

2026

Characteristics of Preschool Capacity in Vermont

A Supplement to the 2026 Supply Demand Gap Analysis Report

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Analysis: Programs Serving Preschool Age Children

The [2026 Supply Demand Gap \(SDG\) Analysis](#), completed by First Children's Finance (FCF), analyzes the supply of full-day, full-year child care supply and demand in Vermont. The Supply Demand Gap Analysis provides policymakers with essential data to understand the availability of full-day, full-year child care across the state. FCF recognizes however, that full-day, full-year care alone does not fully capture families' lived experiences of access and availability.

This brief highlights key findings related to the full population of preschool-aged children in Vermont and the settings, licensed capacity, and operating hours of the programs that serve them. Statewide there is enough licensed capacity for all three- and four-year-olds in Vermont to access preschool. However, as described in the SDG Analysis, there is a gap in the availability of full-time preschool. Across the state there are 2,622 more preschoolers likely to need full-time care than available full-time preschool slots.

While overall, 54% of preschool capacity in Vermont occurs in full time settings, only 43% of capacity in Universal Preschool (UPK) partner programs occurs in full-time settings. Within UPK, privately operated partners provide most of the care available in full-time settings.

Licensed and Regulated Preschool by Hours of Operation

Families access preschool for a variety of reasons, including as child care during work hours as well as to provide critical academic and social enrichment and prepare for kindergarten. The following analysis draws on Vermont Health Department population data and Child Care Licensing data to illustrate how preschool access varies by county. This data differs from the Supply Demand Gap Analysis. It reflects the full population of preschoolers, rather than those assumed likely to need care due to parental employment. It also reflects the entire preschool licensed capacity of all licensed and regulated programs (both full-time and part-time supply).



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While the total number of licensed preschool slots exceeds the population of preschool eligible children in all but three counties, this picture changes when considering program availability for working families seeking full-time care. Aligned with the SDG Analysis, full-time care is defined as both full-day (8-hour) and full-year (12 months).

Table 1. Analysis of preschool children, capacity and full-time slots by county

County	Total Preschool Aged Children	Total Preschool Licensed Capacity	Preschool Capacity in Full-Time Settings	Percent of Preschool Capacity in Full-Time Settings
Addison	582	631	365	58%
Bennington	644	778	470	60%
Caledonia	517	651	378	58%
Chittenden	2,825	3,481	2,369	68%
Essex	111	104	11	11%
Franklin	1,123	888	385	43%
Grand Isle	138	102	82	80%
Lamoille	484	670	403	60%
Orange	524	566	223	39%
Orleans	553	621	354	57%
Rutland	974	1,109	497	45%
Washington	984	1,101	423	38%
Windham	656	805	305	38%
Windsor	898	1,208	572	47%
Vermont	11,013	12,715	6,837	54%

Universal Preschool by Hours of Operation

Through Act 166, Vermont offers 10 hours of free Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) for three- and four-year old children. In Vermont's mixed delivery model, UPK is offered in public settings such as elementary schools and privately operated, high-quality child care centers and family child care homes. To be eligible for UPK participation, licensed and registered child care programs must be rated 4 or 5 STARS in Vermont's Quality Recognition and Improvement System or accredited through the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Private child care programs work in partnership with school districts to provide UPK services to the children residing in the school district. Of Vermont's 372 UPK partner programs, 223 are privately operated and 149 are operated by public school districts.

Table 2. UPK Settings and Hours of Operation

	UPK partners operating full- day, full- year	UPK partners operating part- day and/or part- year
Publicly Operated	6	143
Privately Operated	160	63

Working families requiring full-time child care benefit from accessing UPK in a full day, full year setting where UPK hours can be easily stacked with child care service hours funded by the child care financial assistance program (CCFAP) or private

tuition. Virtually all UPK full-time capacity in Vermont is offered by privately operated programs. However, six public school sites distributed across three counties offer 225 slots of full-time care.

Table 3: Analysis of UPK licensed capacity in full-time and private partner programs

County	Total UPK Licensed Capacity	UPK Licensed Capacity in Full-Time Settings	Percent of UPK Capacity in Full Time Settings	Percent of Full-time UPK Capacity in Private UPK Partner Programs
Addison	404	168	42%	100%
Bennington	559	365	65%	100%
Caledonia	437	186	43%	100%
Chittenden	2,636	1,643	62%	100%
Essex	95	2	2%	100%
Franklin	618	129	21%	100%
Grand Isle	84	64	76%	100%
Lamoille	375	159	42%	100%
Orange	447	106	24%	100%
Orleans	459	240	52%	46%
Rutland	709	209	29%	100%
Washington	764	168	22%	68%
Windham	620	208	34%	79%
Windsor	851	293	34%	100%
Vermont	9,058	3940	43%	94%

As shown above, privately operated UPK partner programs play an important role in the ecosystem of preschool care especially for Vermont's working families.