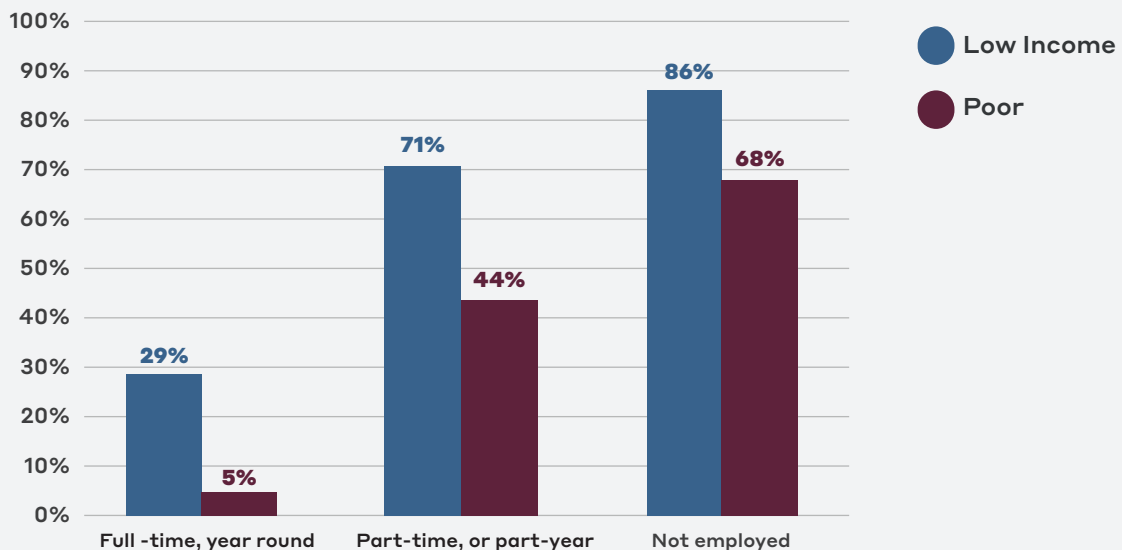


# Strengthening Families Through Child Care

Parents and families are the first and most important influence on a child's well-being and early development. In today's economy, young children are increasingly growing, developing, and learning both at home and in formal child care settings. Although each setting independently impacts a child, together the home and formal contexts interact to offer a unique influence. The family's engagement in their child's upbringing—both at home and in a formal setting—is critical to that child's success. Child care and early learning programs help strengthen families in several ways.

**Nearly two-thirds of parents with children under age 5 are in the workforce and need safe, trustworthy, and affordable child care while they are at work supporting the well-being of their family.**

**Percentage of Children in Low-income and Poor Families by Parent Employment, 2016<sup>1</sup>**



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

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One of the key predictors of academic achievement is the extent to which families are engaged, both by encouraging learning at home and by involving themselves in their child's education.<sup>2,3</sup> When a parent or caregiver is involved in a child's education, the child is less likely to have behavioral problems and more likely to reach higher levels of achievement.<sup>4</sup> Engaging parents in becoming their child's advocate at the earliest occasion establishes productive and trustworthy relationships, develops feedback loops, and helps providers and the broader community better understand the needs of the family and child.

## PARENTAL SUPPORT

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Children are more likely to thrive when their parents and families have the support they need. In a 2016 survey, approximately 80% of parents with young children agreed strongly that good parenting can be learned, and 69% said they would use more positive parenting strategies if they knew what those strategies entailed.<sup>5</sup> Participation in child care and early learning programs often provides parents with supports and resources that can increase positive outcomes for children and families, including by building communities of support, offering comprehensive services such as health and mental health resources, and connecting parents to other community resources to help them reach their goals and fulfill their needs.

## FAMILY SUSTAINABILITY

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A substantial body of research confirms the link between a family's financial stability in a child's early years and the child's academic achievement, behavioral problems, and mental health.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, multiple studies have shown that early development suffers when children lack access to basic needs like safe housing, health care, and nutritious food, and when their parents are financially stressed or overworked.<sup>7</sup> Access to child care so parents can work is therefore a critical aspect of supporting families with children. The earnings these parents make can promote social mobility and even decrease dependency on public-assistance programs over time.

### **The Takeaway**

Access to high-quality child care creates greater financial stability for families, meaning parents have more time to connect with their children, giving them a strong foundation to achieve their full potential.

# Endnotes

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3. Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, 2002. Available at: <https://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>.
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5. Zero to Three, *Tuning In: Parents of Young Children Speak Up About What They Think, Know and Need*, June 6, 2016. Available at: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1425-national-parent-survey-report#downloads>.
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