

The Long Road to Quality: Publicly Funded Child Care and Ohio's Progress Toward High Quality



High-quality early care and education settings provide substantial benefits to young children. Long-term research studies show that young children in high-quality settings exhibit better language, math, cognitive, and social skills, as well as better relationships with classmates than do children in lower-quality care. Subsequently, students score higher in school-readiness and are less likely to need special education or be held back a grade.

Seven in ten young children in Ohio who are currently served in state or federally funded early care and education programs for low-income families receive Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) subsidies. Unfortunately, too many of these families still lack access to high-quality environments for their children and are forced to leave them in unsafe, unrated settings. Because it is so clear that quality is important, especially for our children with the highest needs, Ohio implemented Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) and mandated that children who receive PFCC subsidies should be in high-quality settings.

Providers licensed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services are a long way from the 2020 and 2025 goals (see sidebar). As of 2015, only 35% of licensed childcare centers, 26% of Type A, and 3% of Type B home providers are Star Rated, and only 15% of licensed childcare centers and 5% of Type A home providers are high-quality*. Due in part to this slow progress, the vast majority (65%) of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers receiving PFCC subsidies are served by unrated providers and only 14% of are in high-quality settings.

Increasing the number of providers who can meet and sustain high-quality SUTQ ratings not only provides stability for parents working toward self-sufficiency but it also improves the developmental outcomes necessary for at-risk children. Unfortunately our state still has a long road ahead in meeting its commitment to providing equal access to quality.

* Percentages of providers that serve PFCC children of all ages

Only 1 in 7 Ohio PFCC children under age 5 are served in high-quality settings—2 out of 3 are in unrated programs

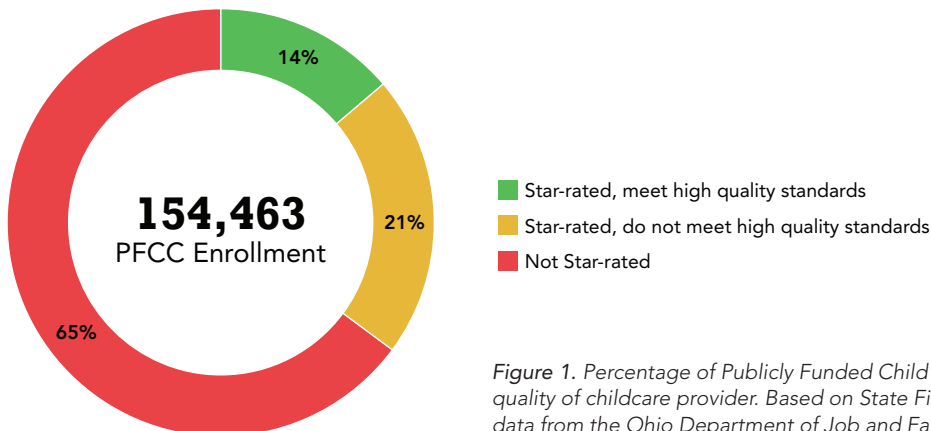


Figure 1. Percentage of Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) infants, toddlers, and preschoolers by quality of childcare provider. Based on State Fiscal Year 2015 Step Up To Quality ratings and enrollment data from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Step Up To Quality and Ohio's Quality Mandates

Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) is a five-star quality rating and improvement system administered by the Ohio Departments of Education and Job and Family Services (ODFJS).

SUTQ recognizes and promotes programs that exceed health and safety regulations and meet nationally researched quality standards that lead to improved outcomes for children. Programs with 3 to 5 Stars are considered high quality.

As part of Ohio's Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant, 100% of ODJFS-licensed childcare providers in Ohio serving children who receive Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) subsidies must be Star Rated by 2020.

Ohio statute also mandates that 100% of ODJFS-licensed providers (excluding Type B home providers) that serve PFCC children should be high quality by 2025. In order to reach this goal, the following benchmarks must be met:

- By June 30, 2017, 25%
- By June 30, 2019, 40%
- By June 30, 2021, 60%
- By June 30, 2023, 80%
- By June 30, 2025, 100%

Ohio is a long way from meeting the 2025 goal of serving all PFCC children in high-quality settings

3,176 childcare centers & Type-A home providers with PFCC, 2015

454 currently meet high quality standards (14%)

641 currently do not meet high quality standards (20%)

2,081 are not yet Star-rated (65%)

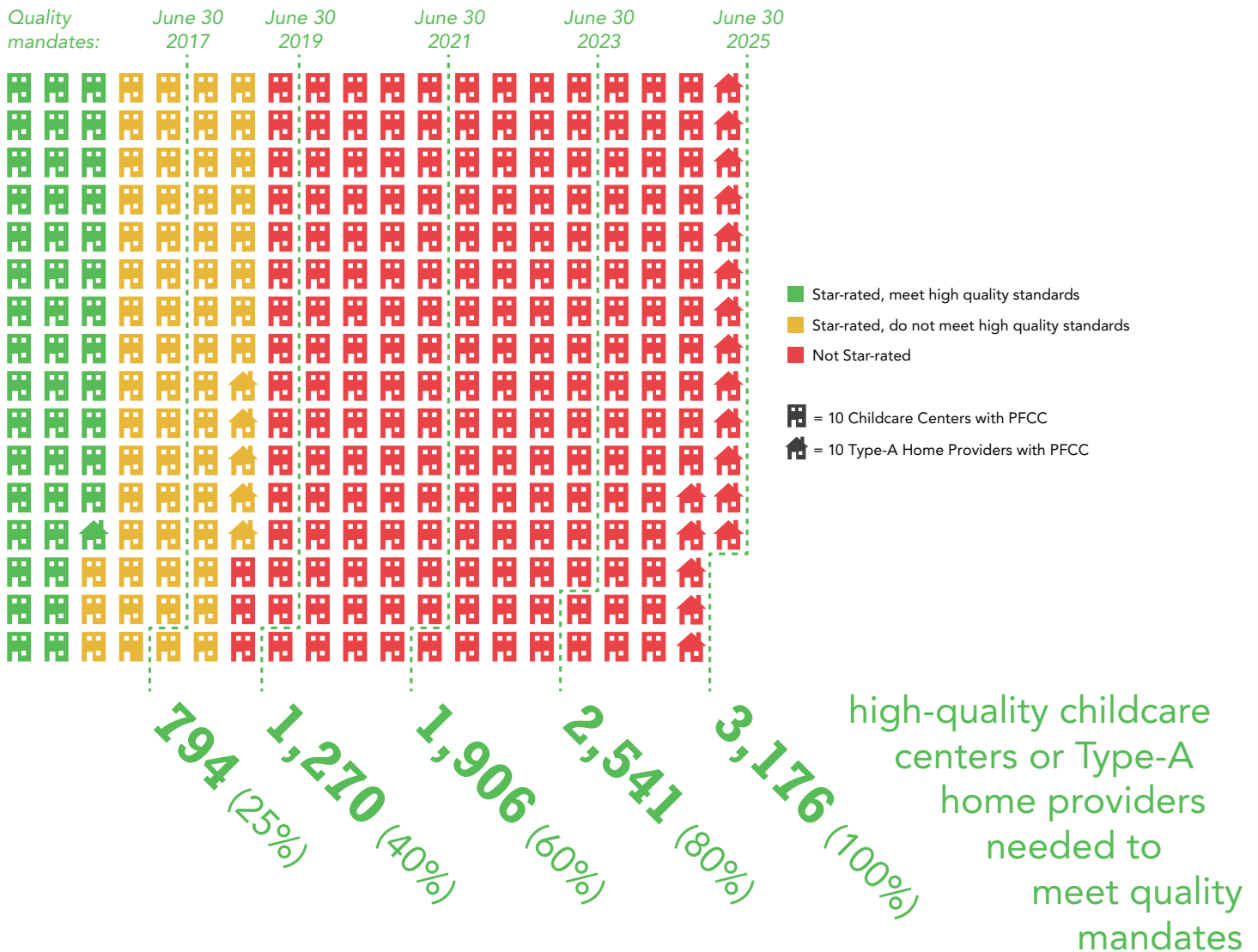


Figure 2. ODJFS-licensed childcare centers and Type-A home providers serving PFCC children by current quality of setting and number of providers needed to be high-quality to meet Ohio's quality mandates. These include providers that serve only school-age children. Type-B homes providers are not required to meet the quality mandates. Based on State Fiscal Year 2015 Step Up To Quality ratings data from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.