Early Care & Education Consortium

Delivering Quality Early Care and Education at Scale

Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC) members operate more than 7,500 programs across 48 states, employ about 185,000 educators, and serve over one million children.

Families look for childcare, preschool, and before- and afterschool programs that provide safe, nurturing, enriching environments where children can learn and thrive. Delivering that quality at scale requires sustained investment in appropriately credentialed educators, research-based curriculum, safe facilities, enriching learning environments, and continuous improvement. ECEC members deliver that quality through investment in qualified educators, strong program practices, and exceeding safety minimums. The data below documents ECEC members' investments in these areas and compares their participation in external validation systems against broader industry benchmarks.

26.5%
of ECEC member centers are NAEYC accredited vs. ~5% of all centers nationally

35.7%
of ECEC member centers hold at least one recognized national accreditation

64.3%
of ECEC member centers participate in QRIS, compared with 57-60% nationally

What is NAEYC Accreditation?

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation is a **voluntary, multi-year process** evaluating curriculum, teaching practice, child-teacher relationships, staff qualifications, health and safety and family partnership—requiring self-study, documentation, external verification visits and ongoing renewal. Programs are evaluated against 10 research-based standards for high-quality early childhood education.

What is QRIS?

A state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a state designed and administered assessment system that uses data on early childhood education programs to rate a program's quality, support quality improvement efforts and provide comparable information on the quality of available ECE programs. States vary on whether or not participation is mandatory.

State Spotlights



PENNSYLVANIA

61% OF ECEC CENTERS ARE STAR 4 IN KEYSTONE STARS VS. 32% STATEWIDE.

MAXIMUM RATING IS 4



COLORADO

58% OF ECEC CENTERS ARE COLORADO SHINES LEVEL 4 OR 5 VS. 49% STATEWIDE.

MAXIMUM RATING IS 5



TEXAS

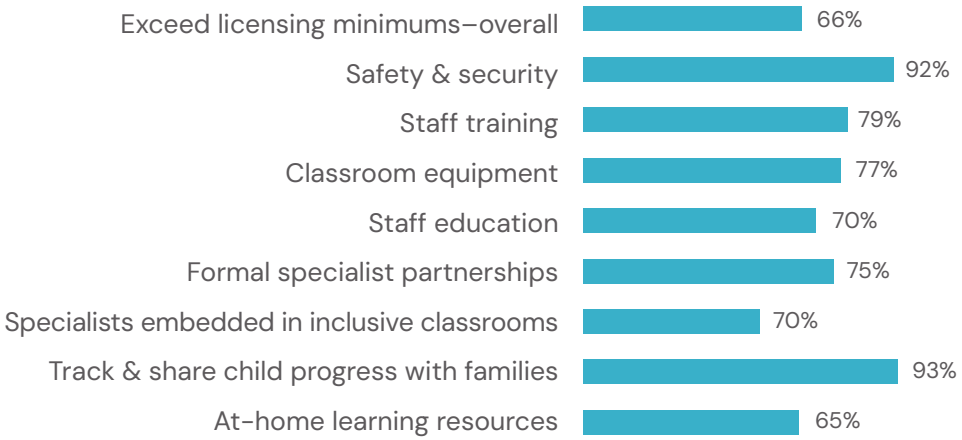
43% OF ECEC CENTERS ARE TEXAS RISING STAR LEVEL 3 OR 4 VS. 30% STATEWIDE.

MAXIMUM RATING IS 4

66%

OF ECEC MEMBERS **EXCEED** STATE LICENSING MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

ECEC Member Practices: Quality and Safety



What Does Safety Look Like in Practice?

- SECURE ENTRY/ ACCESS CONTROL
- VIDEO MONITORING
- VISITOR/RELEASE VERIFICATION
- EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS DRILLS
- PLAYGROUND AND FACILITY SAFETY ABOVE LICENSED STATE MINIMUMS

Key Elements of the Cost of Quality

LABOR COSTS	ACCREDITATION FEES	ACCREDITATION MAINTENANCE	CREDENTIALING	CURRICULUM
60–80% of operating costs are attributable to labor	Initial ~$4,000 for NAEYC accreditation; annual ~$2,000 to maintain	Additional annual costs to ensure centers operate at NAEYC standards	99% of members offer education and CDA support to staff	75% of members use proprietary research-based curriculum

DATA: Tyton Partners, "The ECE Sector and the ECEC Membership in Context" (Aug. 2026); National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), "Annual Report 2025" (Aug. 2025); BUILD Initiative, Quality Compendium (April 2024); U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics" (May 2025); U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employee Benefits in the United States" (March 2025); Brown, J.H. & Herbst, C.M., "Big Daycare: The Growth of Private Equity in the U.S. Childcare Market" (Aug. 2026); Texas Health and Human Services Commission, "HHSC CCL Daycare and Residential Operations Data" (Updated Oct. 2026); Texas Workforce Commission, "Statewide Childcare Subsidy Providers" (Updated Oct. 2026); Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, "Childcare Providers including Early Learning Programs Listing Current Monthly Facility County Human Services" (Updated Sept. 2026); Colorado Department of Early Childhood, "Colorado Licensed Childcare Facilities Report" (Updated Oct. 2026).

Early Care & Education Consortium

The Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC) is the leading national nonprofit trade association of high-quality multi-state, multi-site child care providers, state child care associations, and premier education service providers. Our members operate over 7,500 programs across 47 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, serving over one million children and employing roughly 185,000 early educators and staff. You can find more information on our website.

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