

# Highlights of Mississippi Child Care Survey

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[www.hspsc.org](http://www.hspsc.org)

As background for deliberations of the Financing Universal Early Care and Education Project, this report highlights information collected on current utilization of early care and education in Mississippi. The following text and attached charts summarize data collected by a general population survey designed to be representative of Mississippi parents with children birth to 5 years old. The sample consists of responses from 876 parents. We weight the sample to reflect the age distribution of children in Mississippi and annual child care utilization patterns. The survey was conducted from April to June 2003 by the Social and Economic Survey Research Center at Washington State University, under direction of the Human Services Policy Center (HSPC) at the University of Washington. The survey was sponsored by the Mississippi Department of Human Services Office for Children and Youth and the Barksdale Reading Institute.

In this document, information is presented either for all children or for detailed age groups (<1, 1-2, and 3-5 year(s) old). For the purposes of this report, we present information on three broad types of child care: 1) center care, Head Start (HS) or Early HS, 2) Family Child Care (FCC), and 3) Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care. Center care includes HS or Early HS<sup>1</sup> (when appropriate to a given age group), licensed child care centers, nursery schools, and pre-schools, but not school-based pre-kindergarten programs. FCC is defined as family child care, day care homes, or family day care where care is provided as a business by a non-relative in the caregiver's home. We define FFN care as any regular, non-parental care other than a licensed centers or family child care. FFN care thus includes relatives, friends, neighbors, and other non-parental adult caregivers such as sitters or nannies. The definitions for FCC and FFN care do not distinguish between whether or not the care is regulated according to Mississippi regulations, and likely some overlap between the two categories exists. Where applicable, we also provide information specifically on school-based pre-kindergarten programs.

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<sup>1</sup> Early HS supports a range of models including both center- and home-based programs. For the purposes of this report, we have not made a distinction between HS and Early HS and, thus, have included Early HS participation within the category of center care. Removing Early HS from this category would not substantially affect the results as it affects such a small proportion of children.

### **Percent of Children in Child Care**

The percent of all children using *any amount* of each type of child care per week is presented in Chart 1 and summarized below:

- ✓ Center care, HS, or Early HS is used by approximately 17% of children less than 1 year old, 28% of 1- to 2-year-olds, and 42% of 3- to 5-year-olds.
- ✓ FCC is used by only approximately 1 in 10 children, regardless of the child's age.
- ✓ FFN care is used by approximately half of all children across all age categories.
- ✓ Of 4- and 5-year-olds, 24% attend school-based pre-kindergarten.

### **Number of Children in Child Care**

Chart 2 translates the percent of children in care into an estimated number of Mississippi children in each type of non-parental care for any amount of time each week:<sup>2</sup>

- ✓ Of the 42,000 infants (children less than 1 year of age) in Mississippi, 7,000 spend time in center care, HS, or Early HS; 5,000 spend time in FCC; and 24,000 spend time in FFN care.
- ✓ Of the 83,000 toddlers (children age 1-2), 23,000 spend time in center care, 10,000 spend time in FCC, and 46,000 spend time in FFN care.
- ✓ Of the 125,000 preschoolers (children age 3-5), 53,000 spend time in center care, 15,000 spend time in FCC, and 66,000 spend time in FFN care.

### **Primary Care Arrangements**

Information on children's primary non-parental care arrangements is presented in Charts 3a and 3b. The primary care arrangement is defined as the non-parental care arrangement used at least five hours a week and more than any other type of non-parental care arrangement. Chart 3a presents the percent of all children with each type of primary care arrangement. Chart 3b presents this information for 4- and 5-year-olds and includes school-based pre-kindergarten as a primary care type. We present the percent of 4- and 5-year-olds with each type of primary care, including school-based pre-kindergarten, separately because pre-kindergarten is not a care option available to all children birth to 5 years old.

- ✓ Center care, HS, or Early HS is the primary care arrangement for more than one in four (27%) children between the ages of 0 and 5 years old [Chart 3a]. The percent of children with center care as their primary care arrangement increases with child's age, ranging from 14% for children less than 1 year old to 34% for children 3 to 5 years old.
- ✓ FCC is the primary care arrangement for only 7% of children age 0-5. [Chart 3a].
- ✓ FFN care is the primary arrangement for approximately 23% of children age 0-5 [Chart 3a]. Use of FFN care as the primary care arrangement decreases with child's age, ranging from 31% for children less than 1 year old to 18% for 3- to 5-year-olds.

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<sup>2</sup> Estimates of number of Mississippi children in each care type are derived from Census 2000 estimates of the number of children by age in Mississippi, adjusted for state estimated population growth between 2000 and 2003.

- ✓ Of 4- and 5-year-olds, approximately 18% have school-based pre-kindergarten, 34% have center care, 4% have FCC, and 16% have FFN care as their primary care type [Chart 3b].

Approximately 47% of infants (children less than 1 year old), 43% of toddlers, (children 1 to 2 years old), and 29% of preschoolers (children 3 to 5 years old) have no primary care arrangement.

### **Hours per Week in Care**

We present the median number of hours per week children spend in each type of care in Chart 4a. This information is summarized below:<sup>3</sup>

- ✓ For children in center care, HS, or Early HS, the median number of care hours is 30 hours per week for children less than 1 year old, 35 hours per week for 1- to 2-year-olds, and 30 hours per week for 3- to 5-year-olds.
- ✓ The median number of care hours for children in FCC is 39 hours per week for children less than 1 year old, 30 hours per week for 1- to 2-year-olds, and 35 hours per week for 3- to 5-year olds.
- ✓ The median number of care hours for children in FFN care is 12 hours per week for children less than 1 year old, 6 hours per week for 1- to 2-year-olds, and 10 hours per week for 3- to 5-year olds.
- ✓ The median number of care hours for 4- and 5-year-olds in school-based pre-kindergarten is 30 hours per week.

Charts 4b, 4c, and 4d present the percent of children with different amounts of care hours per week for center care, FCC, and FFN care. These charts suggest that many children spend less than 11 hours per week in each care type, especially for FCC and FFN care, as summarized below:

- ✓ Approximately 22% of children birth to 5 years old in center care spend less than 11 hours per week in center care, and another 22% spend between 21 and 30 hours per week in center care. One in three children (33%) birth to 5 years old in center care spend between 31 and 40 hours in center care [Chart 4b].
- ✓ Similarly, approximately 21% of children birth to 5 years old in FCC spend less than 11 hours per week in FCC, another 20% spend between 21 and 30 hours per week in FCC, and one in three children (35%) spend between 31 and 40 hours in FCC [Chart 4c].
- ✓ More than half of children birth to 5 years old in FFN care (53%) spend less than 11 hours per week in FFN care [Chart 4d].

These results imply that, in addition to any parental preferences, consideration in choosing FFN care over center care or FCC may involve the availability of part-time care.

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<sup>3</sup> We present the median hours in care rather than the mean hours in care because for some care types (particularly FFN care) a small percent of children use a large number of hours of that care per week, thereby increasing the mean and masking the actual distribution of care hours for most children.

### **Percent of All Care Hours in Each Type of Care**

Taking into account how many children use each type of care and how much time they spend in that care, we compute the proportion of all non-parental care hours provided by each care type. These results are presented in Chart 5 and summarized below. We report information on 4- and 5-year-olds separately and include school-based pre-kindergarten as a care type for this age group.

- ✓ Centers, HS, or Early HS provide 39% of the care for all children birth to 5 years old, including 27% of the care hours for children less than 1 year old and approximately 40% of the care hours for 1- to 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds, and 4- to 5-year-olds.
- ✓ FCC accounts for 14% of all care hours for all children birth to 5 years old, with the proportion of all care hours in FCC ranging between 7% (for 4- to 5-year-olds) and 26% (for 3-year-olds).
- ✓ FFN care accounts for 37% of all non-parental care hours for all children birth to 5 years old and is highest for infants (53%), declining with increasing age to 28% for 4- to 5-year-olds.
- ✓ For 4- and 5-year-olds, we find that school-based pre-kindergarten provides 25% of all care hours.

### **Use of Evening and Weekend Care**

Approximately 19% of all 0- to 5-year-olds are in some form of non-parental care during evening or weekend hours. Among only those children who are in some type of non-parental care each week, 27% participate in some form of care during evening and weekend hours. Use of evening and weekend care decreases as children get older, ranging from 35% for children less than 1 year old to 23% for 3- to 5-year-olds. The percent of children participating in evening or weekend care for each care type is detailed in Chart 6 and summarized below:

- ✓ Among children birth to 5 years old in center care, HS, or Early HS, only 2% are in that care on the evening or weekend.
- ✓ Approximately 11% of children birth to 5 years old in FCC are in some evening or weekend FCC, ranging from 7% for children less than 1 year old to 14% for 3- to 5-year-olds.
- ✓ Children in FFN care have the highest rates of evening and weekend care, with between 41% (for children less than 1 year old) and 33% (for 3- to 5-year-olds) of children in some evening or weekend FFN care.

The proportion of all non-parental care that occurs during evenings and weekends is detailed in Chart 7 and summarized below:

- ✓ For children in centers, HS, or Early HS, evening or weekend center care hours account for only 16% of all center care hours.
- ✓ Evening or weekend FCC hours account for only 6% of all FCC hours.
- ✓ FFN care involves the highest percent of evening or weekend care. Forty-two percent of all FFN care hours involve evening or weekend care.

Thus, a major consideration in choosing FFN care over center care or FCC may involve the availability or desirability of that care during evening or weekend hours.

### **Children with Special Needs**

Information on child care for children with special needs is presented in Chart 8 and summarized below. For the purpose of this report, children with special needs are defined as children who are reported by their parents to have a physical, emotional, developmental, or behavioral condition that affects decisions about their care.

- ✓ Approximately 4% of children age 0-5 have special needs.
- ✓ We find no significant differences between the percent of children with special needs in each type of care.

### **Parent Values and Reasons for Selecting Primary Care Arrangement**

Chart 9 presents information regarding what parents report as the most important characteristic of child care. The questions regarding the most important characteristics of child care were asked of all parents regardless of whether or not they use non-parental care or what type(s) of care they use.

- ✓ Forty-five percent of parents with children 0 to 5 years old rank the way the child and caregiver relate to each other as the most important aspect of care.
- ✓ Training and education of the caregiver is identified by approximately 23% of parents as the most important characteristic of care, and the number of children per caregiver is identified by 13% of parents as the most important characteristic of care.
- ✓ The types of activities or programs offered, cost, location, and flexible/convenient hours are each identified by less than 10% of parents as the most important characteristic of care.

Charts 10-13 report the main reasons for choosing each type of primary care; thus, these questions were asked only of respondents with a primary non-parental care arrangement. Chart 10 illustrates parents-reported main reasons for choosing center care, HS, or Early HS.

- ✓ Characteristics of the program<sup>4</sup> (26%) is the most frequently cited reason for selecting center care, HS, or Early HS as the primary care arrangement, followed by knowing, trusting, or liking the caregiver at 14% and recommendation of a friend, neighbor, or relative at 12%.
- ✓ Approximately 10% of parents identify each of the following as reasons for selecting center care, HS, or Early HS as the primary care arrangement: religious or cultural preferences, location, and convenient hours or availability
- ✓ Approximately 4% of parents report training or education of staff as the reason for selecting center care, HS, or Early HS.

Chart 11 presents parent-reported main reasons for selecting school-based pre-kindergarten as the primary care type. As with center care, characteristics of the program is the most frequently cited reason for selecting pre-kindergarten as the primary care type (44%), followed by knowing, trusting, or liking the caregiver (12%) and location (11%). Less than 10 % of parents identify each of the following as the main reason for selecting pre-kindergarten as the

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<sup>4</sup> Parent responses categorized as 'characteristics of the program' include liking the activities, the curriculum, or the program itself.

primary care type: training or education of staff; religious or cultural preferences; recommendation of a friend, neighbor, or relative; and cost.

The main reasons for selecting FCC as the primary care type are different than those for selecting either center care or school-based pre-kindergarten, with a greater emphasis placed on knowing, trusting, or liking the caregiver and a lower emphasis placed on characteristics of the program [Chart 12].

- ✓ Knowing, trusting, or liking the caregiver is the most frequently cited reason for selecting FCC (28%).
- ✓ Approximately 18% of parents identify recommendation of a friend, neighbor, or relative and 14% identify child to staff ratio as the main reason for selecting FCC.
- ✓ Less than 10% of parents cite each of the following main reasons for selecting FCC: characteristics of the program, convenient hours or availability, religious or cultural preferences, similar values, and cost.

As with FCC, parents selecting FFN care as the primary care type place greater importance on knowing, trusting, or liking the caregiver than parents selecting center care or school-based pre-kindergarten [Chart 13].

- ✓ Knowing, trusting, or liking the caregiver is the most frequently cited reason for selecting FFN care (54%), followed by cost at 11% and convenient hours or availability at 9%.
- ✓ All other reasons for selecting the FFN care are identified by less than 6% of parents.

### **Child:Adult Ratios**

Parent-reported child:adult ratios for the different types of care are presented in Chart 14a and summarized below:<sup>5</sup>

- ✓ Center care, HS, and Early HS average 3.8 children per adult for children less than 1 year old, 5.9 children per adult for children 1 to 2 years old, and 6.7 children per adult for children 3 to 5 years old.
- ✓ Licensed FCC's average 3.6 children per adult for children less than 1 year old, 4.5 children per adult for children 1 to 2 years old, and 4.4 children per adult for children 3 to 5 years old.
- ✓ FFN care averages 1.2 children per adult for children birth to 5 years old.

The percent of children with different parent-reported child:adult ratios for center care and licensed FCC are provided in Chart 14b and summarized below:

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that while parent-reported child:adult ratios for FCC are fairly consistent with provider-reported ratios, parents tend to underestimate the child:adult ratio for centers when compared with provider-reported information. Therefore, actual average child:adult ratios for center care are likely higher than those reported here. (Source: Willer, B. et al. 1990. The Demand and Supply of Child Care in 1990: Joint Findings from the National Child Care Survey 1990 and a Profile of Child Care Settings. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children).

- ✓ For infants (less than 1 year old) in center care, HS, or Early HS, the majority (67%) are in settings with reported ratios of 4 or fewer children. For both toddlers (age 2-3) and preschoolers (age 3-5) in center care, the approximately half of these children (55% and 46%, respectively) are in settings with reported ratios of between 4 and 8 children per adult.
- ✓ Seventy-seven percent of infants (< 1 year old) and 52% of toddlers (age 2-3) in regulated FCCs are in settings with reported ratios of between 3 and 6 children per adult. Fifty-four percent of preschoolers (age 3-5) in regulated FCCs are in settings with reported ratios of 3 or fewer children per adult.

### **Payment for Care**

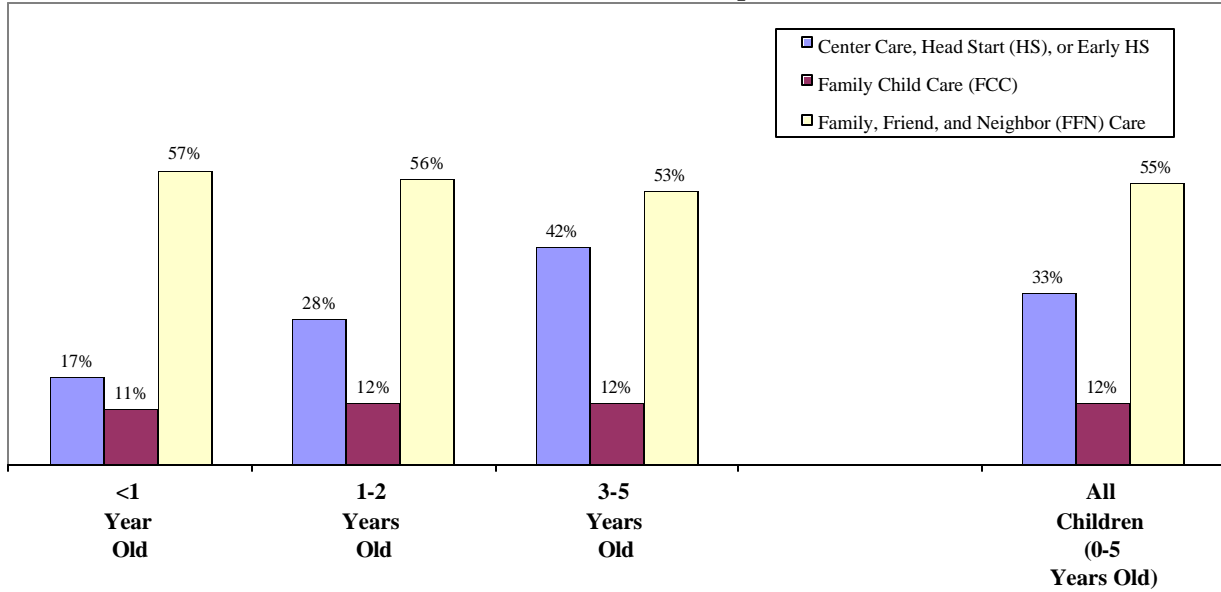
Information on payment for care is presented in Charts 15 and 16 and summarized below:

- ✓ Among mothers who are income eligible and employed or in school or training, 26% report receiving a government subsidy for child care [Chart 15]. Subsidy participation ranges between 10% and 32%, depending on family income level.<sup>6</sup>
- ✓ Among parents that use relative care, approximately 19% pay for the relative care they use [Chart 16].

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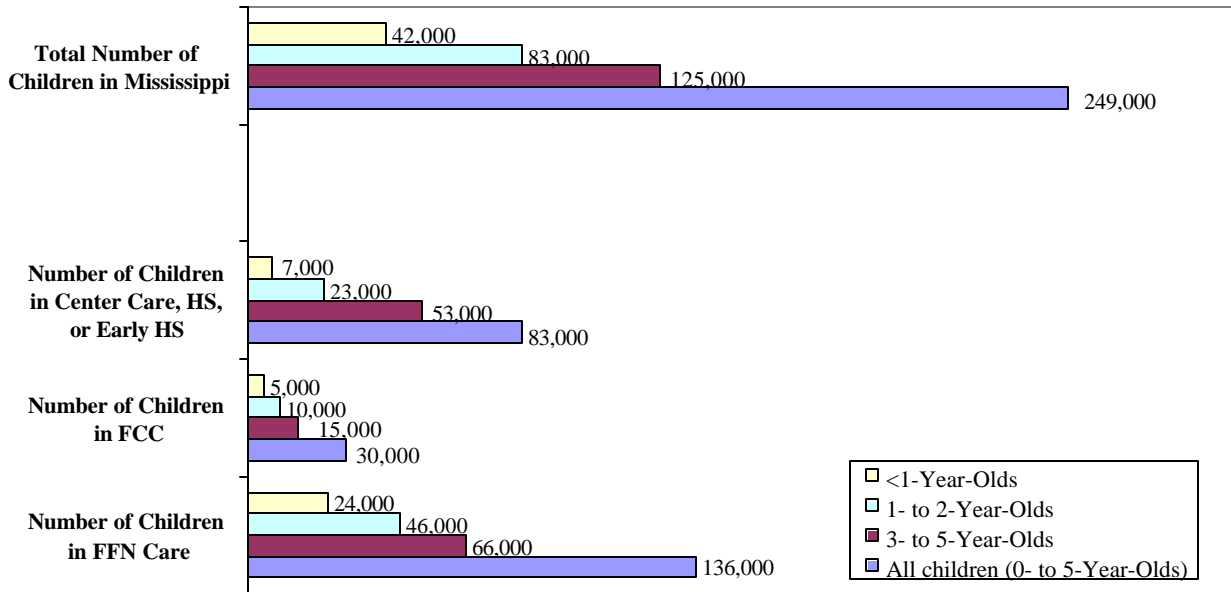
<sup>6</sup> The 2002 Federal Poverty Level was \$15,020 for a family of three and \$18,100 for a family of four.

**Chart 1: Percent of Children Birth to 5 Years Old in Any Amount of Center Care, FCC, and FFN Care\* per Week**



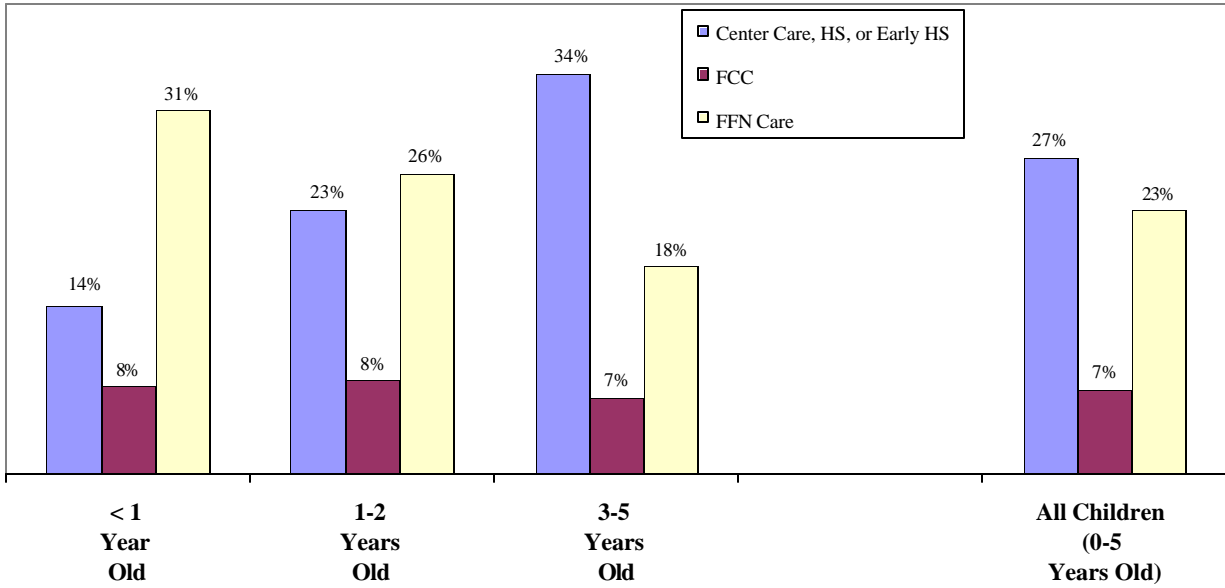
\* Categories are not mutually exclusive (i.e., children may participate in more than one type of care).  
 In addition to the care types shown, 24% of 4- and 5-year-olds participate in school-based pre-kindergarten.

**Chart 2: Population Totals for Children Birth to 5 Years Old in Any Amount of Center Care, FCC, and FFN Care\* per Week**



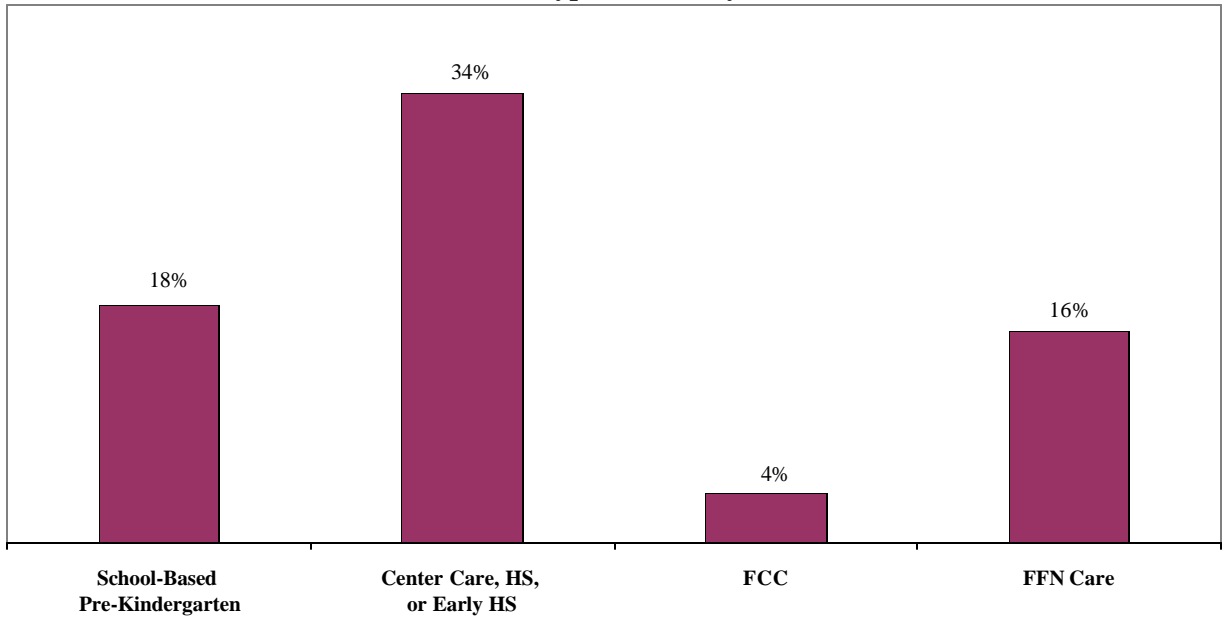
\* Categories are not mutually exclusive.

**Chart 3a: Percent of Children Birth to 5 Years Old in Each Type of Primary Care\***

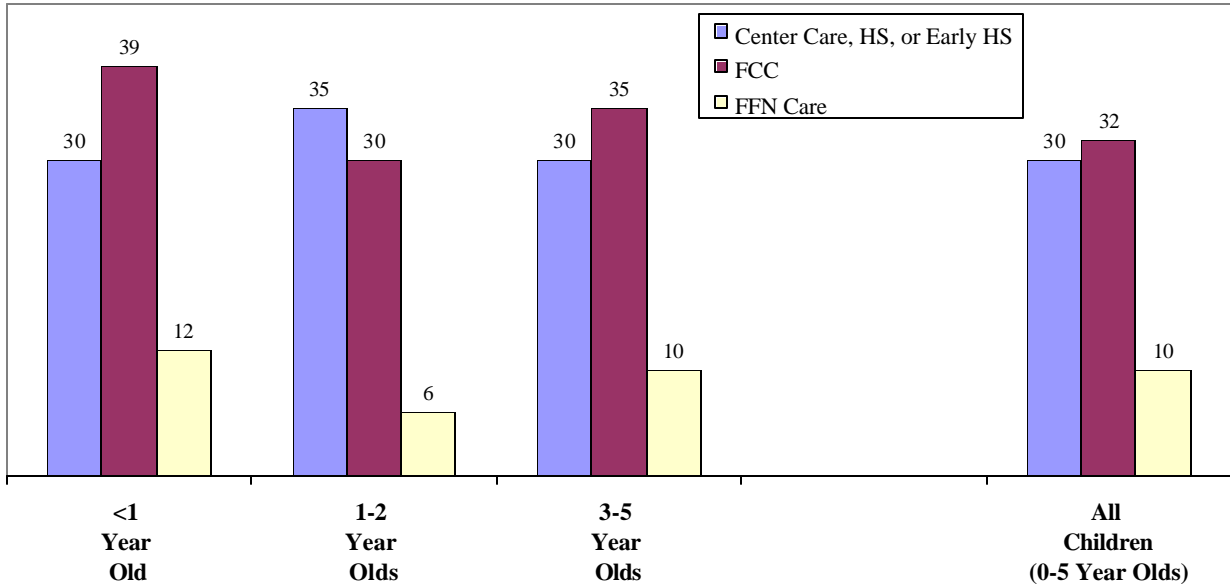


\* The primary care arrangement is defined as the non-parental care arrangement used at least five hours a week and more than any other non-parental care arrangement.

**Chart 3b: Percent of 4- and 5-Year-Old Children in Each Type of Primary Care**

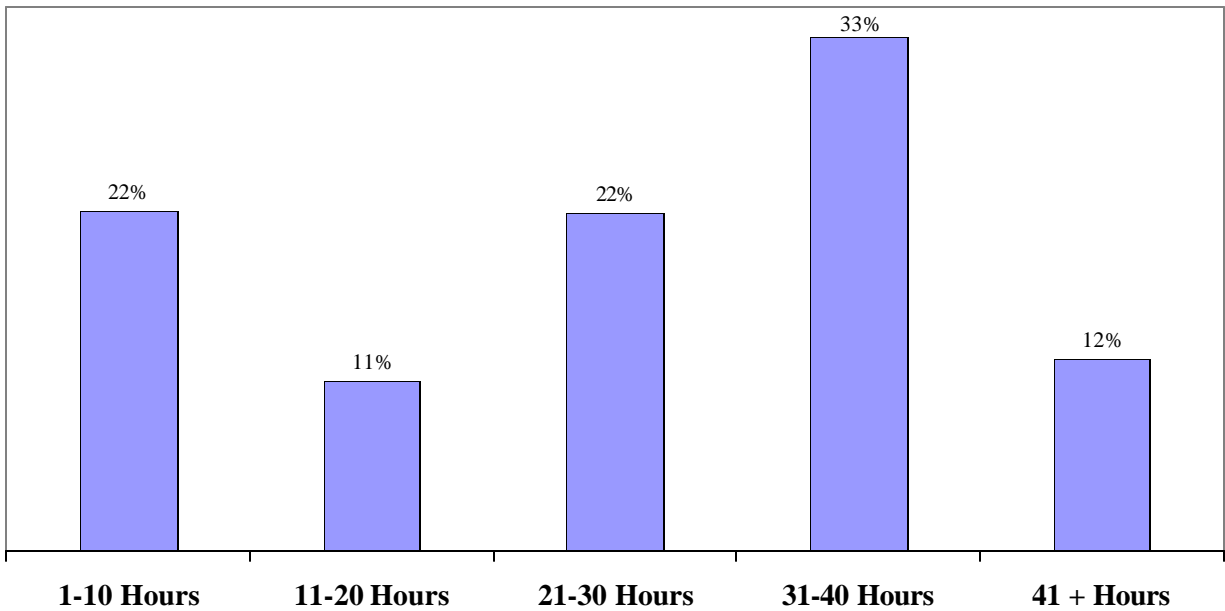


**Chart 4a: Median Hours per Week of Center Care, FCC, and FFN Care for Children in Each Type of Care\***

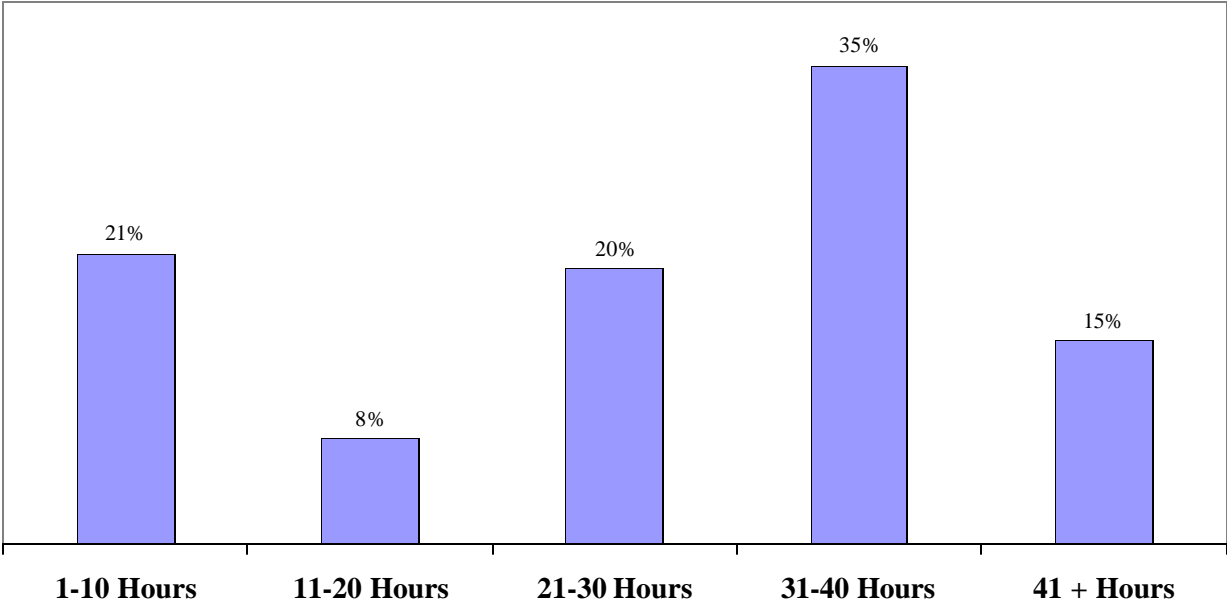


\*In addition to the care types shown, the median number of care hours for 4- and 5-year-olds in school-based pre-kindergarten is 30 hours per week.

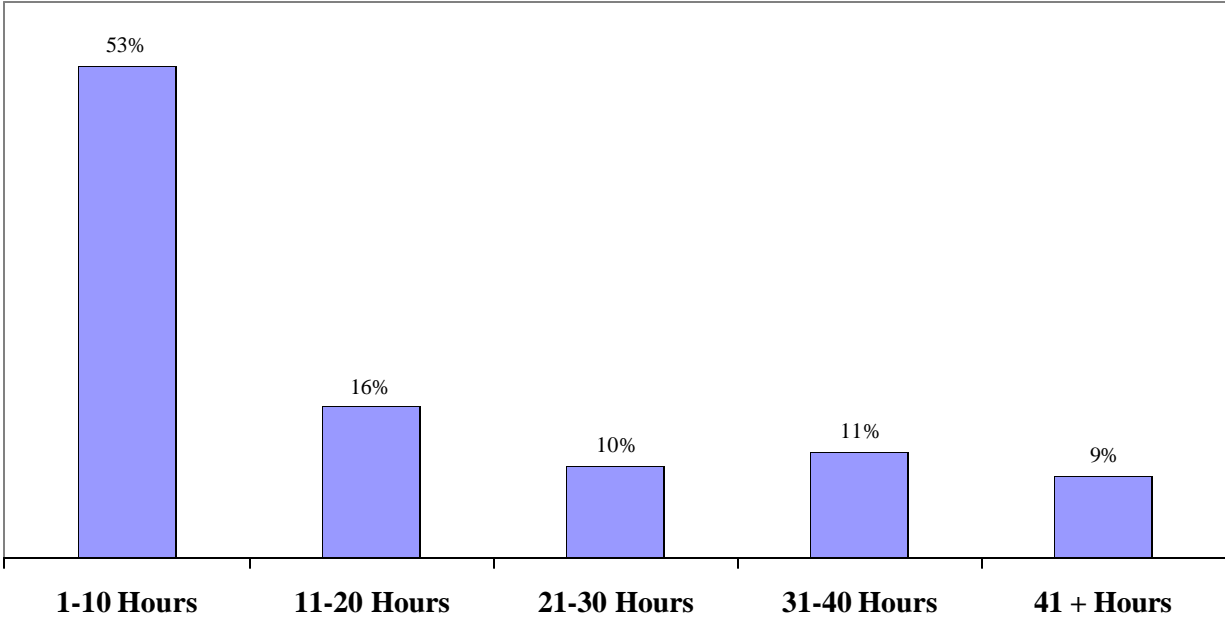
**Chart 4b: Percent of Children in Center Care, HS, or Early HS with Each Amount of Center, HS, or Early HS Care Per Week**



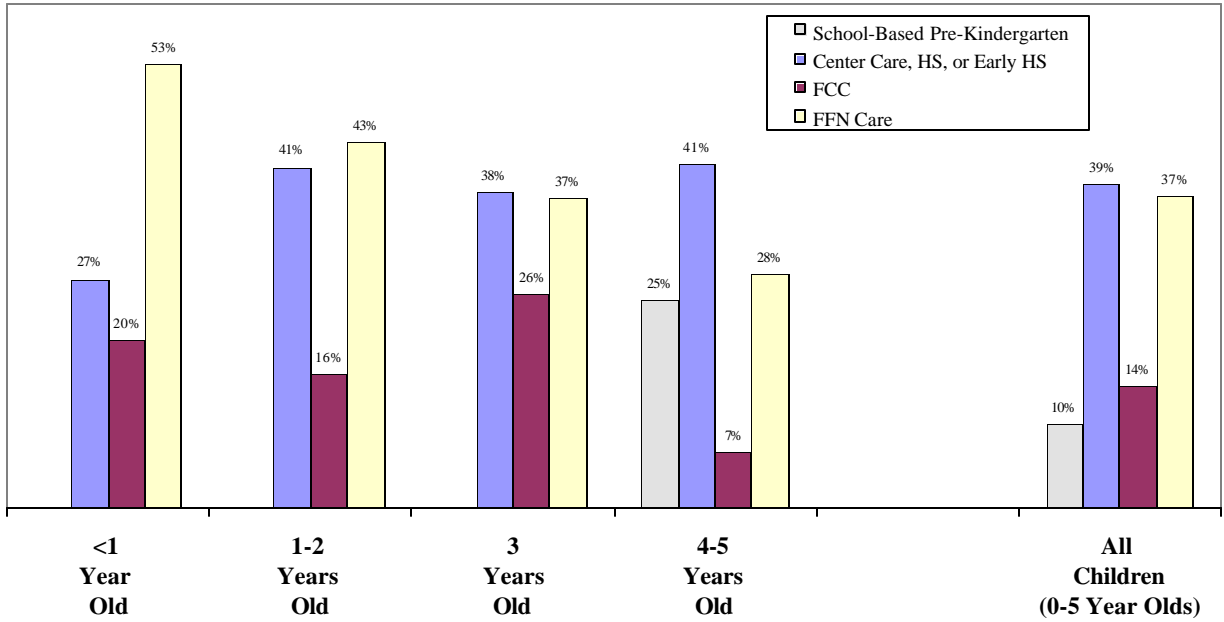
**Chart 4c: Percent of Children in FCC with Each Amount of FCC Care Per Week**



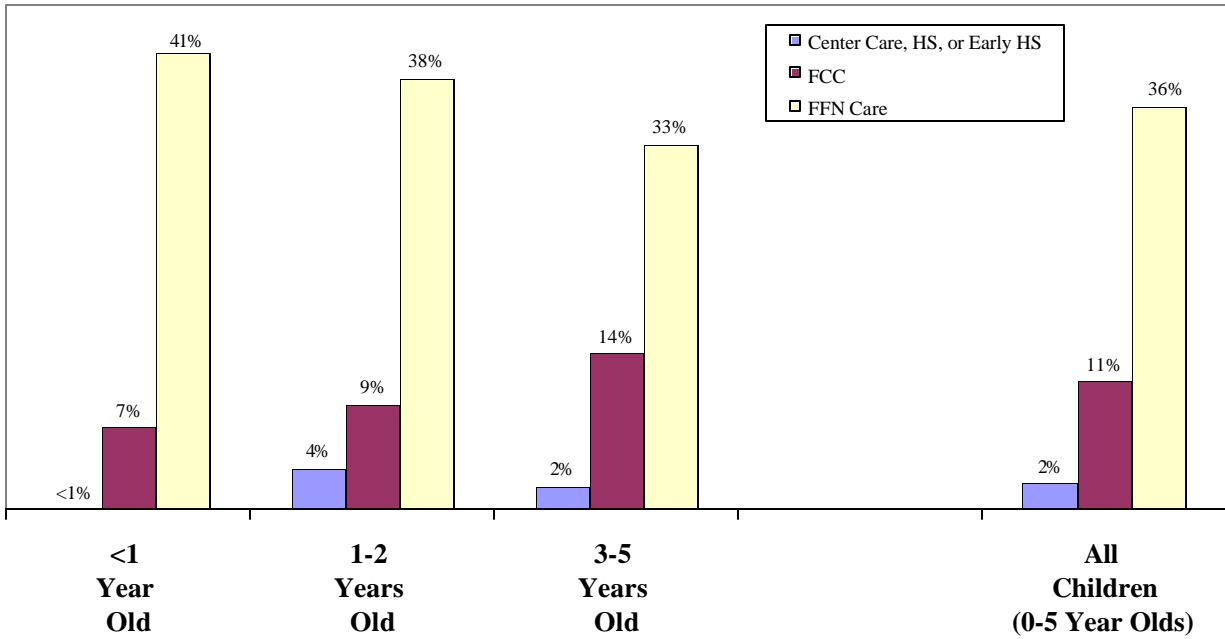
**Chart 4d: Percent of Children in FFN Care with Each Amount of FFN Care Per Week**



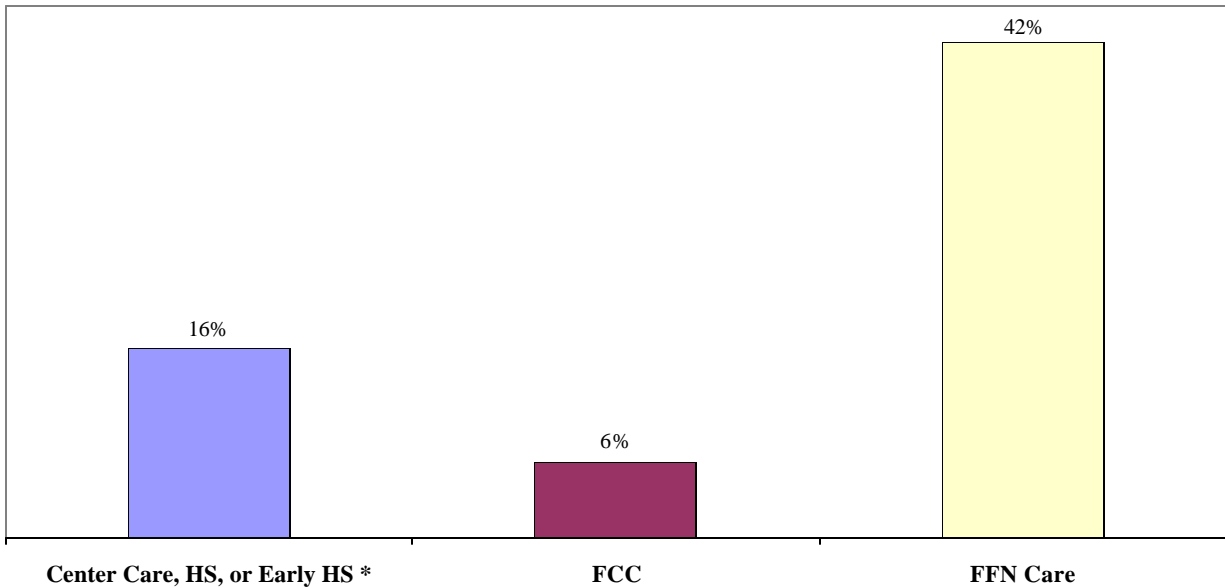
**Chart 5: Percent of All Non-Parental Care Hours in Each Type of Care**



**Chart 6: Percent of Children in Each Type of Care Who Are in That Care on Evenings or Weekends**

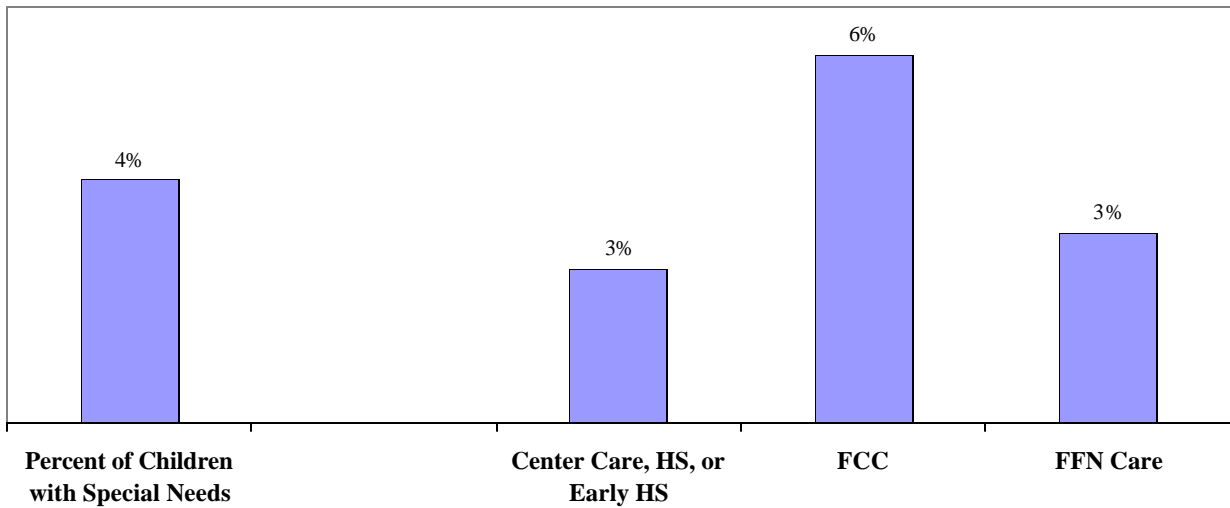


**Chart 7: Percent of All Non-Parental Care Hours during Evenings and Weekends**



\*Value for center care based on less than 10 observations.

**Chart 8: Percent of Children in Center Care, FCC, or FFN Care with Special Needs\***

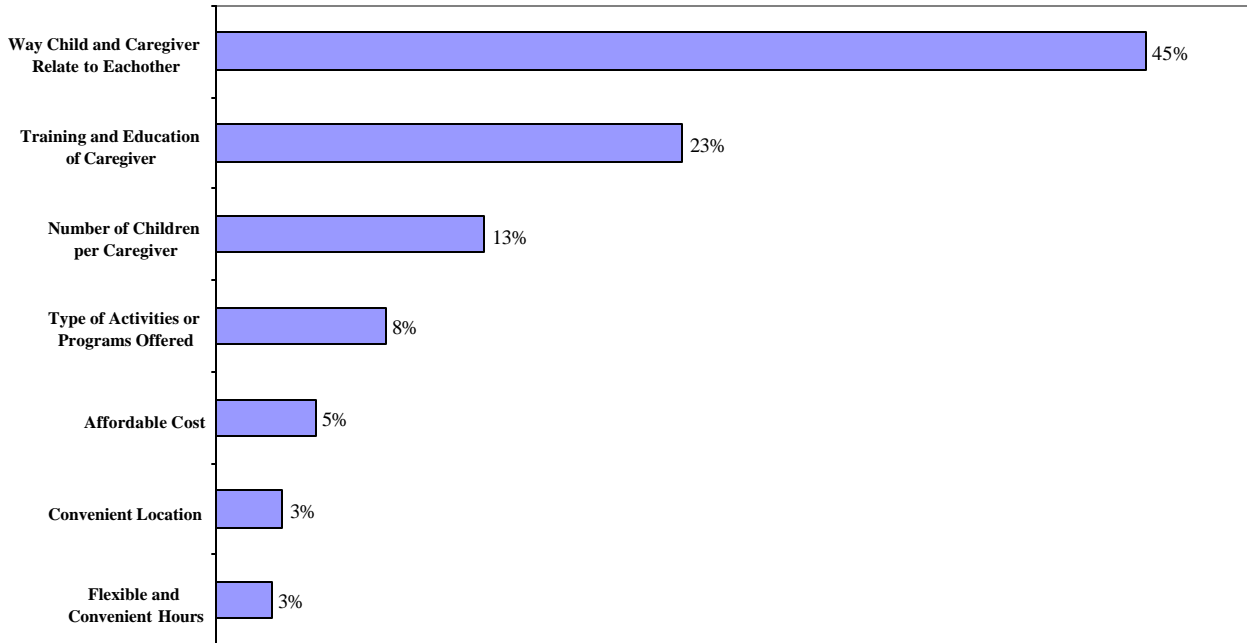


\* Children with special needs are defined as children who are reported by their parents to have a physical, emotional, developmental, or behavioral condition that affects decisions about their care.

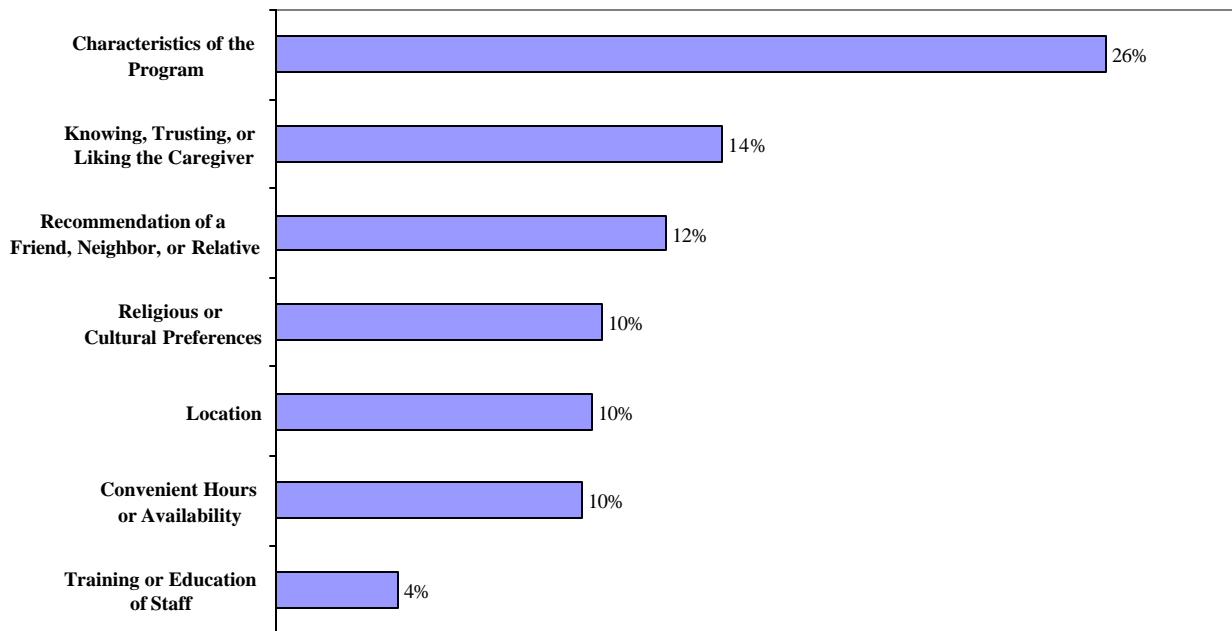
\*\*No differences between children with special needs and those without special needs in the likelihood of using each type of care are significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

Note: In addition to the values shown, 5% of children in school-based pre-kindergarten have special needs.

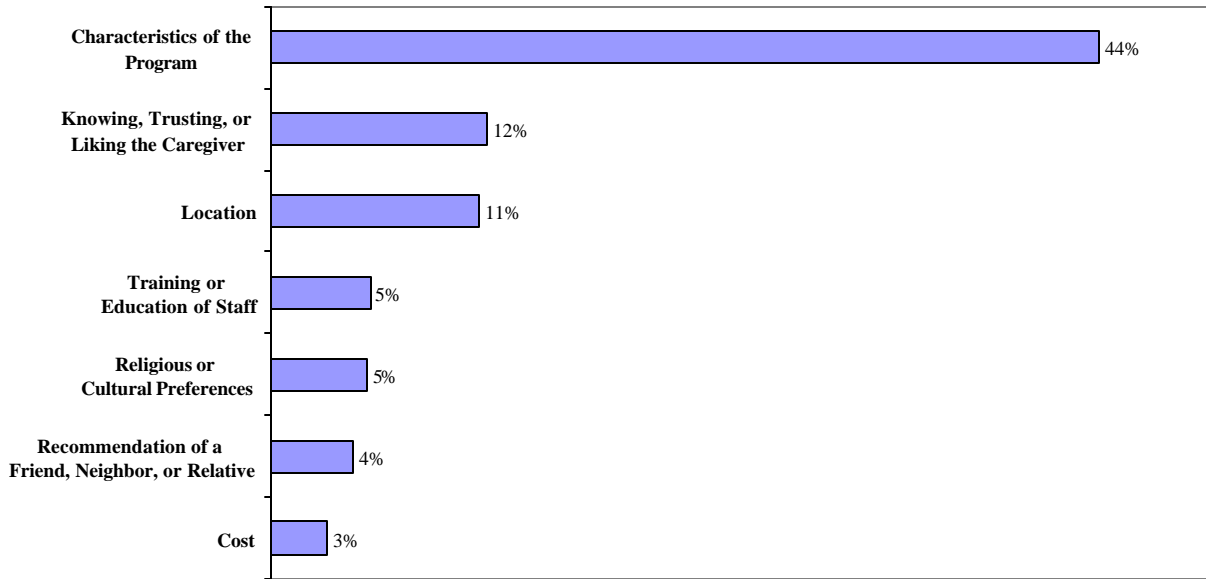
**Chart 9: Percent of Parents Ranking Each Characteristic of Child Care as the Most Important**



**Chart 10: Percent of Parents Reporting Each as the Main Reason for Choosing Center Care, HS, or Early HS as the Primary Care Arrangement**

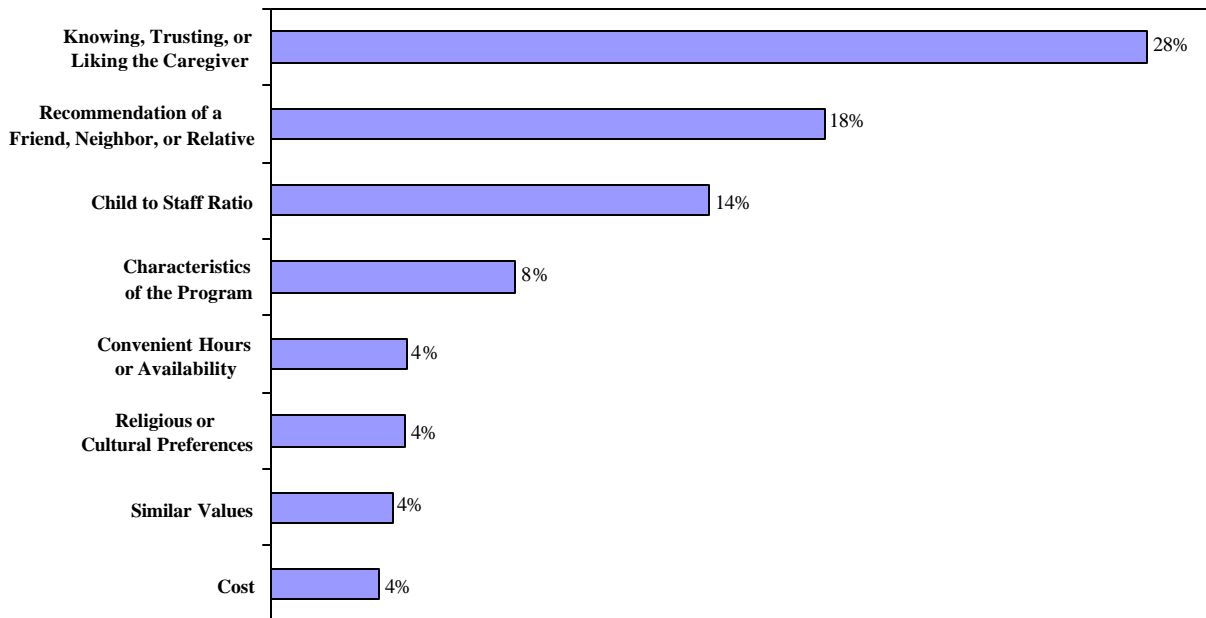


**Chart 11: Percent of Parents Reporting Each as the Main Reason for Choosing School-Based Pre-Kindergarten as the Primary Care Arrangement**

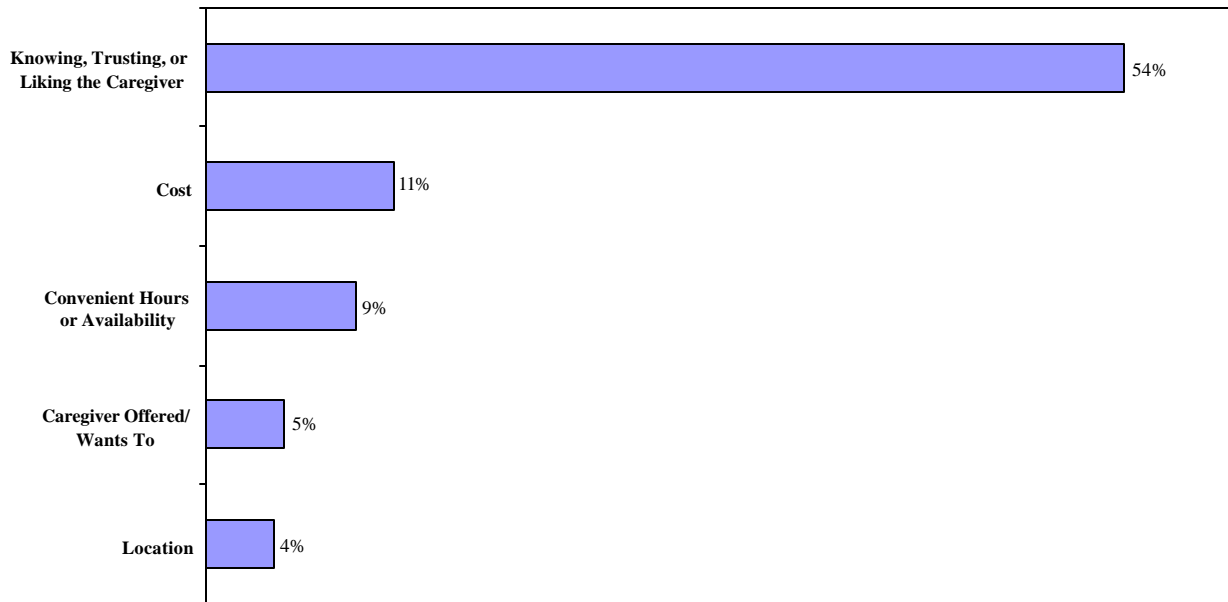


\*Pre-kindergarten is applicable for 4- and 5-year-old children only.

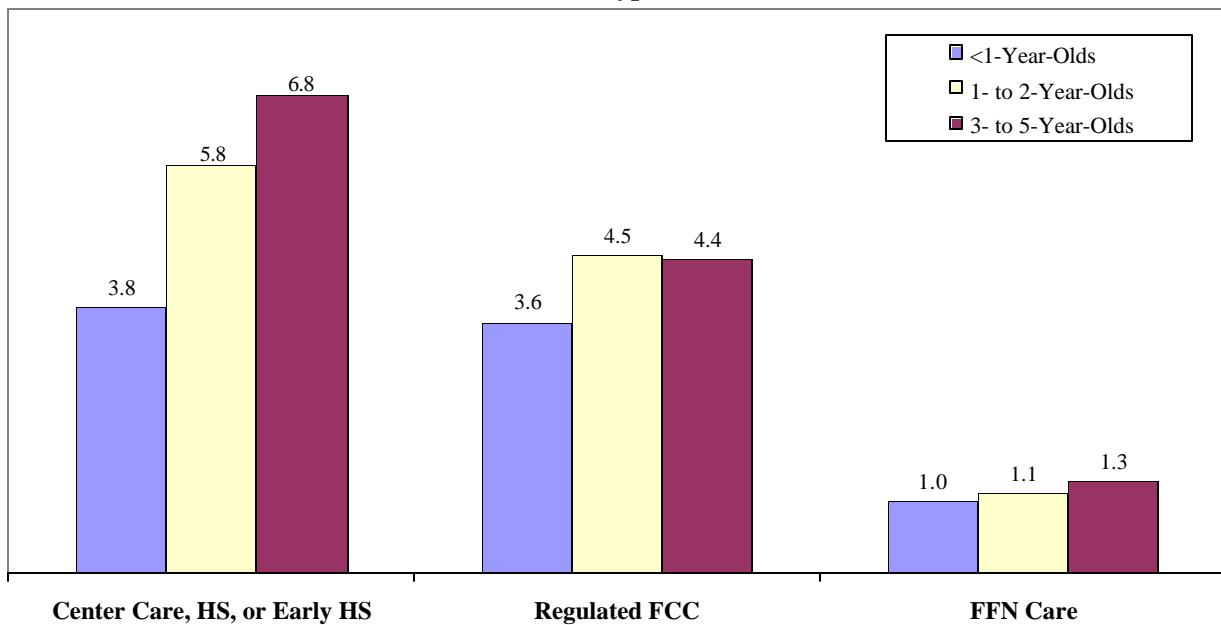
**Chart 12: Percent of Parents Reporting Each as the Main Reason for Choosing FCC as the Primary Care Arrangement**



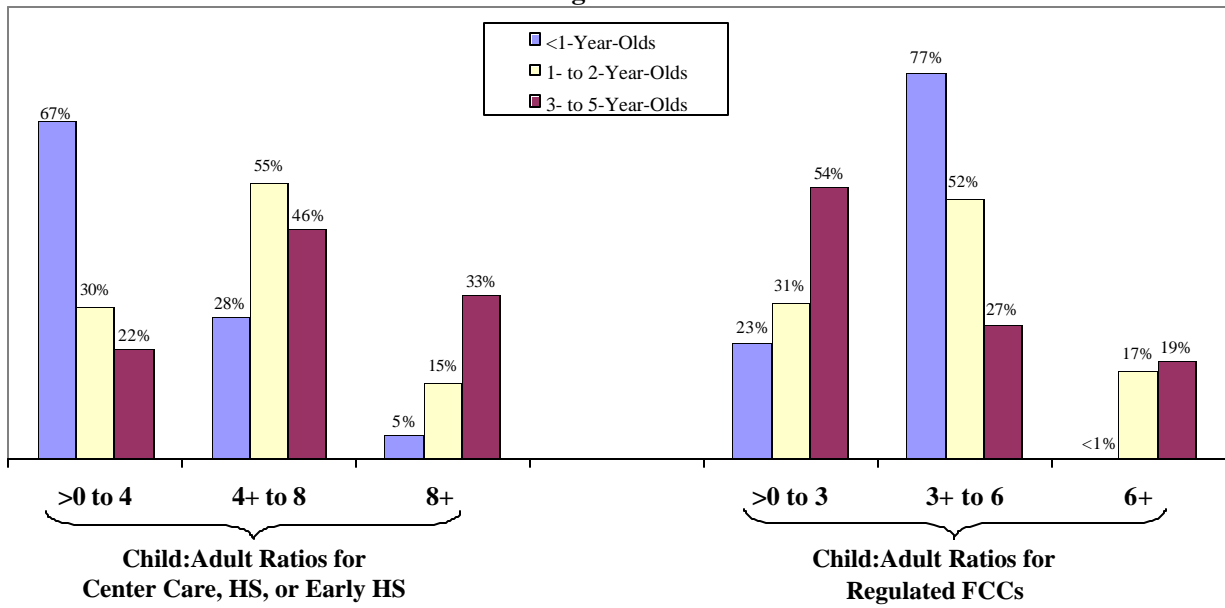
**Chart 13: Percent of Parents Reporting Each as the Main Reason for Choosing FFN Care as the Primary Care Arrangement**



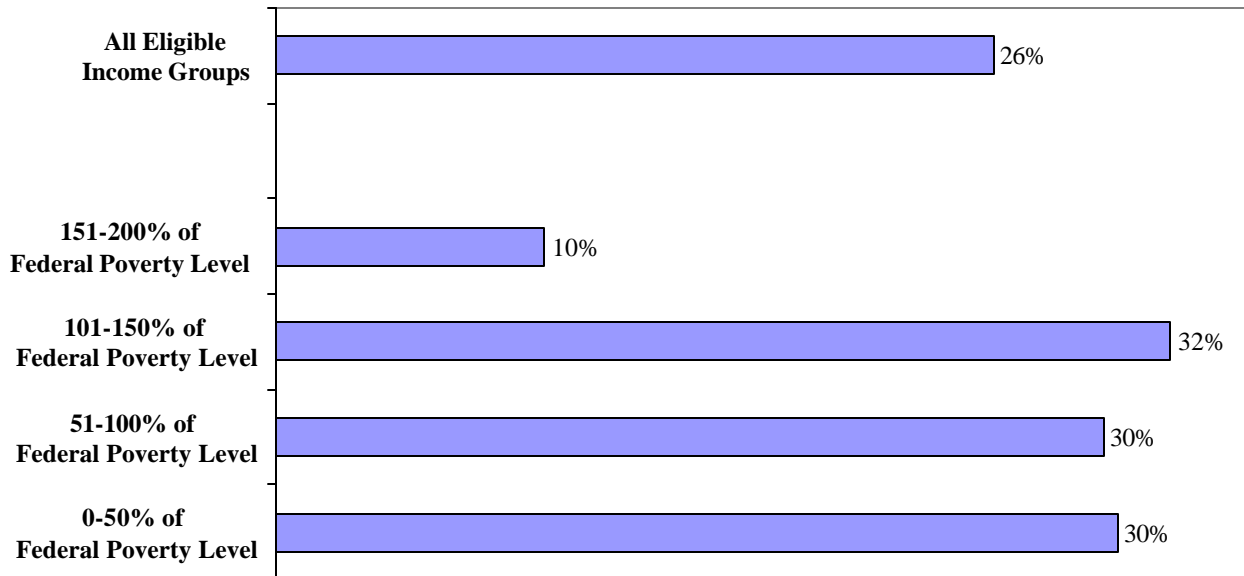
**Chart 14a: Average Parent-Reported Child:Adult Ratio for Each Type of Care**



**Chart 14b: Percent of Children with Each Parent-Reported Child:Adult Ratio for Center Care, HS, or Early HS and Regulated FCCs**



**Chart 15: Child Care Subsidy Participation Among All Mothers Who are Income Eligible and Employed or in School/Training by Detailed Income Groups\***



\* The income eligibility threshold for child care subsidies in Mississippi is approximately 2 times the Federal Poverty Level.

**Chart 16: Percent of Parents Paying  
for the Relative Care They Use**

