

Minnesota has nation's 3rd highest cost of child care

Written by John Michaelson, Minnesota News Connection
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The cost of child care continues to increase faster than income, and a [new analysis](#) also shows that parents in Minnesota pay among the highest rates in the nation. The average annual cost for care for an infant in Minnesota is nearly \$14,000, and for a four-year-old it's more than \$10,000.

According to Ann McCully, executive director of Child Care Aware of Minnesota, however, those numbers are based on care at centers, while Minnesota is actually more of a state of home providers, which generally charge less.

"And then furthermore, the centers we do have, about 70 percent of those are clustered in the Twin Cities metro area, where the rates are higher," she pointed out. "But we do tend to have high standards here in Minnesota. We really believe in having qualified staff, having small ratios of staff to children, and that does drive costs."

Since quality opportunities for all are vital for future success of the children and the state, McCully said, the 2013 Legislature did approve funding to provide scholarships so some of those living in poverty or from low-income families can have access to high-quality early care and education.

"And coming this March will be another \$20 million worth of additional incentives for child-care programs, specifically who take children on child-care assistance, to also increase their quality. So we are starting to see some action," she said, adding that, "Unfortunately, those scholarships only are going to reach about 9 percent of the children in Minnesota."

The report from Child Care Aware of America also found that in the last year, the cost of child care increased at up to eight times the rate of increases in family income.

The states with the highest cost of child care are New York and Massachusetts, while Mississippi is at the bottom of the expenses list in all categories.

The "Cost of Care" report is at bit.ly/1ecxeoP .