



**Smart Start Oklahoma
Annual Report
SFY 2016
(July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016)**

Title 10 O.S. § 640

Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board
Oklahoma State Early Childhood Advisory Council

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Ann Cameron and the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board and Foundation members for their dedication to promoting school readiness in Oklahoma. This report was inspired by the curiosity of the board to understand root causes of barriers to school success. Thank you to the current Smart Start Oklahoma staff who assisted in the preparation of this report, Megan Scott, Matt Wade, Laura Hamilton and Christopher Lee, and to former employees Megan Tyler, Sarah Ashmore, Wendy Smelser and Debby Guthrie who contributed to the work reflected in this report.

We are especially grateful to the fifteen Smart Start Oklahoma community coordinators across the state that spent countless hours meeting with parents, community leaders and early childhood providers to find solutions to improve school readiness in their communities. Each of their communities provided a unique perspective on what families in Oklahoma need in order to be successful.

Oklahoma's early childhood programs grow and are sustained due to the efforts of this fantastic team of caring and dedicated individuals. Our children and our state will be stronger when all of Oklahoma's children are provided a SMART START!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debra Andersen".

Debra D. Andersen, Executive Director
Smart Start Oklahoma

Dear Governor Fallin,

As Chair of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) Board and Oklahoma's Early Childhood Advisory Council, more commonly referred to as Smart Start Oklahoma (SSO), it is my responsibility to present to you the State Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Report. It is also my responsibility, I believe, to advise that I am gravely concerned about the future of this profoundly important program.



Almost every area of state government received budget cuts this year. Given the magnitude of the revenue shortfall you and the legislature were forced to address, this was unavoidable. But while most agencies' budgets were reduced an average of 5%, SSO funding was reduced by 67%, a reduction of \$1 million from our FY16 appropriation. The massive decrease in funding has all but disabled SSO's ability to operate. I urge you and the legislature to revisit this decision and restore funding to a level that is more in line with funding decreases imposed on other state government services during the upcoming legislative session.

Nothing more directly impacts the future of our state than the way children are educated and cared for during their earliest years. We know that the effect of adverse experiences can be reduced when children are in environments with responsive, caring adults. Parents of young children can benefit from a variety of programs to help them feel less emotional strain. In addition, support for working families to find safe, affordable and enriching child care is critical to building a stronger workforce.

OPSR plays a vital role in both assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of our State's early childhood services, and in making recommendations to help Oklahoma improve the work being done. Our taxpayers' dollars help fund programs that provide critical services and support for Oklahoma families and children; and the work of the OPSR Board is to ensure the efficient collaboration of all these efforts.

This year's report highlights the challenges and opportunities we face in Oklahoma to ensure our youngest citizens have the best start possible in life. The racial and ethnic breakdown reflects the younger population is becoming more diverse with 47% of young children in a minority population. While improving, Oklahoma continues to rank low in overall well-being for children at 37th. Finally, while participation in Pre-K programs remains steady, we have 11 counties in the state serving less than 70% of four-year-olds with these counties being some of the more densely populated areas.

Through the work of our Smart Start Community Network statewide and our Board (comprised of State agency and community leaders), we strive to understand the needs of children and families in our cities as well as in rural areas. We address the challenges that are blocking the way for kids to be ready to succeed when they enter school. The UNICEF State of the World's Children Report for 2016 illustrates powerfully what is at stake for Oklahoma and the children and parents who depend on SSO, "The vast inequities and dangers do more than violate the rights and imperil the futures of individual children. They perpetuate inter-generational cycles of disadvantage and inequality that undermine the stability and security of societies."

Thank you for your continued leadership and support for strengthening families and school readiness for all children.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Stephenson Cameron".

Ann Stephenson Cameron
OPSR/SSO Board Chair

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ABOUT SMART START OKLAHOMA

Smart Start Oklahoma provides a structure for collaborative planning and decision-making to increase coordination between programs, maximize the use of public and private funding, and pursue policies for improving learning opportunities and environments for Oklahoma children under six. Smart Start Oklahoma is a public-private partnership made up of two branches: the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board and the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Foundation. Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board was created by the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Act (Title 10 O.S. § 640). Additionally, the Board is the designated body that serves as Oklahoma’s State Early Childhood Advisory Council, as authorized through the federal Head Start Act of 2007 (PL 110-134, Section 642B), and carries out the responsibilities established therein.

Mission: To lead Oklahoma in coordinating an early childhood system focused on strengthening families and school readiness for all children.

Vision: All Oklahoma children will be safe, healthy, eager to learn, and ready to succeed by the time they enter school.

Legislative Duties of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness:

- Conduct an assessment of existing public and private programs to determine their effectiveness and efficient use of state dollars.
- Implement a public engagement campaign and establish a structure to facilitate communication between communities.
- Provide leadership at the state level to encourage and empower communities to develop and improve school readiness opportunities at the local level.
- Encourage public and private programs, services, and initiatives be brought together to provide coordinated, community-based, effective and cost-efficient programs.
- Maximize the extent to which private sector funding is leveraged and federal, state, and local funds are coordinated with private funds.
- Establish standards of accountability in school readiness programs and policy and recognize and promote the best practices.
- Submit an annual report to Legislature and Governor.

Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness SFY16 Accomplishments

- Implemented a comprehensive state-funded effort to promote school readiness in 15 sites across Oklahoma; gathered input from local community leaders and parents on gaps and barriers to school success and implemented action plans to address these concerns. Supported an additional 6 community-based grants through private donations to gather parents and business leaders' input on strategies to improve early childhood in their community.
- Developed the Oklahoma School Readiness Pathway as the roadmap to guide Oklahoma and local communities to build a strong early childhood system.
- Completed a 3-year *Vulnerable to Resilient: Building Stronger Pathways to Early Childhood Success for At-Risk Children* grant funded by the Administration for Children and Families. Through research conducted by the grant, generated policy recommendations to improve access for children in the child welfare system to early care and education programs.
- Submitted to Governor, Legislature and the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth an Outcomes Measurement Plan for Oklahoma's home based-family support (home visiting) programs as required in state statute. Data collection for outcomes identified in this plan began July 1, 2016 for the first report due December, 2017.
- Conducted public engagement activities, reaching over 400 individuals face-to-face and 3,500 through social media to educate others about school readiness.
- Surveyed 2,400 kindergarten and Pre-K teachers across Oklahoma about using a kindergarten readiness assessment.
- Conducted 12 Open Meetings to convene the public/private partnership board and associated committee meetings to support the work of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Act.
- In accordance with the legislative requirements, secured private funding of \$474,897 to accomplish the goals and legislative requirements of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Act.



How well a child succeeds in school and in life is shaped during their early years. Babies must be born on time and healthy; toddlers must be developing appropriately; children must live in safe, secure and healthy homes and neighborhoods; four-year-olds must have opportunities to help prepare them for school; and by five, all children should be prepared socially, cognitively and physically to enter school ready to learn.

Oklahoma has many of the critical components of a successful early childhood system in place; yet, too many children in Oklahoma still enter school without the skills needed to succeed. The circumstances of families with young children should drive policy and funding decisions. A system, designed for “traditional” families only, will not meet the needs of the majority of young children in our state. Oklahoma must constantly examine these circumstances and seek innovative solutions, based on what families tell us they want and need.

This report will provide state-national comparisons, enrollment and outcome trends over time, and an overview of the efforts of Smart Start Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness in accomplishing the vision that “All Oklahoma children will be safe, healthy, eager to learn, and ready to succeed by the time they enter school.”

The **Oklahoma School Readiness Pathway** outlines milestones and critical supports required to prepare children toward a path of school readiness. Children who are prepared for school begin their academic experiences ahead of children who are not. Closing this skill gap at school entry is difficult and costly. Ensuring all children begin school on a level playing field ensures a trajectory of success throughout their school journey. Research on early education and parent programs has shown impacts on areas such as education, employment, crime, drug abuse, and teen pregnancy. Investing now avoids unnecessary costs in treatment and incarceration later. This will ultimately result in a more educated, prepared, and active workforce in Oklahoma.

Key indicators are identified on the School Readiness Pathway that will move Oklahoma toward the goal of all children being prepared for school. Not all measures on the Pathway are available right now, but many are in development. Monitoring how well we are accomplishing these measures will guide Oklahoma in making sound decisions on our investments in early childhood.

Oklahoma School Readiness Pathway

In order for children to be ready to succeed in school:



In order to ensure these things are possible, Oklahoma's early childhood system must provide critical supports, including:

Parents & Children Connected to Health Services

- Mental Health and Addiction Treatment
- Regular Developmental Screenings and Early Learning Assessments
- Preventive Medical Care

All Parents Have Access to Education & Support Services

- Home and Center-Based Parenting Support Programs
- Targeted Access to Concrete Supports to Ensure Child Safety

Children Engaged in High Quality Early Care & Learning

- Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Working Parents
- Preschool and Early Learning Standards Aligned with K-12
- Skilled Workforce Prepared to Meet the Needs of Young Children

Sustainable Funding

- Shared Outcomes and Accountability Standards
- Leveraged and Coordinated Resources, Public/Private Partnerships

When critical supports are in place, Oklahoma can make data-informed decisions about targeting quality improvement efforts, investments and resources.

How well is the state's early childhood system functioning?

System Measures:	Babies Born on Time & Are Healthy	Toddlers on Positive Developmental Trajectory	3-Year-Olds Safe, Secure, and Healthy	4-Year-Olds on Path to School Readiness	5-Year-Olds Ready for School
Easy Access to Needed Services	% mothers who receive early and adequate prenatal care	% of eligible children enrolled in Early Head Start	% children < 4yrs who have received a well child visit in past year	% of 3 and 4 year olds enrolled in a preschool program	% of children enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs
Stronger Inter-Agency Service Coordination & Referral Network	% of parents needing mental health/substance abuse treatment linked to services	% of health care providers promoting reading to young children during visits	Rate of children who were confirmed victims of child maltreatment	% of children under 5 years living in an area served by a Smart Start community	# of K students with a previously identified delay who are on an IEP
Aligned Policies & Practices Across Settings	% of women screened /referred for maternal depression during prenatal/post-partum visits	% providers screening and referring children < 35mo for developmental delays	% of children up-to-date on immunizations before 35 months	% of 0-3 programs with standards that align to Pre-K Programs	% K students who have a completed standardized K Readiness Assessment.
System Responsive to & Respectful of Family Needs & Voice	# of employers offering paid maternity leave or with family-friendly policies	% children 0-3 eligible for child care subsidy enrolled	# of child care facilities available during non-traditional work hours	# of children 0-4 years suspended from early childhood settings	% K students who are English Language Learners (ELL)
Resources Leveraged and Expanded to Meet Needs	% of providers referring eligible families to WIC nutrition services	% of children 0-3 in DHS custody screened for developmental delay	# of existing HS, EHS, Pre-K or Child Care collaboration models	# of families with children < 5 yrs. enrolled in home visiting programs	# of K students receiving behavioral health services
Services Provided Are High Quality	% of mothers who carry babies to full-term (>37 wks.)	% licensed child care facilities implementing Early Learning Standards	% of children 0-3 yrs. enrolled in child care in high quality care (2-3 stars)	# of NIEER established quality standards that are met by the state	% of kindergarten students who pass literacy screening

The Big Picture about Oklahoma’s Little Kids

The unique needs of families of young children are shaped by where they live, their culture, income and employment status. Most parents of young children are young adults - just getting started in their careers or still receiving training and education. They are a generation raised with internet technology, smart phones, electronic gaming devices and social networks. These tools shape their knowledge and attitude about raising their children.

Today, we know more than ever about how children learn and develop. The knowledge around “what works” to achieve desired outcomes is growing. Creating an effective and responsive set of programs and services to best meet each individual family’s need can be challenging. There is no magic program or service that fits all families’ needs. A menu of options is needed rather than expecting one program or service to meet all needs.

“One Size” does not fit all.

This report highlights the uniqueness of Oklahoma’s young children and Oklahoma’s efforts to ensure “all Oklahoma children will be safe, healthy, eager to learn, and ready to succeed by the time they enter school.”



Oklahoma Early Childhood Rankings

Rankings can be useful to understand how trends in Oklahoma compare to trends in other states. While improvements or declines may be seen from one year to the next, trends over time and how that compares to national trends can help Oklahoma realize areas for improvement. The Annie E. Casey Foundation publishes an annual Kids Count Profile to monitor trends across states and in the US.

**Oklahoma ranked 37th –
up from 44th in 2010**

In the 2016 Kids Count report, Oklahoma ranked **37th** overall on indicators contributing to Economic Well-Being, Education, Health and Family and Community risk factors. The good news, overall, Oklahoma is doing better as a state than it was in 2010. The following are selected Oklahoma indicators from this report that directly impact young children.

WORSENERD

Children whose parents lack secure employment

2008: 29% 2014: 30 %

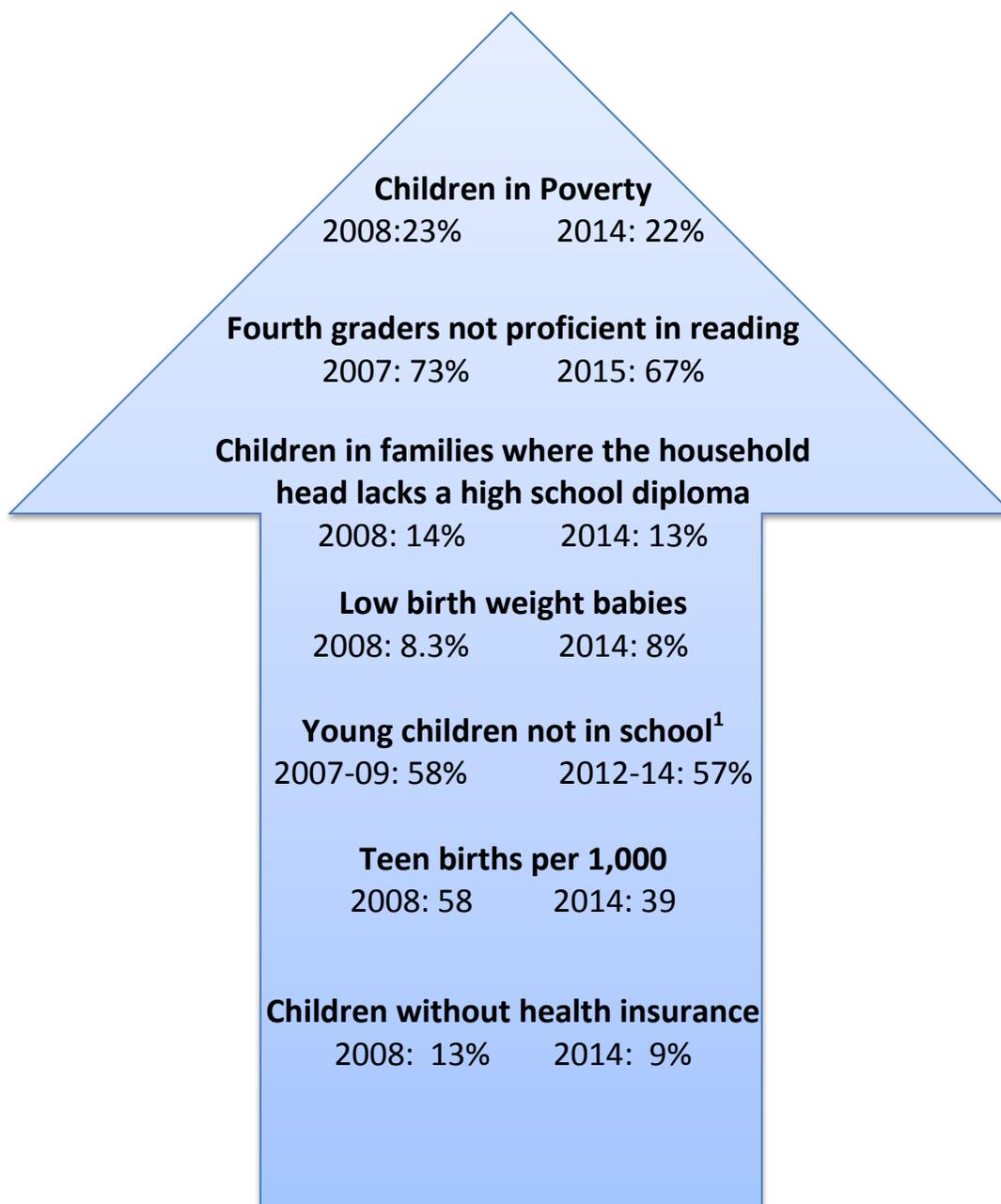
Children in single parent families

2008: 33% 2014: 36%

Children living in high poverty areas

2006 – 10: 11% 2010-14: 13%

IMPROVED



¹ The share of children ages 3 to 4 not enrolled in school, including nursery school, preschool or kindergarten, during the previous three months; Population reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-09 and 2010-14 five-year American Community Survey, Annie E Casey.

School Readiness Indicators

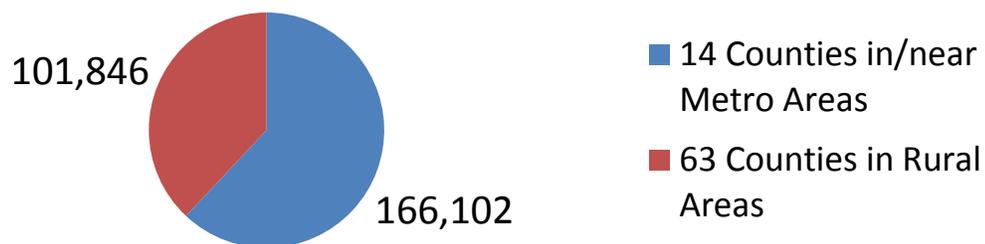
Indicator	Oklahoma	US	Rank
Preterm Births: The percent of births less than 37 weeks	13%	11%	38 th
Developmental Screening: The percent of children under 6 who received a developmental screening by a medical provider	28%	30%	27 th
Percent of three- and four-year-olds <u>not</u> in preschool	57%	53%	29 th
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above 200% poverty level 	52%	45%	37 th
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below 200% poverty level 	61%	61%	15 th
Children under five without health insurance	5%	4%	34 th

Young Children in Oklahoma

As a population, the majority of children under the age of six live in the two metro areas of Tulsa and Oklahoma City and the counties surrounding them. They are racially, culturally, and economically diverse, and most live in families with all primary caregivers working. Children, under the age of six, also represent the majority of children placed in out of home care due to child abuse and/or neglect.

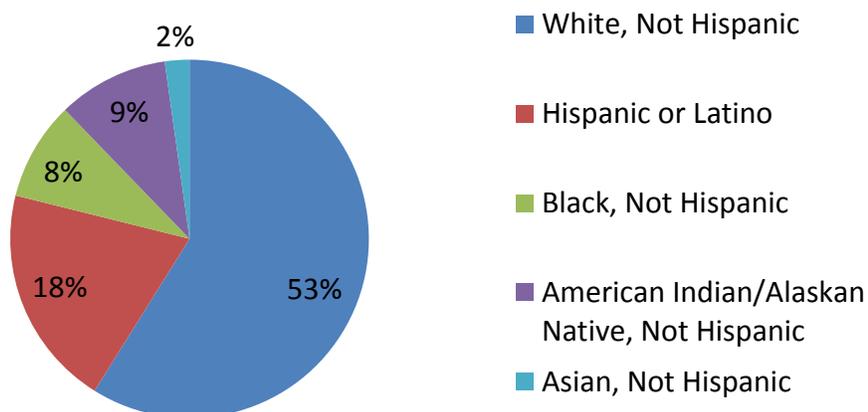
There are an estimated **267,948 children living in Oklahoma under the age of 5**. This represents close to 7% of Oklahoma's 3.9 million residents. Most of Oklahoma's young children live in or near to urban areas.

Where Young Children Reside in Oklahoma



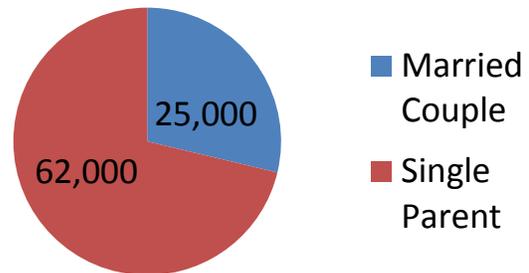
Source: US Census Bureau 2015 Population Estimates

Ethnic Breakdown of Children Under 5 2015



Young children have a greater likelihood of living in families in low-income than older children, **25% of children less than 6 years of age live in families at the poverty level.** Young children living in low-income families are at greater risk for lower school performance.

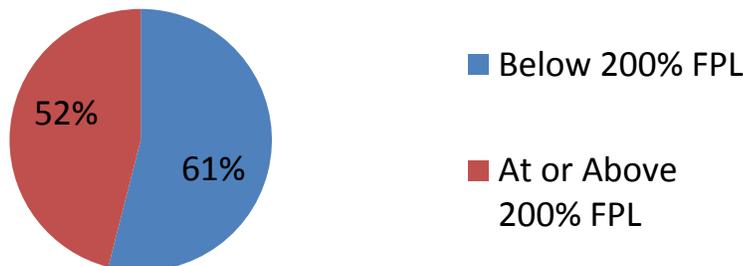
Families with related children under 18 below poverty level



Source: Annie E Casey Kids Count Data Center 2016

There are an estimated 88,000 families with children in Oklahoma below the federal poverty level.² There are 59,000 children under the age of 5 who live with families below poverty and the majority of their parents are single. Single parents of young children at all socio-economic levels face exceptional challenges of balancing school, work and care for their children. Challenges are even greater for single parents living in poverty.

3- and 4-yr.old Children Not in School By Poverty Status



As a population, children below **200% of the federal poverty level** (twice the poverty level) attend preschool programs at nearly **10% less than** children above this level.

² US. Census Poverty Threshold; 2 Adults, 2 Children, \$24,036/year

Working Families

63% of children under age 6 have all available parents in the labor force.

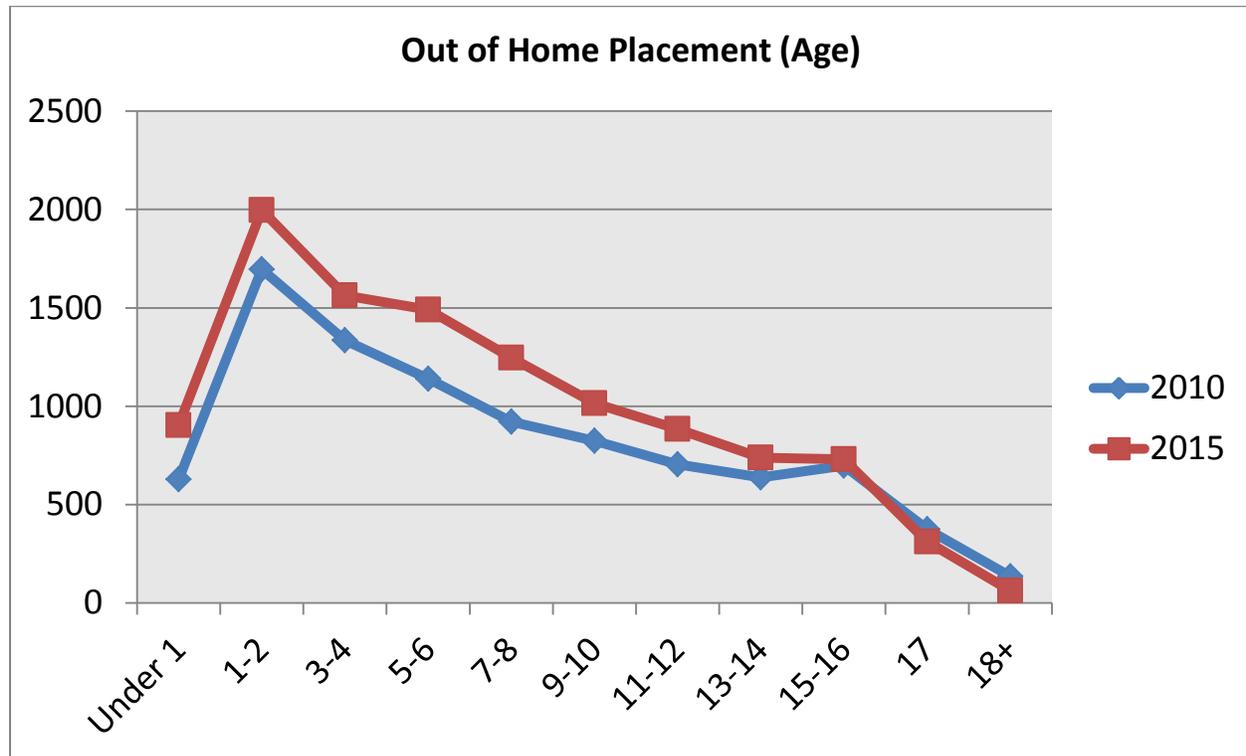
168,807 children require some form of care while their parent(s) work.

99,000 children are in low-income (200% FPL) working families.

Uncertain, irregular or non-traditional working hours create additional challenges for families of young children. High costs for low-wage earners can result in families spending 30% or more of their income on child care. Accessibility to care that is near work and/or home may not be available, creating an additional burden of travel time and costs. Stable care or back-up options are difficult when working non-traditional schedules – “holding a slot” with a licensed provider may not be feasible for a low-wage earner who also must pay for non-traditional hours. These are challenges that face many of our parents who are employed in retail, restaurant/hospitality, health care, oil and gas, and law enforcement fields.



Out of Home Placements



Source: OKDHS Statistical Tables

The number of children under the age of seven in out of home placements increased between 2010 and 2015 in Oklahoma. A robust early childhood network of supports for families combined with early care and learning opportunities can help reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

In FY2015, 80% of all confirmed cases of abuse were due to neglect.

OKLAHOMA PARTNERSHIP FOR SCHOOL READINESS ANNUAL REPORT

This report presents accomplishments by Smart Start Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board and Foundation in meeting and reporting on the legislative mandates and responsibilities under the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Act.

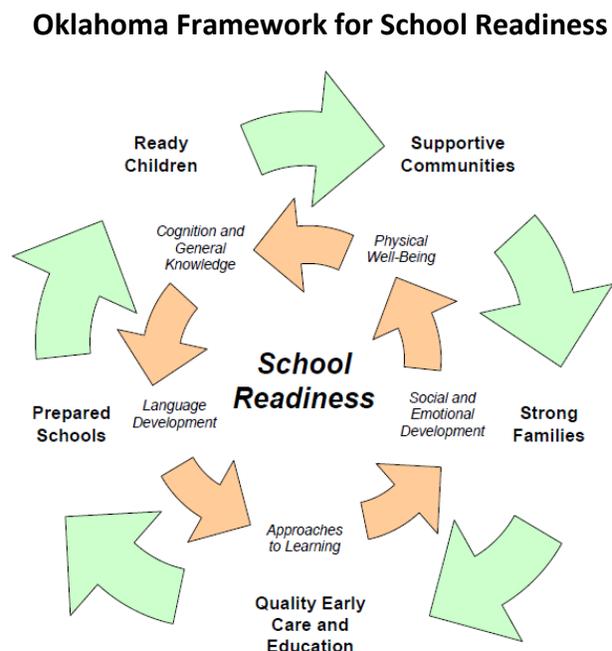
I. Preparedness Level of Children Entering Kindergarten

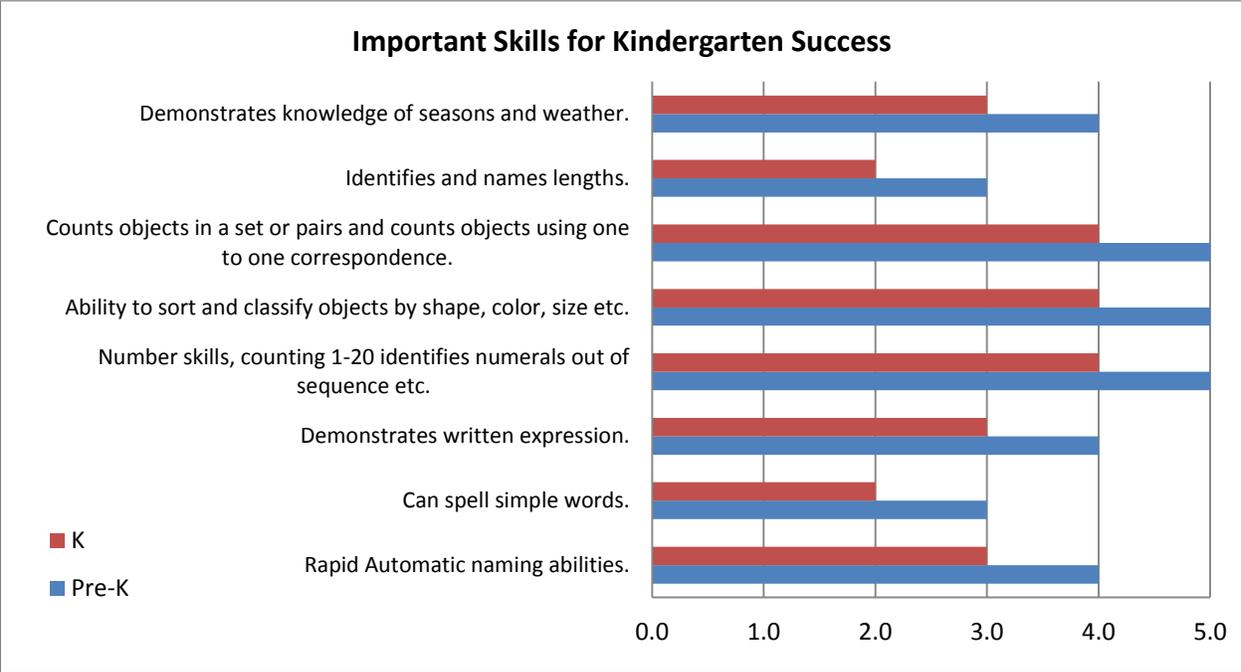
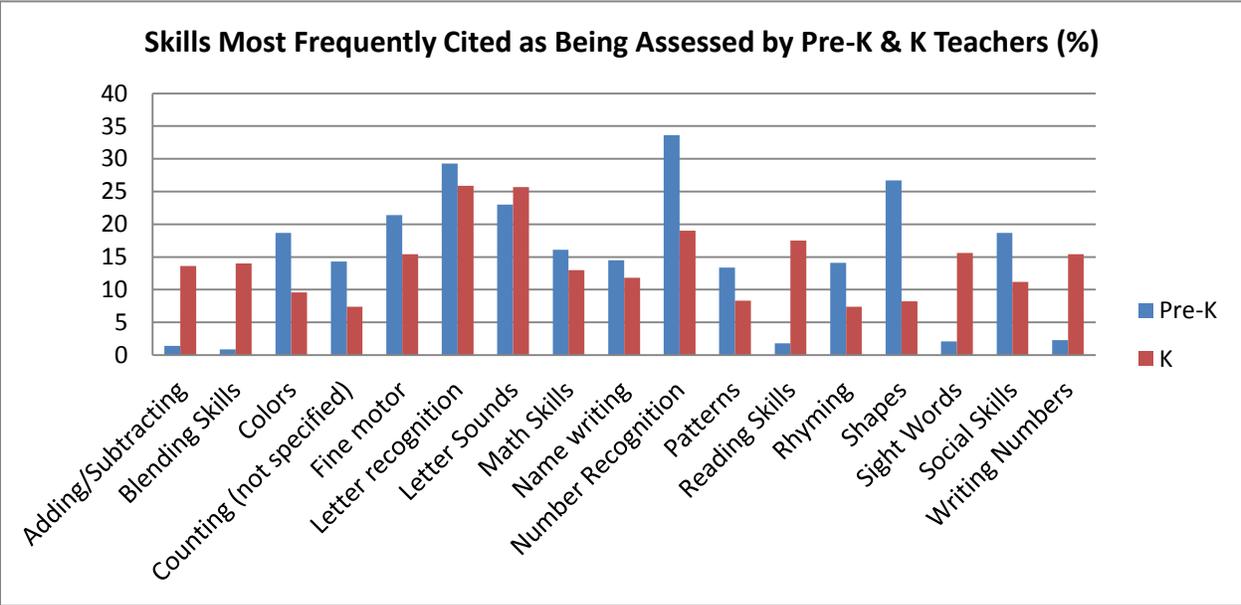
The OPSR Board adopted the Oklahoma Framework for School Readiness which articulates skills and system components that must be in place in order to ensure children are prepared to be successful in Kindergarten and beyond. Families, communities and schools each have responsibilities in providing opportunities for children to be prepared upon school entry.

To understand the preparedness level of children upon school entry, Smart Start Oklahoma is working in partnership with the Oklahoma State Department of Education to support implementation of a Kindergarten Inventory. The primary goal of the inventory is to inform Kindergarten Teachers about their students' skills to guide instruction. This tool will ultimately improve our state's ability to make informed policy and funding decisions to improve school readiness.

Kindergarten and Pre-K Teacher Survey

As a first step in identifying a Kindergarten Inventory tool, Smart Start Oklahoma and the Oklahoma State Department of Education surveyed 2,293 Kindergarten and Pre-K teachers from 92% of Oklahoma's school districts. Teachers were surveyed on the current use of assessments and the skills they believe are necessary for students to succeed in Kindergarten. A full report of the results of the survey can be found at www.opsrfoundation.org





1-Not Important; 2-Less Important; 3-Somewhat Important; 4-Important; 5-Very Important

Overall, teachers were fairly positive about the assessments they currently use and find them to be helpful for improving instruction and informing parents. Beyond the literacy assessments required by the Reading Sufficiency Act, there is little consistency in assessment use by teachers. Teachers feel that assessments should be comprehensive, encompassing all domains of development, and should be aligned with curricula and classrooms statewide. In addition to lower teacher-student ratios, teachers indicated that professional development and continuing education are necessary to use assessment tools effectively in their classrooms.

II. Public Engagement Efforts

Smart Start Oklahoma is responsible for engaging the public to improve conditions for school readiness in communities across the state. This is accomplished through a number of strategies. We all want what is best for our children. Research on what is “best” to support the development of young children continues to emerge. Smart Start Oklahoma keeps policy makers, providers, and parents informed about trends and emerging research on best practices in early childhood. Parents also know what works best for them. Smart Start Oklahoma seeks input from families of young children to understand what they need most to be successful.

We all want what’s best for our children.

During SFY16, Smart Start Oklahoma participated in multiple *Raising of America* documentary screening events to increase awareness of how our earliest environments shape the developing brain. Former Governor Frank Keating, District Attorney David Prater, Representative Lee Denny and Oklahoma State Chamber Education Director Drew Dugan shared their thoughts and recommendations for Oklahoma’s future early childhood investments at one event. The panel, facilitated by Oklahoma’s News9 Reporter, Alex Cameron, highlighted the challenges many Oklahoma families face in having the resources to provide a safe, stimulating early childhood experience for their children. In order to help prepare children for school, Oklahoma must prioritize not only early childhood program investments, but also must help stabilize families through health, housing and food supports.

Smart Start Oklahoma partners with the Potts Family Foundation and the Oklahoma Business Roundtable to support the **Oklahoma Champions for Early Opportunities (OKCEO)** network. David Lawrence, former Editor of the Miami Herald, along with a state panel of early childhood experts spoke in Enid, Ardmore and Oklahoma City to nearly 200 concerned citizens during an OKCEO sponsored event to share successful strategies from the Florida Children’s Movement and discuss opportunities in Oklahoma.

Social media is a powerful tool to message current research, best practices and current events. Over 3,500 individuals follow the **Smart Start Oklahoma Facebook** page, providing the opportunity to reach a broad number of stakeholders in the state through an effective communication format.

III. Private Sector Involvement

The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board is a public/private partnership comprised of 17 private sector representatives appointed by the Governor. These board members volunteer their time through meetings, advocacy and messaging. On May 22, 2016, the Oklahoman published an Opinion-Editorial by Ann Cameron, Chair, on the importance of investing in early childhood in light of our state's current fiscal crisis.

“We understand the profound challenges faced by the governor and lawmakers in addressing Oklahoma’s fiscal crisis, and realize budget cuts must be part of any comprehensive plan to fund state programs. Our message today is that there is no more pressing or vital responsibility than that which we all owe to our state’s youngest citizens.” Ann Cameron, OPSR Board Chair

In addition to volunteer support from the private sector, through the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Foundation, private sector funding is received to support early childhood initiatives in the state. During State Fiscal Year 2016, \$474,897 was donated or received as grants to support early childhood initiatives through the Foundation. The directors of the Foundation are private citizens, three of whom also serve on the OPSR Board. This overlap in membership ensures continuity and coordination of efforts between both boards.

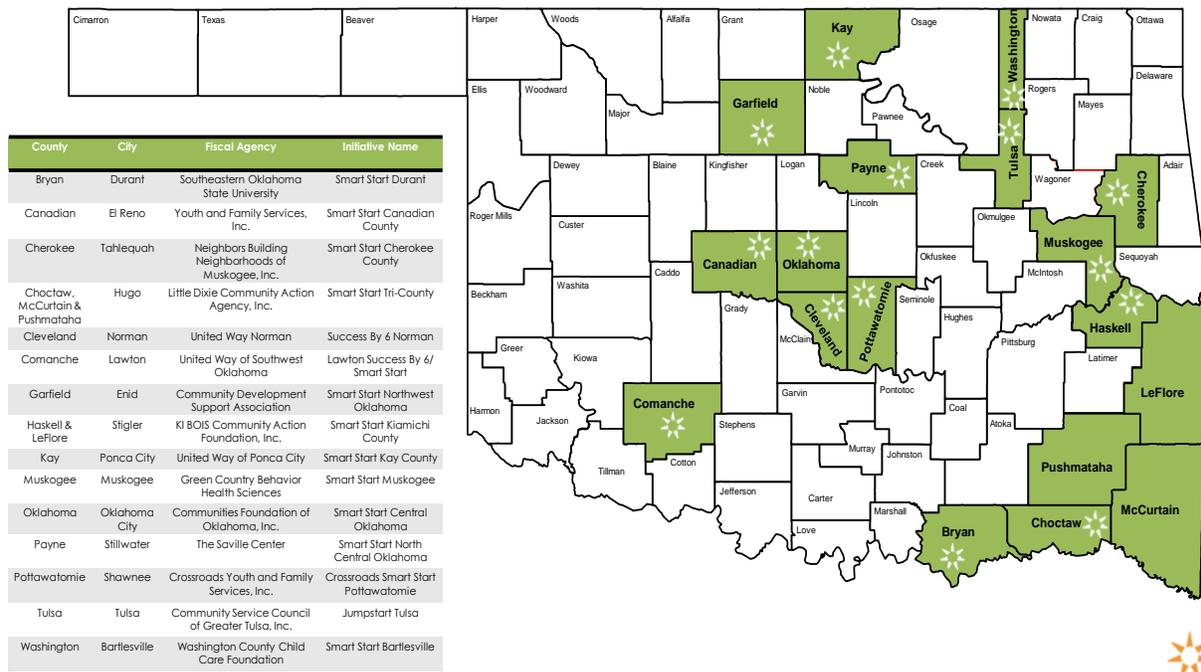
Grant Highlight

In the spring of 2015, funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation was received to facilitate processes to establish a kindergarten assessment integrated within a coordinated data system to better understand Oklahoma's progress in supporting school readiness for all children. Accomplishments thus far include the development of an early childhood data sub-committee under an existing state agency data collaborative in the Health and Human Services Cabinet and a partnership with the Oklahoma State Department of Education to survey kindergarten and Pre-K teachers about the utilization of assessment tools, attitudes about assessment and priorities of skills important for kindergarten students to possess. These efforts are ongoing for the next two years and will result in a Kindergarten School Readiness Inventory and a mechanism to improve linkages across early childhood data systems.

IV. Community Initiatives

Fifteen community-based organizations received grants to implement Smart Start Oklahoma Community Initiatives during State Fiscal Year 2016. The total amount of state funding expended by Smart Start Oklahoma was \$1,439,785 with over \$1 million awarded to local organizations. This funding was received from the Oklahoma Department of Human Services through general appropriations. The Department is named in state statute as the lead state agency under the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Act of 2003. The legislature does not specify the funding amount for Smart Start Oklahoma.

Smart Start Oklahoma Communities SFY 2016-2019



July 31, 2015



Note: On July 1, 2016, these community-based contracts were not renewed due to lack of funding (\$1 million reduction) to continue the current scope of work. During SFY17, DHS & Smart Start Oklahoma will seek alternative strategies to support community-based efforts.

This was the first year of an intensive effort to fund community-based organizations to address a targeted problem – not all children in Oklahoma are safe, healthy, eager to learn, and ready to succeed by the time they enter school. Organizations were charged with focusing on improvements in their communities to ensure all early childhood services and supports are:

- available, accessible, and reaching families with young children
- aligned and coordinated
- of high quality
- responsive to the changing needs of children and families

Each community-based initiative conducted a scan of the status of their early childhood programs and services and explored underlying causes as to why children might not be prepared for school. Across the state, these Smart Start Oklahoma community initiatives focused on reducing barriers by:

Smart Start Oklahoma Community Strategies

Identifying strategies to improve families’ abilities to 1) obtain reliable and accurate information about development, school readiness, child nutrition, behavior, and 2) access/leverage resources for transportation, food, housing, and health care.

Building parental capacity through connections with parenting training, increasing educational attainment, and building literacy skills.

Streamlining enrollment processes and identifying policy or practice barriers that restrict or delay families’ ability to access programs.

Minimizing duplicative and/or excessive information being provided to families.

Increasing providers’ knowledge, partnerships, and communication in order to refer families to appropriate resources.

Increasing the diversity of providers to better fit cultural needs of families.

Identifying disparities in education, pay, and training for early childhood providers across programs to ensure equitable access for all children to quality early care and education programs.

Increasing quality in programs.

Identifying gaps in resources for families, seeking creative solutions and advocating for early childhood investments.

V. Child Care

Available, accessible, quality child care is the cornerstone of an effective early childhood system. Not only is child care a critical support for all working families, a quality early learning environment, beginning at birth, has been proven to have



profound effects on the subsequent academic achievement of children from low income families. Oklahoma has been a leader in the nation establishing sound policy through licensing standards and pioneering the first quality rating and improvement system, *reaching for the Stars*, to assist parents in choosing care and reward providers for implementing quality standards.

However, in Oklahoma and across the country, families with very low incomes are not getting the help they need to care for their children while they work or receive job training. Federal and state investments are declining while knowledge of best-practices in care for young children increases the need to improve quality.

Children who are in less stimulating and more chaotic environments demonstrate lower developmental skills and behavioral challenges.

When families can't find, afford or meet the requirements for formal child care assistance, they are forced to juggle work schedules, find alternate care arrangements, rely on

friends or family and/or may be using unlicensed care. Some families are fortunate enough to be able to rely on informal supports and their children are in stable, caring and nurturing environments. Too often, families do not have these supports available to them and are forced to rely on care arrangements that may not be optimal. Unpredictable care can result in loss of a job, place children in unsafe environments, and can greatly increase stress in the family.

The affordability challenge is creating an opportunity gap between families who can pay for high quality early learning environments and those who cannot. Schools notice the difference upon Pre-K entry. Children who are in less stimulating and more chaotic environments demonstrate lower developmental skills and behavioral challenges.

How well is Oklahoma providing all working families available, affordable and quality early care and learning environments?

In September 2016, New America released a Care Report which examined the Care Index on how well states are supporting working families through child care. In the analysis of state systems, New America reported that no state is performing well according to their measures. Here are the results on Oklahoma’s data and rankings:

Location	Oklahoma	Ranking	US Range
In-Home Care cost/yr.	\$27,376	22 nd	\$25,774 – 33,366
Center-based Care cost/yr.	\$7,925	16 th	\$5,721 - 15, 856
Cost Average	\$16,259	32 nd	\$11,866 - \$25,081
Cost/Median Income	34%	44 th	20% - 45%
Quality Score³	91	46 th	142 - 65
Availability Score	89	41 th	140 - 77
OVERALL	89	47 th	70 - 123

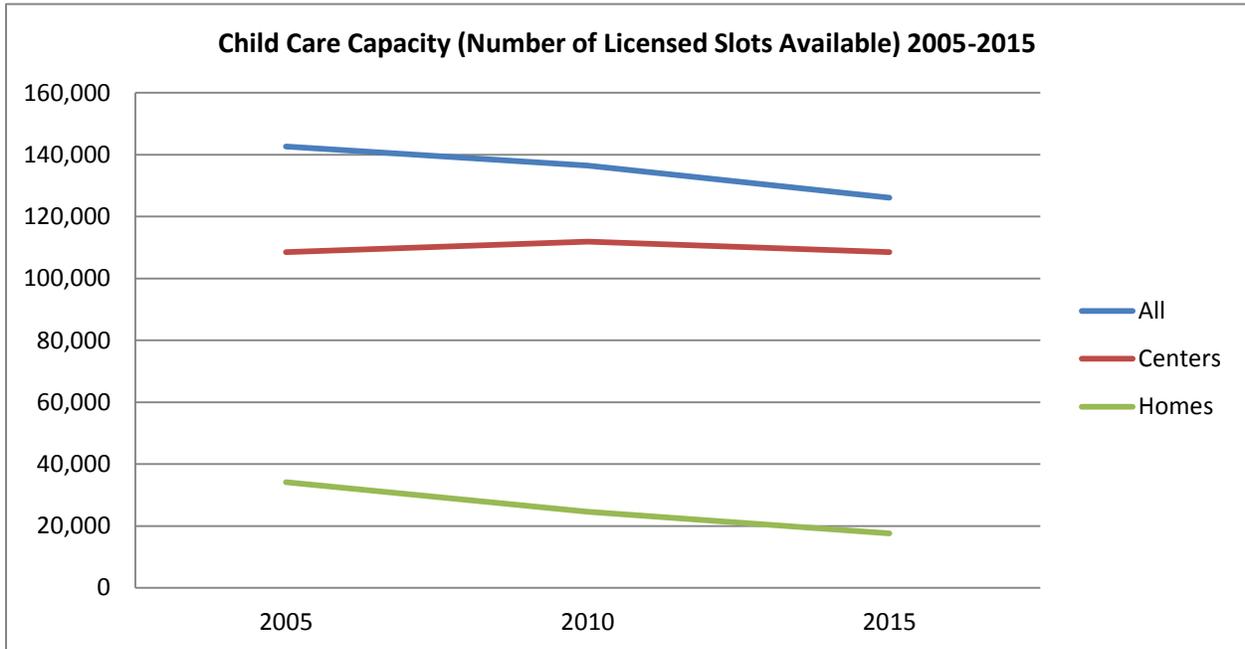
Oklahoma's Rankings from the New America Care Report

Smart Start Oklahoma is legislatively required to report the availability and cost of quality child care for children less than five years of age. This year’s report includes a 10-year trend in availability of child care - reflecting the reduction in the availability of this critical support for working families of young children in our state.

³ Measures on quality included only two national accrediting organizations as a state to state comparison; Oklahoma recognizes six accrediting agencies

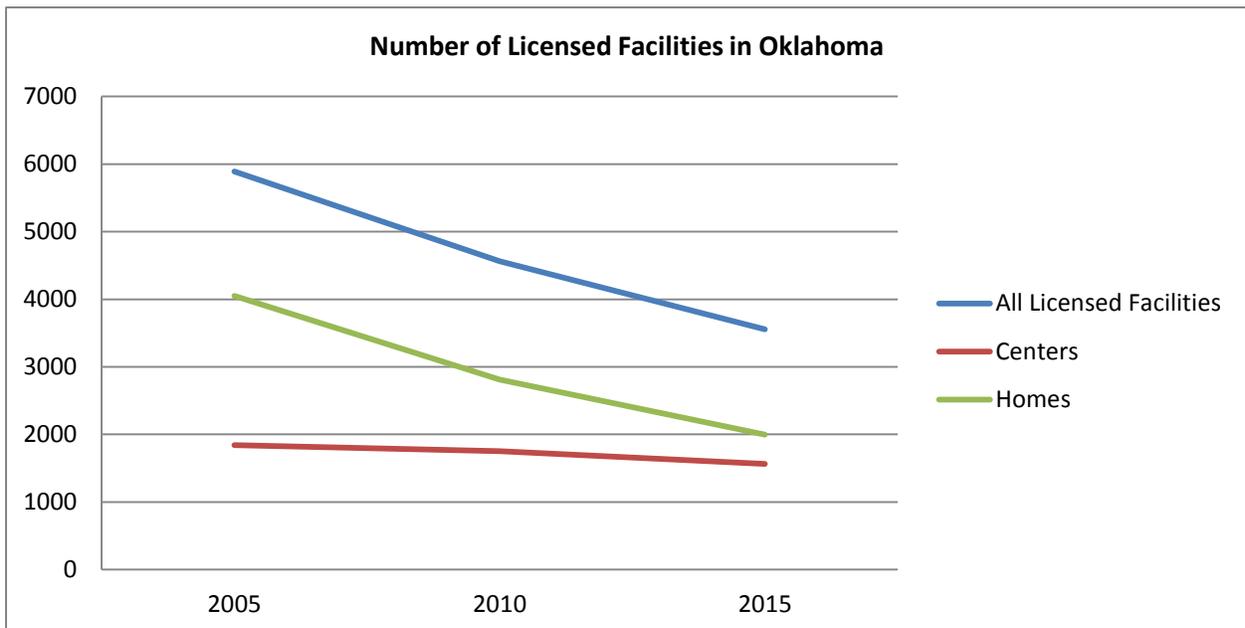
Child Care Availability

Since 2005, there has been an **11.6% decrease** in the number of available slots.



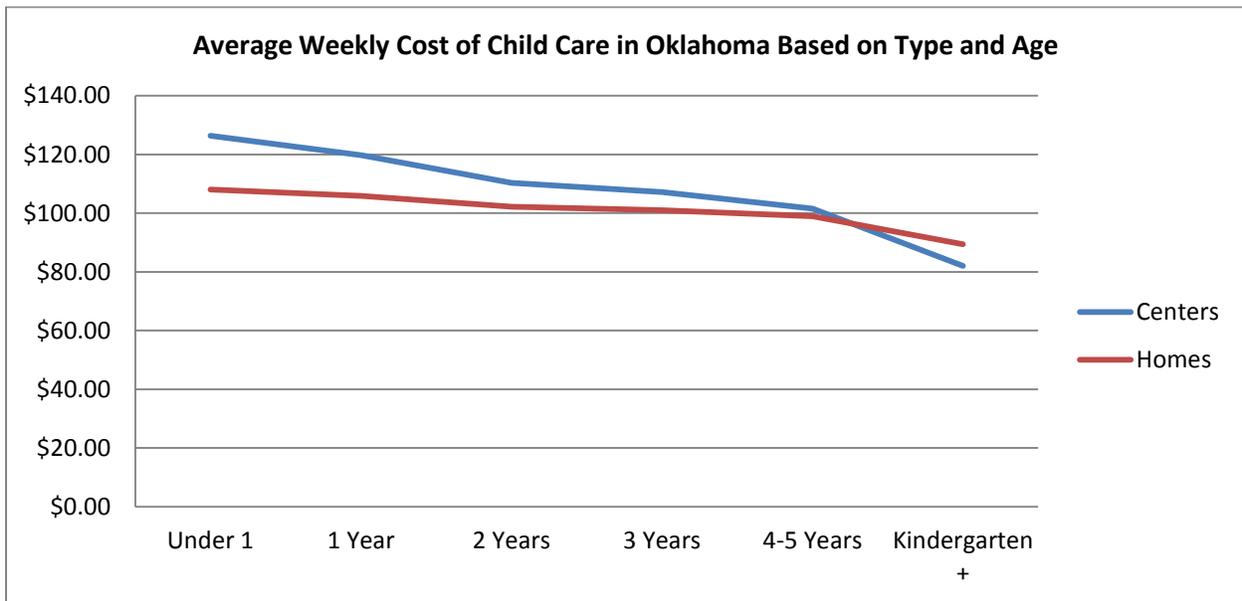
Source: Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association, Inc.

Since 2005, there has been a **39.6% decrease** in the total number of available facilities.



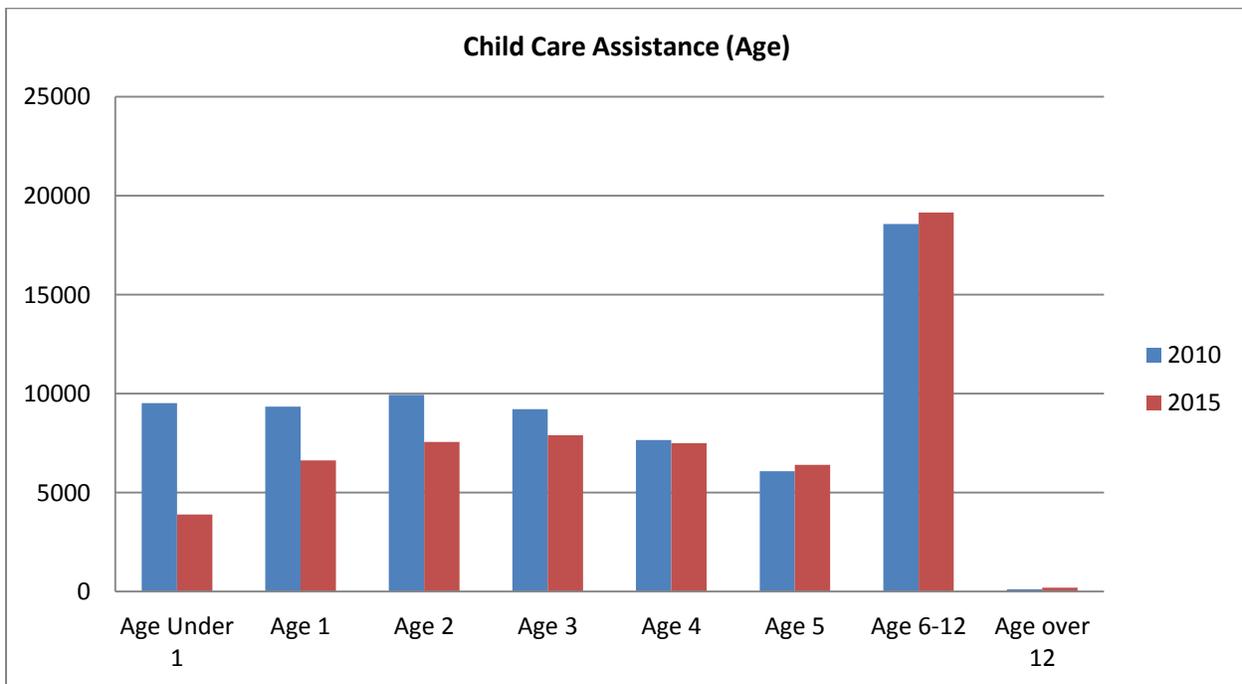
Source: Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association, Inc.

Child Care Cost



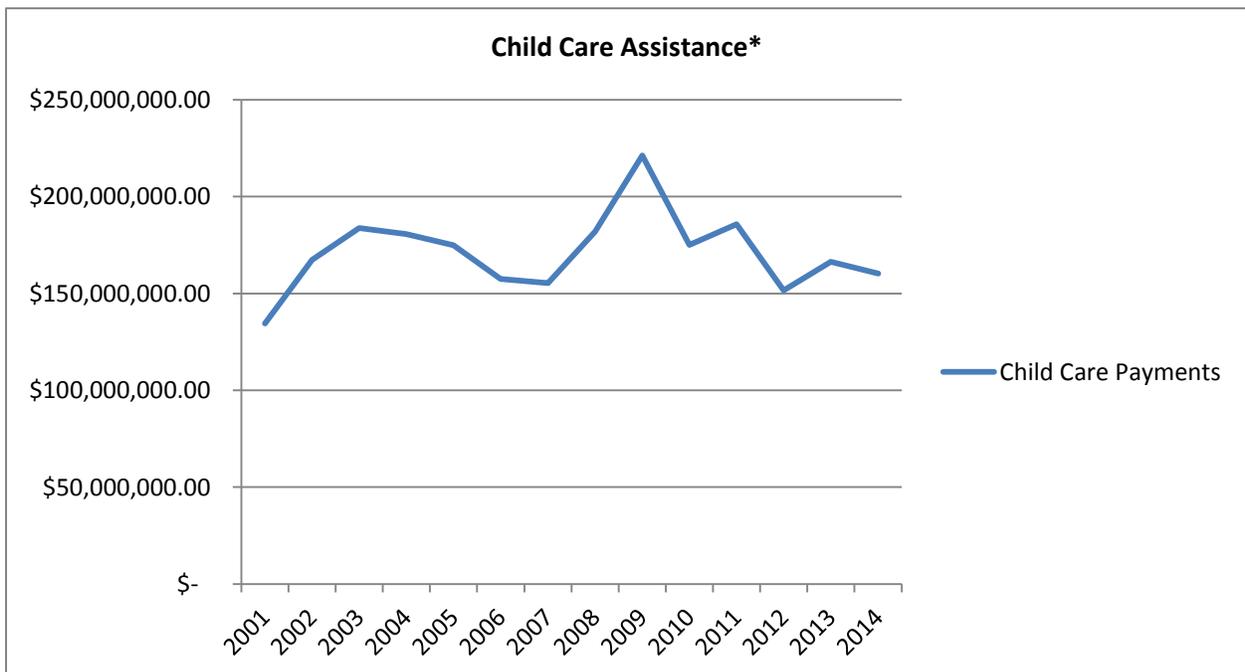
Source: Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association, Inc.

The average cost of child care is 34% of the median family income. However, for a minimum wage earner, this cost is 108% - out of reach for a very low income working parent.



Receiving child care assistance is declining for parents of very young children. In 2015, 12,045 fewer children 3 and under received child care assistance, a decline of 31.6%.

State and federal investments must be made to support the valuable resource that child care provides to Oklahoma. Child care provides safe and stable options for parents when they work or go to school, and provides opportunities for enrichment for children during critical early years of brain development. Oklahoma's expenditures on child care assistance mirror US Expenditures, with a slight increase in total spending since 2001. However, this reflects less spending power when adjustments are made for inflation.



*Total Child Care Spending (CCDBG and TANF; FY2009 includes ARRA funding)

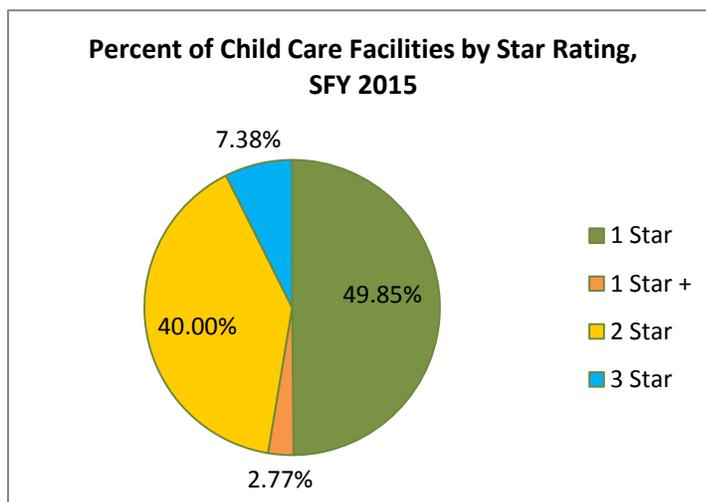
Child Care Quality

While the Child Care Index ranked Oklahoma lower as compared to other states on quality, Oklahoma actually does much better when a broader context is used. Oklahoma is one of 27 states that meet seven high quality benchmarks in the Reaching for the Stars Program.⁴ These benchmarks are:

Components of an Effective Quality Rating and Improvement System
Statewide – comprehensive systems.
Eligibility – participation by programs, including by child care centers and family child care homes.
Standards – the quality indicators that define increasingly higher levels of program quality.
Monitoring and Accountability – tool measuring the quality of a program.
Program and practitioner supports – training, coaching and consultation to help programs meet higher standards.
Incentives – grants, scholarships, and rewards to encourage and support meeting higher levels of quality.
Family and Consumer Education – using symbols and simple icons (like a star) to help parents and the public identify the quality of programs.

Source: White House Summit on Working Families www.workingFamiliesSummit.org

Close to **50%** of Oklahoma licensed child care centers meet a one star plus level or higher. **95%** of children who receive child care subsidy attend two star or higher rated centers. Providers are offered higher child care subsidy reimbursement rates when they participate at a higher star level - known as Tiered Reimbursement Rates. There is not a policy in place for families to receive incentives for participating in higher quality care.



⁴ Source: White House Summit on Working Families www.WorkingFamiliesSummit.org June 23, 2014

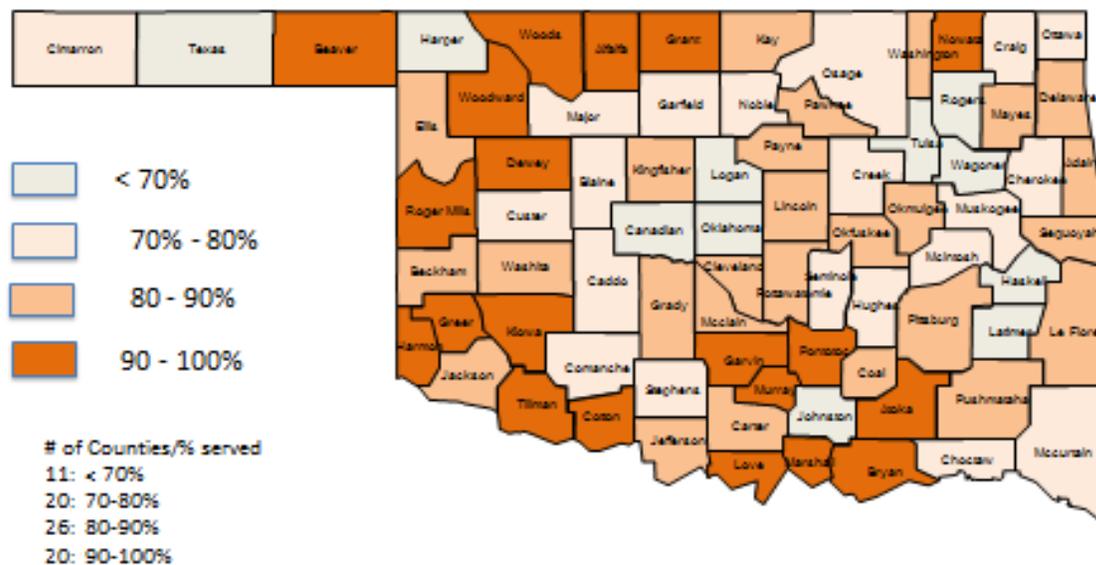
VI. Pre-K

Pre-K Access

Oklahoma has been a national leader for nearly two decades in access to the Four-Year-Old Program (Pre-K). In 2010-11, the Early Childhood Program (originally referred to as the State Pilot Early Childhood Program), was formed as an innovative strategy to leverage private resources and extend access to children age birth to three and their families. In many communities, enrollment of three-year-olds in Head Start programs is increasing as more four-year-olds participate in Universal Pre-K programs. This continuum of quality early learning opportunities, beginning at birth, is growing in some areas of the state, yet many children continue to lack access to these opportunities due to a lack of sufficient and stable funding. Oklahoma does not include three-year-olds in the school funding formula to provide universal access to this age group.

In Oklahoma, 99% of public school districts offer a Pre-K program. Forty-six counties in Oklahoma serve 80% or more of the four-year-olds in public school Pre-K programs, as compared to kindergarten enrollment. In 31 counties, that percent is less than 80%.

OKLAHOMA



Pre-K Quality

NIEER 2015 State of Preschool Report

All public school Pre-K programs meet eight of the ten NIEER quality benchmarks.

Quality Standards for Pre-K Programs			
Policy	State Pre-K Requirements	Benchmark	Meets Benchmark
Early Learning Standards	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	✓
Teacher Degree	BA/BS	BA	✓
Teacher Specialized Training	EC certification for birth-3	Specializing in Pre-K	✓
Assistant Teacher Degree	HSD or equivalent	CDA or Equivalent	✗
Teacher In-Service	None	At least 15 hours/year	✗
Maximum Class Size	3-year-olds: N/A 4-year-olds: 20	20 or lower	✓
Staff-Child Ratio	3-year-olds: N/A 4-year-olds: 1:10	1:10 or better	✓
Screening/Referral	Vision, hearing, health, and support services	Vision, hearing, health, and at least 1 support service	✓
Meals	At least 1 meal	At least 1/day	✓
Monitoring	Site visits and other monitoring	Site visits	✓

While enrollment has grown slightly from 2010, other states are outpacing Oklahoma in expansion of Pre-K programs, both in enrollment and in funding. Many states have expanded access to three-year-olds, which Oklahoma does not serve through the school funding formula.

State Rankings for Access and Spending		
Measure	2010 Rank	2015 Rank
Access	1st	4th
State Spending	16th	28th
All Spending	9th	10th

SMART START OKLAHOMA FUNDING

Name	Location	Counties Served	State Funds Awarded
Smart Start Bartlesville	Bartlesville	Nowata and Washington	\$73,735
Smart Start Durant Counties	Durant	Bryan	\$70,827
Smart Start Canadian County	El Reno	Canadian	\$52,097
Smart Start Northwest Oklahoma	Enid	Garfield	\$60,639
Smart Start Tri-County	Hugo	Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha	\$98,081
Smart Start Lawton	Lawton	Comanche	\$70,474
Smart Start Muskogee	Muskogee	Muskogee	\$43,528
Success By 6 / Smart Start Norman	Norman	Cleveland and McClain	\$71,274
Smart Start Central Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	Oklahoma	\$100,000
Smart Start Kay County	Ponca City	Kay and Osage	\$77,309
Smart Start Pottawatomie County	Shawnee	Pottawatomie	\$62,859
Smart Start Kiamichi Country	Stigler	Haskell, Latimer, Leflore, and Pittsburg	\$62,866
Smart Start North Central Oklahoma	Stillwater	Lincoln, Noble, Pawnee, and Payne	\$62,378
Smart Start Cherokee County	Tahlequah	Adair, Cherokee, and Sequoyah	\$37,697
Jump Start Tulsa	Tulsa	Creek, Rogers, and Tulsa	\$80,571

SFY10 to SFY16 Total Expenditures

	State	OPSR Foundation	Totals
SFY 2010	\$1,894,962	\$442,383	\$2,337,345
SFY 2011	\$1,666,155	\$700,966	\$2,367,121
SFY 2012	\$1,538,802	\$720,050	\$2,258,852
SFY 2013	\$1,540,415	\$1,329,780	\$2,870,195
SFY 2014	\$1,665,928	\$1,051,034	\$2,716,963
SFY 2015	\$1,580,362	\$464,978	\$2,045,340
SFY 2016	\$1,439,785	\$445,525	\$1,791,982

SFY16 SSO Communities In-Kind and Cash Match Received: \$199,258

SFY16 OPSR Foundation Funds Received: \$474,897

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Alliance for Early Success | George Kaiser Family Foundation | Pew Charitable Trusts | Inasmuch Foundation | Potts Family Foundation | W.K. Kellogg Foundation | Board Members

STATE FISCAL YEAR 2017 AGENDA

The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board, Foundation, and Smart Start Oklahoma staff are prepared to face the fiscal and policy challenges during State Fiscal Year 2017. Areas of focus will include:

Leverage and build public and private partnerships that will:

- **Promote best practices** by highlighting research and evaluation studies on Oklahoma's early childhood efforts;
- **Coordinate and align standards** across all programs serving young children and their families to reduce disparities and increase access to high quality experiences (at home or in early childhood centers);
- **Seek investments** in supporting best practices; and
- **Respond to families** through community-based efforts to improve school readiness opportunities.

Support the implementation of a kindergarten readiness inventory tool to inform teacher instruction and improve student learning.

Collect and document outcomes achieved as a result of participation in early childhood programs and services to inform decisions on future investments.

Support the re-creation of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board under the 2017 Sunset Review legislation.

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Regents Professor and Dean
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