

25 YEARS OF COUNTING DELAWARE KIDS



2009

DATA SNAPSHOT

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL INVOLVEMENT & ACHIEVEMENT

The early years of a child's life lay the foundation for lifelong success. Ensuring opportunity for each and every child's educational achievement is critical. This begins with quality prenatal care and continues through the early elementary years. With a strong and healthy beginning, children can more easily stay on track to remain in school and graduate on time, pursue postsecondary education and training and successfully transition to adulthood.

HONORING OUR PAST.
BUILDING KIDS' FUTURES
25 YEARS



EDUCATIONAL INVOLVEMENT & ACHIEVEMENT

25 Years of Delaware Data: Early Care and Education

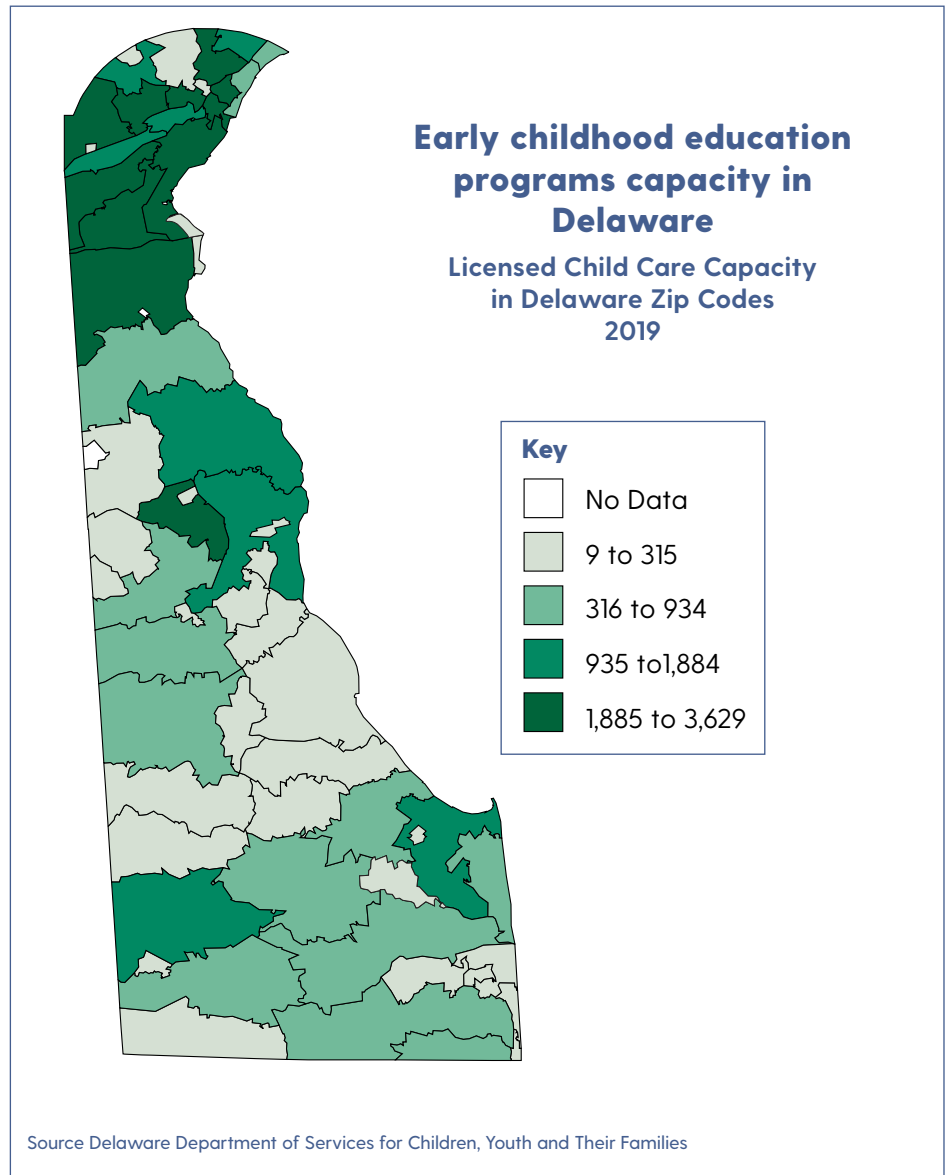
Changing demographics, social trends and economic necessities of the last several decades have made early care and education a commonplace need for young families in Delaware. Nationwide, we do not invest enough in our children's earliest years which leaves parents to navigate and balance questions of availability, quality and affordability of care.

In 2007, Delaware's Early Childhood Council initiated Delaware Stars for Early Success, a voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). Under this initiative, participating programs receive a rating based on a five-star scale that ranges from meeting child care licensing regulation to meeting progressively higher quality standards in the areas of qualifications and professional development, learning environment and curriculum, family and community partnerships and management and administration. Since then, the purchase of care reimbursement rate has been linked to star rating.

As of 2019, licensed capacity in Delaware's early care and education system stood at just over 50,500 slots at 1,075 providers, an increase of almost 40% from the licensed capacity in Delaware in the mid-1990s. Capacity does not reflect actual enrollment.

Why Does it Matter?

Investing wisely in early childhood affects our collective well-being, quality of life and future prosperity as a state. Early care and education helps keep Delaware's economic engine running by ensuring that employers have a robust, stable workforce from which to draw talent. It also allows parents the opportunity to earn an income to support their families while knowing their children are safe and cared for. Additionally,



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children have the opportunity to reap benefits from positive nurturing relationships with stable early care and education providers.

But all programs are not created equal. Child participation in high-quality early childhood programs can make a significant difference in a child's development and lay the foundation for future academic success. The first five years of a child's life are particularly important because that is when 90 percent of the brain's neurological foundation is built.

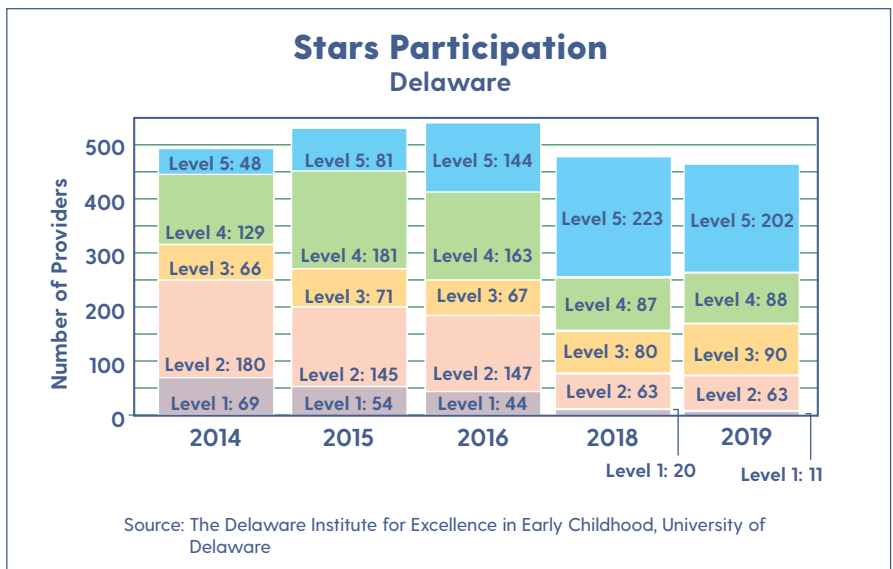
Next Steps

Removing barriers to affordable early care and education is one of the best two-generation strategies Delaware can employ to promote positive outcomes for parents and their children.

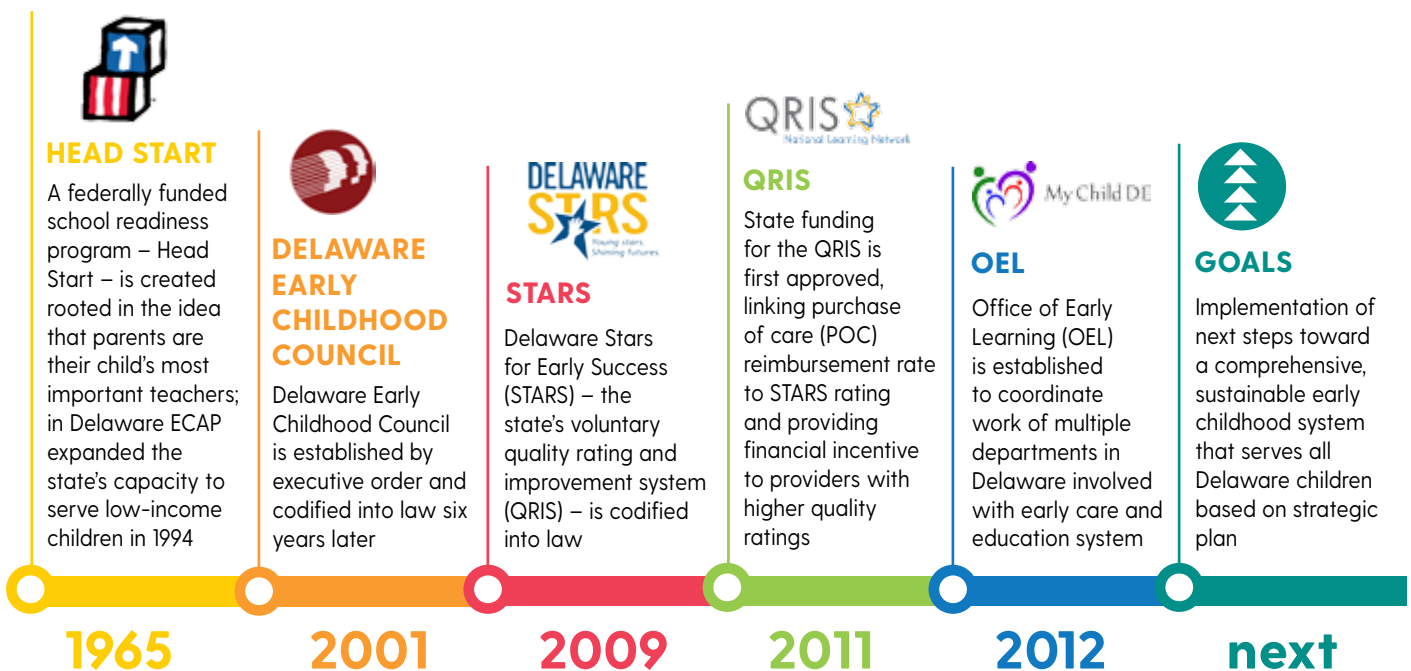
However, complexities of our early care and education system mean that simply decreasing the cost of care is not the answer to challenges Delawareans face accessing care that is affordable. Many important features of high-quality care, such as small group sizes, low child-to-

staff ratios and qualified, experienced staff, cost a lot to provide. And despite the high costs that families pay for early care and education, most programs operate on thin margins. Sacrificing quality for costs will not benefit Delaware in the long run. Instead, Delaware must meet family needs in terms of

availability, quality and affordability of care by building on the strengths of our current system and enhancing features that are not currently optimal. The state's strategic plan incorporates governance, policy and funding approaches to move toward this goal of an integrated system. ♦



EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION TIMELINE





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The photographs in this data snapshot do not necessarily represent the situations described.

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