

CHILD CARE PLUS+ RESEARCH REPORT #3 INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE IN MONTANA

Profile of Children with Disabilities in Child Care



Background

When Child Care plus+ asked child care program owners and directors in Montana for their perspectives on caring for young children with disabilities, individuals from 609 programs responded. Almost half of those programs (271/45%) had a young child with disabilities currently enrolled, that is, a child who was currently receiving early intervention or special education services or who had been identified as having a delay or disability by their parent or other professional. These young children are likely to be receiving early intervention and/or special education services through IDEA in Part B or Part C programs, depending on their ages.

Children with disabilities are enrolled in both rural or urban programs. Montana's child care programs are almost evenly split between rural (44%) and urban (56%) locations. Participants from programs with experience with children with disabilities were also almost evenly split across rural and more populated urban areas. This pattern repeated itself when examining programs currently enrolling children with disabilities also: rural (43%) and urban (48%).

Children with disabilities in Montana are most likely to be enrolled in centers. Programs in Montana are caring for children with disabilities! Many participating programs (45%) had a child with a disability currently enrolled. Most of these programs were child care centers (77%), 56% were group child care homes, and 28% were family child care homes. In addition, 67% said their programs had provided care for a child with a disability at some point in time. And, in this case, 92% were child care centers, 80% were group child care homes, and 51% were family child care homes.

Programs offer families of children with disabilities part-time as well as full-time care. The 271 programs currently serving young children with disabilities were asked whether the children were enrolled part-time or full-time. (Part-time enrollment was defined as less than 30 hours in the program per week; full-time was defined as 30 or more hours per week.) When the responses were sorted out, participants reported that approximately half of the children with disabilities are enrolled part-time and half are enrolled full-time.

Programs include children with all types of disabilities. Participants were asked to describe the disabilities of children enrolled in their programs by reviewing a list of disability names and checking all that applied. The chart below identifies the types of disabilities reported in response to this question, listed in order of "most frequently identified" to "least frequently identified."

Anticipating that participants might be unfamiliar with disability-related terminology, an "other" category was offered. A large percentage of participants checked the "other" category and wrote in a specific response. Whenever possible, these "other" responses were grouped together in a relevant category. For example, when the response "Down's syndrome" was entered in

ABOUT MONTANA (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)	
SIZE	147,138 square miles
POPULATION	902,195
CHILDREN AGES 0-4	54,869
CHILDREN IN PART B (0-2)	1688
CHILDREN IN PART C (3-5)	531
CHILDREN AGES 5-14	131,261

ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE IN MONTANA: EXPLORING PARENT AND PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSION

For information about this research, other topics related to inclusive child care, or copies of this report, contact:

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the "other" category, it was placed in the category "cognitive delay."

Child's disability or delay	Number and percentage of programs		Child's disability or delay	Number and percentage of programs	
speech/language impairment	214	57%	autism	82	22%
developmental delay	204	54%	hearing impairment	62	17%
learning disability	162	43%	orthopedic impairment	61	16%
emotional disturbance	136	36%	visual impairment	48	13%
cognitive delay	121	32%	deafness	31	8%
"at risk"	90	24%	deaf-blindness	20	5%
other health impairment	85	23%	traumatic brain injury	12	3%

Provider's responses indicate that children with a wide range of disabilities are enrolled in child care settings in Montana. Furthermore, children with disabilities who would generally be associated with substantial levels of support, such as children with autism or emotional disturbance, were well represented among the type of children served in child care settings. Similarly, children with medical conditions that are typically described as "other health-impaired" were reported to be enrolled by 23% of the programs having experience with children with disabilities.

I think family home or small groups are very important to the development of all the children. The ones in my care flourish. The disabilities may be there, but the children accept and learn together very easily—they are taught to 'care' on all levels and feel a sense of 'family'—which is what they need to grow. After 18 years of child care, I have seen many things in my home. The most important tie is the love and acceptance—like the 'family.' We help each other learn to crawl, to walk, to speak clearly, to think

Montana Family Child Care Provider

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